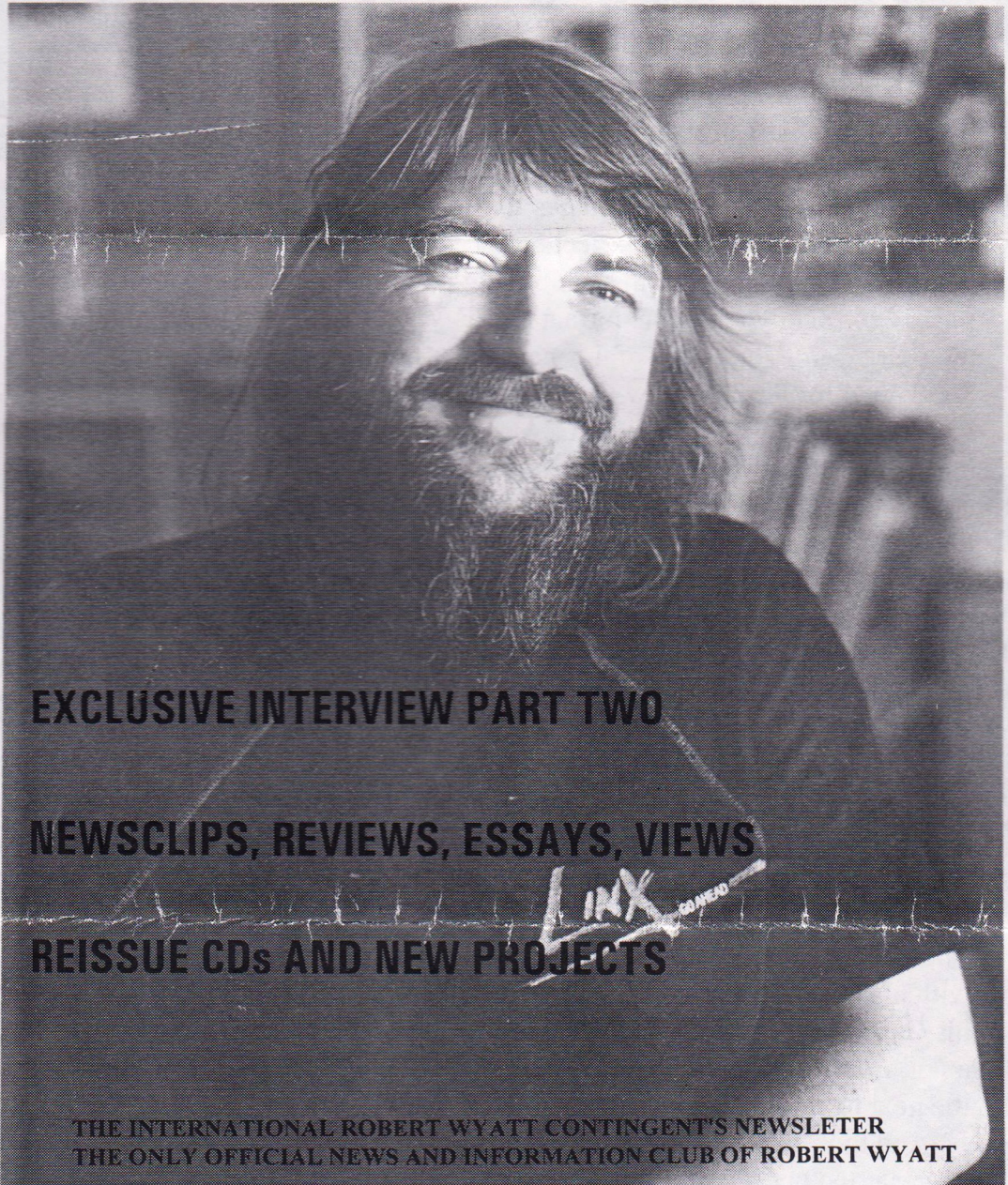


OLD ROTTENHAT'S JOURNAL

VOLUME ONE, ISSUE THREE

AUTUMN 1994

THIRTY YEARS OF WYATT MUSIC



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW PART TWO

NEWSCLIPS, REVIEWS, ESSAYS, VIEWS

REISSUE CDs AND NEW PROJECTS

THE INTERNATIONAL ROBERT WYATT CONTINGENT'S NEWSLETTER
THE ONLY OFFICIAL NEWS AND INFORMATION CLUB OF ROBERT WYATT

Photo by Caroline Forbes ©1985

Hello readers,

Welcome to another edition of OLD ROTTENHAT'S JOURNAL! This issue is loaded with goodies for all of the fanatics. It is better than the last one, and not quite as good as the next. Hope you enjoy it.

I have a confession to make to you. Though I gave myself the title, I am not an editor (proof lies in the last issue). I am a Vessel Communicator by trade and a fictionist by hobby. I only entered this Robert Wyatt venture as a means of uniting his fans through publicity, memories, and reviews. It can be called a 'zine, but I always thought of it as an information source. As it has astronomically grown, I have accepted the fact of my poor editing. The enthusiasm of people like yourself has made this newsletter very proud. I knew you all were out there; thanks for the blessings! I have dedicated the future of this newsletter to perfection for you. When you see a typo or the random misspelling, keep this confession in mind. It is with great effort that I try to constantly better the format of this Wyatt-thing, and to keep in mind my past errors. The future of this newsletter promises to evolve progressive!! Stay tuned for further screw-ups...

This issue is THE THIRTY YEARS OF WYATT continuum. This is really more of a subject for your submissions, than a full career retrospective. I could go on and on, but I'll leave that to Mike King's upcoming bio-gigog of Robert (for those of you who keep asking, it is due in early 1994 through the good publishing prowess of SAF...stay tuned to us for details!!). I once again open the door to all reading this: PLEASE SUBMIT ANYTHING! The door is open to any remembrances, experiences, reviews, quotes, opinions, banter, or comments concerning Robert's music. It is a forum for you, the fan. Do!!!

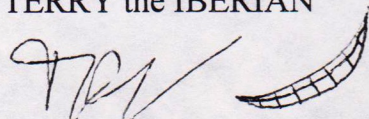
CONTESTCONTESTCONTESTCONTESTCONTESTCONTEST!!!!!!!!!!!!

q) Which Pink Floyd member has worked on projects the most with Wyatt? ha ha ha this one is so easy!!! It's even hinted to in this issue! The winner is to choose anything from our Wyatt CD Archives (we have every domestic released one except "End of an Ear", please include your prize request in the letter of contest), as well as gets a nod from this newsletter.

The winner of our last contest was one Jim Stedge from East Rutherford, NJ with his answer to the titles to songs from the Mr. Head demo (he must know his Canterbury history!). He won "Ruth" on CD, and gets a knot...er, I mean a nod from us. Congratulations Jimmy!!!! Post those answers now and be the next to complete you missing CD collection. Good thinking.

And those asking when Robert's next album will be finished (he hasn't even started one, squire!), just hold the door. Good things come to those patience is a uh....yeah.

TERRY the IBERIAN



N.I.O. WYATT

* New on the collaboration front for Robert is the latest recordings by ULTRAMARINE on the Blanco Y Negro Label . Titled "United Kingdom", the recordings were released 23 August 1993, featuring Mr. Wyatt prominently on five of the tracks. On the titles "Kingdom", "Happy Land", and "Urf", Robert sings as well as takes a co-writing credit. On "The Badger" and "Dizzy Fox", he vocalizes in the style that has drawn this club together for it's originality. For the completists, there is a CD single remix of "Kingdom" with a flipside track "Gold Crest", the latter sampling Robert's voice. The band also covers "Instant Kitten" sans Robert. It is highly recommended to all of our readers to buy this, and both of the aforementioned discs are available in most shops.

*COMING IN AUTUMN 1993 FROM VOICEPRINT U.K.:

A) The Wildeflowers CD taken from their three existing sessions in 1966. Wow!!!! This one will be a monster of fun!!!! The limited edition of this release will come in an A-5 size booklet with notes by Brian and Hugh Hopper. The CD will also include a song from sessions dating 9 Aug. 1969 (described to me as "Soft Machine meets Wildeflowers"). Look for this one at the shops or through mail order in some of the more progressive music catalogues.

B) Daevid Allen Trio- "Live '63"-Recorded 3 June 1963 at London's Marquee Club, this one was recorded when it was all new to our hero. Featuring Mike Ratledge on piano for three selections, and a poet (I didn't catch his name...), the core of the trio is rounded out by the 18 year olds Hugh Hopper and Robert Wyatt. They cover "Little Rooty Tooty" by T.S. Monk and take the coda of the later Gong song "Selene" into an eight-minute workout. The additional track included here is "Fred the Fish" from the Winter 1966-67 Kim Fowley sessions with the Softies. Another CD very much worth finding, thanks to those wonderful people at Voiceprint!! Look for it soon.

*REISSUE MANIA:

SOFT MACHINE IN CONCERT from the Windsong Label. Taken from the BBC transcriptions of 11 March 1971 Peel in Concert series, this ones also known as "SOFT MACHINE AND HEAVY FRIENDS". Feature the extended big band line up and sleeve notes by Hugh Hopper. Craig Shropshire sent me this one and I must say it is my favorite Softs live recording ever. A must buy for all of our readers!!!!

MATCHING MOLE from the Beat Goes On Label. The first Mole recording remastered and now available in the U.S.A. as an import. New sleeve notes by Robert. Go buy it now, squire!!!!

Until the next N.I.O. info-mailer and our next issue

get happy and listen closely.
TERRY the IBERIAN

PART TWO: the robert wyatt inner-view

This is part two of our exclusive interview with Robert conducted by cassette in August of 1992, recorded in his home studio. As an old Sun Ra Arkestra recording blasts in the background, Robert dives into the "statement-questions" Tonja and I sent with bravado. His keen sense of wit and clear judgment in tact, he pauses quite often to get the answers he most wanted expressed on these subjects. We have taken the liberty of again combining both interview sessions together to give a full perspective of his thoughts. Happy reading!! TRV

Q; Influences of Political, Musical, and Literary.

R.W.; (Laughs quite loudly) You gotta' be joking!!!! I've been alive for 47 years and an influence enters my brain...probably...several hundred a second, just like everyone else's. (Laughs again) How long have you got? Uhh...

However, we are also filter systems! I mean you can feed a duck dog-food but it'll never turn into a dog. We're not kind of empty vehicles for whatever we absorb. I think that we kind select, even when we think we're being open. We can't help it. We're, each of us, a search and select machine, and why we find things suit us or don't I don't think any of us can really say. That's why it's very, you know, difficult territory if you start putting down other people's tastes, in a way. Because nobody knows what other people really need. I don't find that it works for me to try and guess what other people want to hear from me, and what other people want. Because I just can't imagine anything worth being satisfactory like that, and I don't like it as an audience when I think somebody's trying to gear something to me that doesn't come natural to them, and therefore doesn't sound natural to me, either.

Musical influences...at any given moment you could ask me...a day later it will be a different answer. I mean there's this whole thing churning around and you just have to pick out what..... surfaces. Rather than dive underneath and risk drowning in...memories...I'm not going to be deliberately obscure; God knows...we'll have difficulty communicating without that (laughs)! And so if some of the names I mention are, say, kind of obvious, well that's fine by me! That means that people are as famous as they should be.

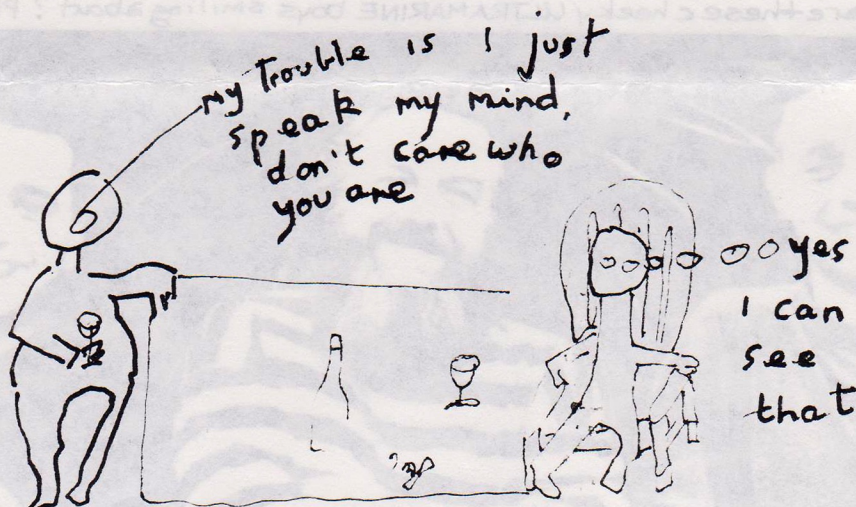
Elvin Jones...the fact that he's alive and playing is some kind of miracle. I don't mean by that it's a terrible surprise. There is no reason he shouldn't be, but he is a miraculous man. He's sort of taken the drums to a level, on a road perhaps started out by, I dunno'...Baby Dodds and Chick Webb... through Kenny Clarke (this writer's favourite Be-Bop player! ed) and so on. He's made this breathing living wind machine out of a drum kit. You've got to remember that the drum kit is a 20th century invention, and it's as modern as any synthesizer...and even more significant. I think the most foolish thing that a lovely Tenor (saxophone) player over here, Courtney Pine, did was not accept Elvin's offer to go on the road, with the Elvin Jones Band. Branford Marseilles said, "Ya shoulda' done it!", anybody like that, Blakey or Elvin asks you to play a gig, you take it! Because, these are the masters, and you've got plenty of time later. It's such a privilege to be asked by these people. So anyways... Elvin Jones, as a drummer.

I'm influenced by a lot of musicians who sing, rather than jazz singers; I've just realized that really. Very often when musicians kind of...(laughs) grunt out a tune, I've always liked that (now amused). Dizzy Gillespie is a lovely singer, in his schooldays. If you hear Gillespie...I had a record of Gillespie

at Newport, big band, and he sings that sort of R & B stuff. Like Jimmy Smith singing "I got my Mojo Working". Wonderful! And there are, of course, various musicians who sort of play and sing like Mose Allison, of course...Nina Simone; versatile pianist. (long pause in thought) And in terms of piano playing, I also like...the playing of...influenced by...practically I have to be, by the people who don't reckon to be pianists or players. But, Gil Evans once said he played a "rangists" piano, I mean, I know what he meant! If you're gonna' be a solo pianist, still now, I ought' to throw by Bud Powell, you see...the Bebop player, who kind of defected East. A lot of musicians did that; went to live in Paris and places like that...Bud Powell is one of these people like Billie Holiday...the people say, "Oh, they went off towards the end of their lives!". But there is something moving about what they did. I don't think they went off towards the end of their lives, it's like saying...a lot of people's music goes through various processes and there can come a time in an artist's life when they're no longer displaying their technical virtuosity or their knowledge. They're simply making, kind of iconic marks. And I really identify strongly with people who have the confidence to do that, however. And Bud Powell used to play piano when he was older. He was...he'd been very badly...damaged. He'd had electro...what's-his-name done there; he'd been brutally treated by psychiatric nurses, or something. It's not dislike you're typical tragic story, I'm not talking about him as a tragic figure: I think he played wonderfully, late in his life, even though he's stumbling. Because there's that sound of searching going on. So, late Bud Powell...late Billie Holiday...the sounds of people when they're meant to have been past their peak, and cracking up inside. I think it's...ugh...seemed to move me a lot.

Okay...literary...no political...no literary...Literary? Literary! Well I suppose I'd have to say the English Comics and comedians. I like our comics, I don't like our serious actors very much, you know, the theater tradition that's very much admired. I mean it just reminds me of the tourist industry and the "World Family". Our great theatrical tradition, and our Royal Family, to me, their entirely...for...um...like those tourist things where everything is decided for you by the touring company, and you file past whatever it is. You go to one country and you file past the Mona Lisa, you go to...what is it...the leaning tower of Pisa, or moaning Pisa or whatever her name is...anyway. To me, our great theatrical tradition is just that. I can't stand that (adapts mock Tudor-styled voice) "Careful enunciation and r-r-resonant voices." I don't need it. If I want a resonant voice, I'll listen to Billy Eckstine (hey...I think it's time for a Mr. B musical resurrection in our youth...yeah! Ed) So, our comedians I love.

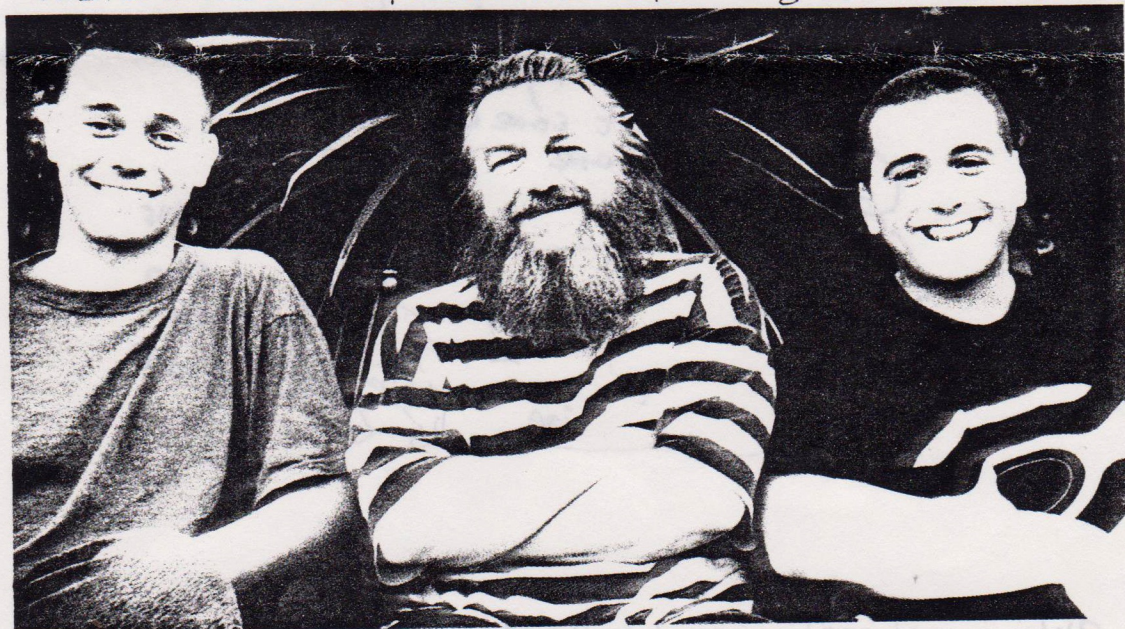
It's almost immedious to pick out some people; you probably wouldn't know them anyway. I'm not sure they'd translate. They very often came from that musical circuit that used to be in England towards the end of the last century. I suppose, the thing that in America developed into a Vaudeville thing. And related to that there was a kind of... sort of...I suppose...19th century, turn-of-the-century English funny writers and children's writers. People like Edward Lear...I really like. I mean, in the same way, America, I really like James Thurber (all right, Rob!!! Ed). I mean where do I stop?! That's just comes out the Rotten Hat at that particular moment, thinking about that question.



Political influences? This is a kind of overwhelming question. It's almost like the same answer, in a way, to the musical ones. You gravitate to what seems to capture your imagination. I'm not even sure you chose to. (Matter-of-factly) England is run by a very conservative establishment, which as Christopher Hitchens has pointed out, there's an attempt to sort of copy it in the United States, almost a kind of reaction of aristocracy of leadership. In both cases anyway, you'd have to say they were oligarchies rather than democracies. Well, obviously if you had to spend any money at all to become a candidate, that disqualifies most of the people who should do it (laughs). Let's think...

Communism and Socialism as your influence...well, I sort of realized I was one by accusation. I mean, in the sense that...in South Africa, the description of the laws to prevent the move towards democracy, and away from fascist dictatorship, were called "the Laws Against Communism". I've simply just allowed myself to be named by my enemies. I mean, when you say all the things I say, or think the things I think, you get called a communist. So I figure, well...if it's useful for people to have a way of identifying me, then I'll live with that, because...umm..."You must be a Commie! Oh, alright, if YOU say so!" All these names are labels; they've got nothing to do with what we are as a kind of living, breathing bits of...ectoplasm, or something. Names are just attempts at identifying this one particular lump of ectoplasm from another, by the group at large. And so it just sort of became apparent that I was one, because people like me get called one and I'm not gonna' argue with... conservatives. If they say that people like me must be Communists...They're very well educated, they are the standard bearers of civilization...They should know!! I'm certainly neither of those things, so I must accept their word for it. I'm a Communist because I just found that the kind of things I think, I'm told are Communistic. Okay. People say, "Well why in America do you have these other words like Liberal?" Well, that's one of these words that doesn't mean the same in England as it does in America. Because we have political parties, for example, a sort of Liberal (Labour) and Conservative party. In England, the Liberals, if they are here, are sort of like twins with the conservatives in a sense that...like if you're being questioned by a policeman and one's the heavy one who might push you around, the other one says, "Never mind him. Look, I'm your friend. Have a cup of tea. Look, let's talk about this." Police work in pairs (especially here in the United States of Amnesia!! Ed) and so do political parties with their people. And in England, the Liberals and Conservatives are just kind of... "Nice guy/Tough guy". But, they're both defending and protecting and talking in behalf of the same interests. So I have to avoid use of the word Liberal. It also suggests a certain kind of moderation, and I have no understanding or conception of what possible use political moderation could have. I can't imagine the kind of moderate, balanced response to any particular situation. Like, for example, the right wing extremist says, "Kill 6 million Jews"; the left wing extremist says, "Don't kill any Jews". So I suppose the moderate, "Well, maybe we should kill about 3 million...then everybody'd be very happy." (Laughs hard) I don't understand the moderate position, you know what I mean?

What are these cheeky ULTRAMARINE boys smiling about? Photo 1993



by **Richard Williams**

IT'S NOT long since Robert Wyatt announced that he was vacating the drum stool with Soft Machine in order to pursue a career with Kevin Ayers' band and various other friends.

"I should know better by now," said Robert last week, shaking his head half in sorrow and half in happiness. "I say these things, and I really mean them at the time, but a week later I'm feeling something else entirely.

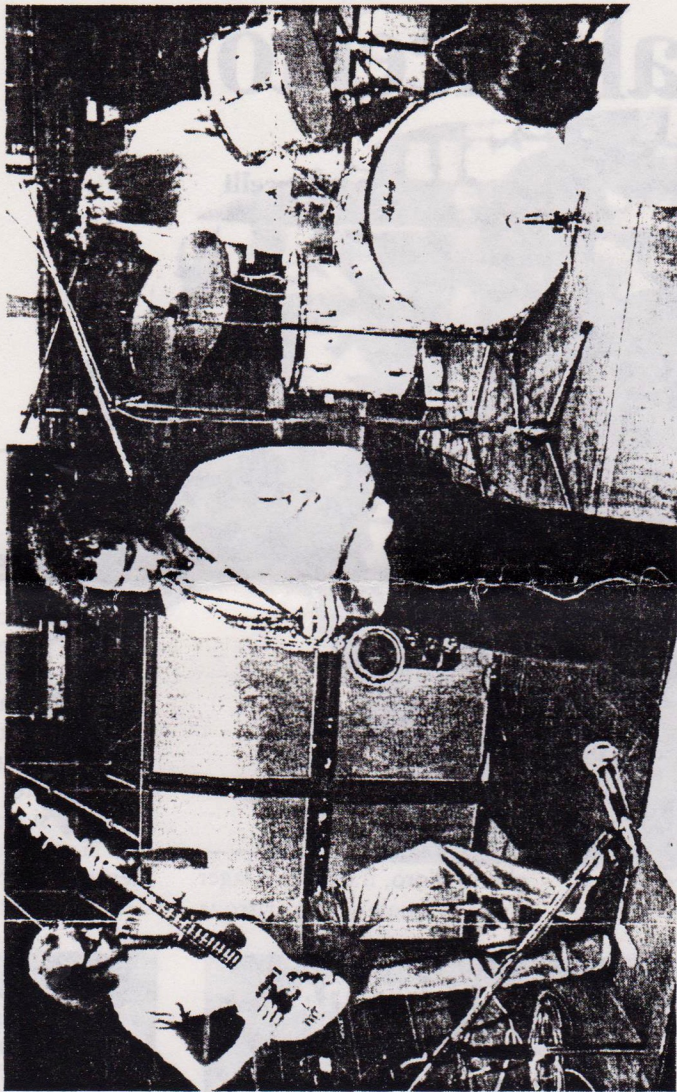
"In all fairness to the Softs, they're still auditioning drummers, which is something I suggested because I thought they might find someone they like better than me, someone who can read music for one thing. Not reading is my thing... primitive music, y'know.

"But I really intended to leave the band, and I suppose I had to get outside it to find out what I really wanted. We had a few fights inside the band, but it's all back together now, and I don't want anything to break that very fine balance we've regained."

The Softs' recent Henry Wood Promenade Concert at the Albert Hall created controversy among the critics, who seemed to be expecting something the group were never prepared to give. Robert looks back on it with very mixed feelings.

"The whole business of surfacing for a couple of hours in that environment was to be heard by people who normally wouldn't listen to us in our normal context — and it was unnatural. "I enjoyed parts of it, and the audience was certainly the biggest we've ever had in Britain. It was a very nice evening, socially speaking, and it was good that the audience seemed to enjoy the pieces Riley and Tim Souster just as much as our stuff.

"We played all right, I suppose, and Elton particularly rose above the circumstances to play some excellent solos. In terms of that occasion, I'd say that all music grows up in a certain environment, and ours is getting stoned, and we spend the first half-hour sorting out the sound balance so that the evening gradually opens out.



SOFT MACHINE at the Albert Hall (from left): Hugh Hopper, Elton Dean and Robert Wyatt.

The Softs, the Proms, and drummer Wyatt

At the Albert Hall, of course, that just wasn't possible. "There was also the whole thing of playing to a deadline. It was very frustrating having to finish at exactly four minutes before 12 o'clock because if you run over that the engineers will pull out the plugs."

How did Robert view the motives of the BBC people who put the Softs on the Proms? "I don't honestly think the BBC had too much say in it. It was down to Tim Souster, who managed to get into the sort of position of respect where he was allowed to present his own evening, and as he was interested in our music he asked us to be part of it. I don't suppose the

do consciously, it happens by accident, but it's nice that people can listen to and like something that they wouldn't normally come across. Anyway I don't consider that we're a bridge-building band. We're very narrow really, pursuing one train of thought. "Elton's writing should make it a little different — but then, oh well, everything seems to go through the sausage mill and come out sounding like the Soft Machine."

Now that Robert is safely back inside the group, does he still harbour desires to get into other areas? "Well, one thing I'm doing right now is playing with my own quartet, which has Elton, Marc Charig

on cornet, and Neville Whitehead on string bass. "We've already recorded a long, free version of Gil Evans' 'Las Vegas Tango' for my own album on CBS, and it's really a totally free thing. Maybe we'll get into doing our own versions of Soft Machine numbers — that would be nice, getting another angle on them with a flowing string bass line instead of the fuzz bass-guitar.

"With this band I'm trying to get some space back into my music. Arrangements, freedom, and all those different procedures can make satisfying music, which is very hard to define, but the actual effect is a certain kind of density.

"I admire the sense of space you get from Miles Smiles or the Miroslav Vitous album; the density of rock bands can be very crude and unrewarding. So many things are happening in the quartet; I'm constantly play-

ing things that I've always wanted to play but never been able to, and that's a result of the more fluid situation.

The experiment of working with Ayers and the Whols although Robert still has a great admiration for the band, "I did two or three things with them in England, including the Hyde Park 'free' and a week in Holland.

"I tried it, but I have this tendency to change my mind completely about everything. I still think it's one of the most amazing bands in the world... oh dear, I'm unhappy about this interview — I'm saying all the things I mean.

"Kevin's band does tend to be a little ramshackle in its approach and perhaps I've been spoilt by being part of a comparatively slick organisation for quite a long time. I really dig David Bedford though."

Robert's own album, which is nearing the mixing stage, is "hours of completely free things in various combinations, with all the fashionable sound tricks that Zappa discarded five years ago and which I'm toying with right now.

"Hugh wants to get the Soft Machine into the studios to record very soon, and one of the best aspects of the band at the moment is the way Elton's got so involved in the music.

"He's even getting us to do things that we stopped trying to do to each other years ago, like getting me to read parts. The others completely accept that I'll never do it, but Elton keeps plugging away.

"It's really nice to see Mike and Hugh struggling with someone else's compositions for a change, instead of grinning evilly while I try and struggle through theirs."

Muzakoncerto



Piazza Navona, una giornata mer... diciamo senza Roma, per tutto... to, per la cultura... nuovo che vogliam... re. 40-50 mila giov... ti un po' da tutta... to per ascoltare tre co... si di prestigio, ma anche... lottare, per esprimere la loro solidarietà alla nostra iniziativa di una campagna nazio-

ghetta... niente servizio d'ordine con ghetto d'oro, il concerto-lager fascetta rossa al braccio finito il quale uno si ritrova

re i conti con le ni e i pesi di concerto non fa ma forse il 27 a memorabile, ha pulso notevole a into di tipo nuo- vimento che sap- to, far cultura, im- si sentire, vivere an- che la musica come un momento nuovo e non margi- nale della lotta.

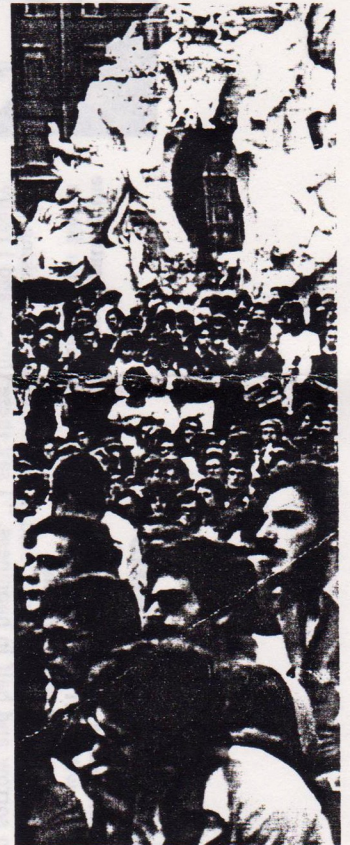


Robert Wyatt

CONCERTO GRATIS
 IL 27 GIUGNO ORE 16
 A PIAZZA FARNESE
 CON
 ROBERT WYATT
 I GONG
 HENRY COW
 ORGANIZZATO
 DA MUZAK

PER L'APERTURA DELLA CAMPAGNA SULLA DEPENALIZZAZIONE DELLA MARIJUANA CONTRO LE DROGHE DURE

Il manifesto del Concerto - Design Ettore Vitale



I 50.000 di p.zza Navona

A FANTASY COME TRUE, BY ROBERT WYATT

LIKE many other bands that I find musically interesting and emotionally exciting, Soft Machine depend a lot on the contrasts between the members of the group to bring their music to life.

It is not a clash of personalities, but a constant interchange of ideas and approaches that keeps what they do fresh, both in their performances and when working out arrangements.

These differences show up a bit on their last album "Third" (CBS 66246), but what shows up even more clearly is the way that four very different people come together to enrich each other's playing, and the music as a whole.

Obviously this works with all groups to some extent, but often there is either one person who dominates, or the musicians come together in the first place because they work with similar ideas.

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With bands like The Whole World, Pink Floyd, and the Softs the approach is different and it produces music that is more likely to evolve in new directions.

"Obviously, the changes in the music depend a lot on the people in the group," said Robert Wyatt, drummer and more extrovert quarter of the Softs. "For instance, when Kevin (Ayers) left and Hugh (Hopper) joined, it made a great difference."

Robert is probably the most basic, least technically-minded of the four. Does he find it restrictive playing within the comparatively tight framework of Mike Rugeley's compositions, which are pretty much worked out and arranged?

"I find it difficult," he says, "but the discipline is pro-



● WYATT: "A bit of musical promiscuity."

ably very good for me, and it brings out things that nobody could have thought of."

Of course, there is plenty of room for improvisation and individual interpretation within Mike's compositions, and even more in Hugh's. Robert's and Elton Dean's. And the group go further along this path by adding other musicians to the line-up on occasion.

When I talked to Robert, they were working on the last track of their new album at Olympic Studios, and working with them on the session were Alan Skidmore, Nick Evans, and Roy Babbington.

The effect of that horn section and of the two bass players on the track, one of

was in my mid-twenties and I had got a job. Everything was very tidy, much too predictable. I just felt like a bit of musical promiscuity."

But it didn't work out quite as he had hoped: "I realised that the things that I could achieve musically with Kevin would probably take far longer than with the Soft Machine. What really happened was that from a distance, I was able to re-appraise the Softs."

His album, out on Friday, is the product of about three weeks' recording at Sound Techniques in Chelsea.

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"We just went in blank and played and doodled around to see what came out. It's nearly an hour long, and probably the only real tune on it is a Gil Evans thing called 'Las Vegas Tango'."

Robert plays piano and electric piano and sings — "not songs, more as an alternative to playing instruments" — and other people on the album are Elton Dean, Mark Charig (cornet), Neville Whitehead (bass), and Dave Sinclair from Caravan (organ).

"It's not supposed to be some kind of great alternative to the Soft Machine," said Robert. "I just thought it would be nice to have an album like that by some body."

The sextet he hopes to do some gigs with will be Nick

Evans, Mongezi Feza, Gary Windo, Roy Babbington, and Steve someone — Robert couldn't remember his surname.

But the thing that has really excited him recently is the Centipede project, Keith Tippett's monster amalgamation of 48 musicians.

"It was like a gathering of the tribes, such a happy occasion," he said. "I really enjoyed it so much — all those people just playing together and enjoying it."

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The only thing that brought him down was the critics' reaction to the gig.

"I don't want to complain too much, because if any group has been helped by critics, we have," he said, "but I think with the Centipede thing those guys missed such a lot. It was such a happy occasion, and when someone goes away and says, 'oh yes, quite interesting in parts,' he just misses the point."

"We're musicians, we realise what is wrong with it and that it was ragged and everything. Critics just don't seem to realise that musicians are people as well, and they can be hurt like anyone else."

"I don't hate critics, because that is silly, but I'd like to point out that they've probably depressed and discouraged Keith again. I hope they are proud of their achievement."

BY STEVE PEACOCK

ROBERT WYATT

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Born Bristol, moved to Dulwich and later to Canterbury at age of ten.

While at school, received tuition in piano, violin, trumpet and drums. Further tuition in drums from George Neidorf.

Became drummer/vocalist in local group The Wilde Flowers from 1964-66.

Drummer/vocalist of Soft Machine 1967-1971, appearing on the following recordings: "Rock Generation Vols. 7 & 8" (Byg), "The Soft Machine" and "Volume Two" (Probe), "Third" and "Fourth" (CBS)

During this period, also made a single with Jimi Hendrix (never released); did session work with Eric Burdon & The Animals; became occasional drummer of Kevin Ayers & The Whole World and made appearances on Ayers' records; accomplished solo album "The End Of An Ear" (CBS) and contributed to Daevid Allen's "Banana Moon" (Byg). Other peripheral activities; Symbiosis, Keith Tippett and Centipede.

Formed Matching Mole in December 1971. Group made two albums – "Matching Mole" and "Little Red Record" (CBS) – before parting company a year later.

Second incarnation of Matching Mole about to begin work in Summer 1973 when serious fall resulted in paralysis from waist down.

During six-month stay in hospital, composed the material for "Rock Bottom" subsequently recorded with Pink Floyd's Nick Mason producing. Released 26/7/74.

Album received ecstatic reviews. Newly recorded single "I'm A Believer" / "Memories" released 6/9/74

from Programme for Drury Lane Concert
8 September 1974

JAZZNEWS

Wyatt makes solo debut

ROBERT WYATT, founder member of the poll-winning Soft Machine, and later leader of Matching Mole, makes his first appearance as a solo artist at tonight's second benefit concert at London's ICA building in the Mall, for the dependants of the late Mal Dean. Wyatt has been out of action for a year following a serious accident but has recently taken a back-seat role in performances by Hatfield and the North and Kevin Ayers.

For a brief period around 1970, Wyatt drummed with the Amazing Band, the free jazz ensemble fronted by Mal in his trumpeting days.

At the ICA, Wyatt will be featured singing and playing keyboards and will have sporadic accompaniment from Gary Windo and Lol Coxhill (reeds). Also appearing will be Pete Brown with Mama Flyer, Mike Horowitz (poetry and kazoo), Adrian Mitchell, and the Spontaneous Music Ensemble featuring Trevor Watts and Evan Parker (saxes), Derek Bailey (electric guitar), Roger Smith (acoustic guitar) and John Stevens (drums and noises off).

Lol Coxhill will also play a solo set. Admission is 50p. There is a well displayed exhibition of Mal's cartoons now adorning the ICA corridors. Altogether, an evening not to be missed.

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NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS

FRONT ROW REVIEWS

Robert Wyatt/ Drury Lane

Even though the gig was due to start at 8.30, Drury Lane had started to clog up with earnest-looking hippies nearly two hours before the event.

Mind you, it all adds to the sense of occasion, but the regrettably prosaic explanation was that someone had neglected to inscribe the precise time of showing on either the tickets or the ads.

So it goes.

Things kicked off with a brief monologue by the newlywed Dancing Jack Peel, clad in his most glam rock outfit. Undeterred by shouts of "Boring" from certain sections of the audience — all right then, from me — he intoned for a few mo-

ments and then vacated the stage, to Ivor Cutler and Phyllis April King, who provided a highly amusing interlude of deadpan poesies and brief songs, which were received with great merriment by the assembled company.

So it goes.

After a discreet intermission, Dancing Jack cartwheeled dynamically back onto the stage. Through mobile, well-shaped lips he enunciated (rather devastatingly, it must be admitted) "For Robert Wyatt of Twickenham, Opportunity Knocks!"

Mr. Wyatt perambulated rapidly to a strategic area between a small mixer ("These knobs don't actually do anything — they just give me something to do with my hands") and a keyboard set-up ("At rehearsals I couldn't find a position from where I could play these, so I probably won't play them. Still, they look good").

He ran through a good-naturedly rickety version of Hugh Hopper's "Dedicated To

You, But You Weren't Listening," backed up by Hopper himself on bass, Laurie Allan on drums, Fred Frith on violin and Dave Stewart on keyboards, the first trickles of the mighty wave of superstars that was soon to swamp the stage.

(The preceding sentence comes to you courtesy of 36 back numbers of "Conan The Barbarian").

Most of the material from Wyatt's "Rock Bottom" found its way into the front half of the set (and in case you need to be re-told, it's a wondrous album indeed).

Towards the end of "A Last Straw", a diffident young man with an unmistakable "I-am-a-junior-roadie" demeanour wandered on, played a bit of synthesiser and wandered off.

It wasn't until he reappeared half an hour later with a Gibson SG strapped around him, that the audience sussed that this dynamic figure was in fact none other than Mike Oldfield, the man with Britain's two best-selling albums to his name, one of which had been blasted through

the P.A. during the intermissions.

However, it was undoubtedly Wyatt's show, despite the superstars who wandered on and off — y'know, yer Nicky Masons, Gary Windos, the bunch.

Swaying in his wheelchair playing ghost drums, fiddling with the dials of his mixer with one hand, clutching a mike with the other and his eyes squeezed tight shut, he was unquestionably the focal point of the proceedings, and folks, he's singing better than ever.

Unfortunately Julie Tippett's contribution to the festivities rather derailed things. After joining Wyatt and Co., in one song, she was left along tooting merrily on a recorder and humming into it occasionally.

This was followed by two songs at de piano, performed extremely nervously, and a number with Wyatt, Windo and trumpeter Mongezi Feza, which could well have been called "Dedicated To You But You Ran Out Of The Room Screaming For Aspirin."

Ms Tippett's voice is still a compelling as ever, but her stiff, uncertain piano playing and the lugubriousness of her song provided a rather dead area in the middle of the set, which eventually climaxed with a thoroughly berserk version of "I'm A Believer" with some singularly dirty rhythm guitar from Oldfield.

Generally, the show veered from the sublime to the ridiculous, with the sublime firmly in the lead.

80 per cent of it was very fine indeed, and the more gig Robert Wyatt feels like undertaking the better.

Wheel meet again

ORDER OF EVENTS

FIRST

IVOR CUTLER and PHYLLIS APRIL KING

with a selection of songs and poems

NEXT THE INTERMISSION AND THEN

ROBERT WYATT	vocals
DAVE STEWART	keyboards
HUGH HOPPER	bass
LAURIE ALLAN	drums
FRED FRITH	guitar, violin
MIKE OLDFIELD	guitar
JULIE TIPPETT	vocals
GARY WINDO	bass clarinet, tenor saxophone
MONGEZI FEZA	trumpet
NICK MASON	drums

PLAYING

Sea Song	Robert Wyatt
A Last Straw	Robert Wyatt
Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road	Robert Wyatt
Alifie	Robert Wyatt
Alifib	Robert Wyatt
Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening	Hugh Hopper
God Song	Phil Miller/Robert Wyatt
Instant Pussy	Robert Wyatt
Signed Curtain	Robert Wyatt
Calyx	Phil Miller/Robert Wyatt
Memories	Hugh Hopper
I'm A Believer	Neil Diamond

LIGHTING	Andra Larson, Tony Winall
SOUND MIXING	Peter Wade
STAGE ASSISTANCE	Nick Levitt, Chris Levitt

Wyatt stories on the air

ROBERT WYATT, Madame Mao, a Rome radio studio? The connection might seem a little tenuous, but in fact it's sewn up neatly in adventurous and creative airwaves beamed out from a corner of the imposing edifice of the RAI, the Italian equivalent of the BBC.

Radio as a voice to stop you in your tracks, to be more than a background milliner, has been the aim and the result of a programme called "Up Cerro Discorso", which was virtually a slogan during the political furor during the mid-Seventies in Italy. It was shared with the two centres of the Communist party, were calling out for "A Kind of Dialogue" in a post-rallying point title for a series of programmes which has been going out every day for an hour and a half in mid-afternoon since 1977. It has broadcast some extraordinarily good material, from music theatre to workshops to large-scale concerts with the RAI modern rhythm orchestra playing compositions by Gill Evans, George Russell and British free jazz players like John McLaughlin.

Rome has been a highly significant place for Wyatt, which was when frequency regulations were stopped and a host of pirate stations were set up. Between two and three hundred appeared in Rome alone, some with the basic equipment could broadcast. These pirate stations were often political, allied to a party or commercial, operating very much on the advertisement. Now the heyday is over, the political pirates are disappearing for lack of revenue and the commercial ones either too blandness. The state radio RAI, on the other hand, has the funding for experiments and for far-reaching, creative radio programmes. Producer Pasquale Santoli, a quipster sharp figure in his early thirties, heads a young, dynamic team of writers bubbling with ideas as to how

to present music and culture. He reckons it's the job of the RAI to provide a different kind of music with a difference.

He says: "We wanted to use the specific role of the radio to give listeners a different kind of music, an amplifier of the point of view and the products of the culture and the second industry. We have tried to be totally different identity and voice, and especially to give airtime to independent labels because they're more interesting."

Certainly ideas buzz round, with a lot of theory about the role of radio in mass communication. And yet, beyond all the talk, the practical results are astounding, with a complete rethink on the presentation of music: "We wanted to get away from the traditional role of the disc jockey and audience on the way differentiation of music can fit into a bigger dialogue".

This could be recorded sound or written texts, with a complete cross-section of music breaking away completely from any sort of categorisation of programmes into rock, jazz, classical, folk and so on.

MAMMOTH

A current mammoth project is to gather material for three months - live recordings, sound recordings - which will then be transformed into a series of ninety programmes. Which is where Robert Wyatt comes in.

In his case, the Italian team had dreamed up a basic theme which was intended as a springboard, no more, for Wyatt's own material. It was the Rome radio studio. All facilities were laid on with a team of excellent engineers and even the offer of the RAI big band if they fitted into his scheme of things.

Teresa De Santis, "Young Rock Discorso" team, had come up with the notion of looking at the history of China through the eyes of Jiang Qing, Mao's widow, since the trial of the Gang of Four threw up a host of

questions and issues. A tall order, but a great opportunity for Robert Wyatt, who is held in great esteem in Italy - almost as a sort of elder statesman for the Rough Trade music.

He explained that before coming to Rome he'd got out his Chinese records, some Chinese poetry and a book on the opium wars which had been a way into the whole topic for him, because thinking about the British imperialist role in China had been the key to how to be Robert Wyatt in an Italian radio studio talking about China and history on a personal level.

Wyatt arrived in the studio, he'd already been based at work for three days and admitted, cheerfully, to extreme nervousness at the start: "I just sat down with the same sort of blank frenzy as when you're doing O-levels." The fourth day he was laying down track after track; hi-hat te-tocs for the passing of time, then a bass line on piano. Slowly the material emerges from its chrysalis form into a song called "Born Again, Gretin" (this being a play on the "Onward Christian Soldiers' mentality) which is about Nelson Mandela, the imprisoned black South African leader, before vocal babbling and then the words emerge.

The opium wars track is the result of an immense amount of information being rushed through at high volume, from an instantly aggressive whisper. On both of these tracks, Robert turns to the idea of a voice struggling to break through on crowded airwaves, coming through the shorewave crackle in bursts. It's very much the result of radio waves, listening for different messages. And it might be just that garbled, distorted voice that is giving another version of the news.

Then there's a break for some good-humoured Italo-English communication with engineers Roberto Carapellucci and Giorgio Sala, and afterwards the tape is played of the wordless "Heathens Have No Souls" which follows the Nelson Mandela song. In this, the only voice is absent, it's that of a mountain howl a harp because - do voices have a

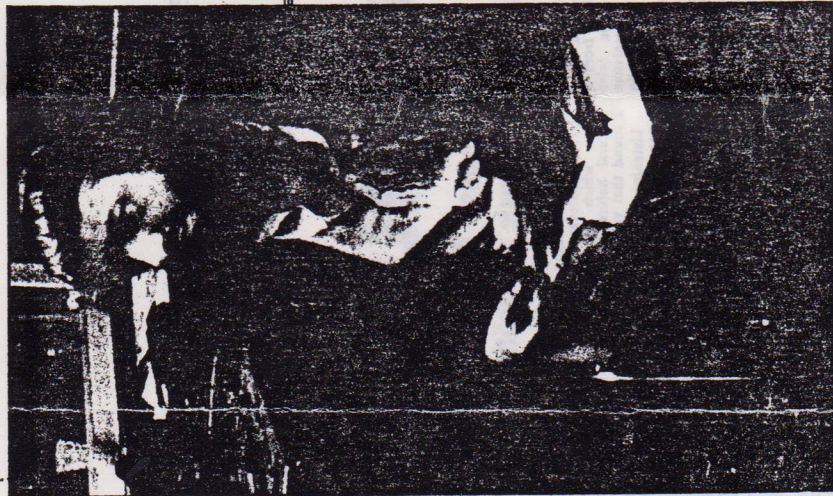
chance? Pessimistic?

But at the same time, Robert has had the chance to explore a much greater area of thought than usual: "This was a big opportunity to do so many things at once. Normally I get one idea a month and maybe one opportunity to do so, so I've used to bring in life outside the music business which is just one big fashion industry."

It's great here because ideas are shared and that's unusual, because normally for recording you have to obtain money for studio time and aim a particular recording for a particular producer. Here they wanted to see if musician's work in progress so it wasn't necessary to have a finished product. This is a long way from the active producer, this programme encourages listeners to be creative. "In fact we get criticised because we

Some listeners wrote in to say they didn't only listen, but they played along, so why not use Robert's drum tracks and leave people free to play what they want... As well as inviting musicians to come and play in the studio, the team are also collecting recorded material to be used in the final mix. So Sabina Sacchi is out on the streets chasing up vocalists from bars, markets, from the streets and the playgrounds of the shouted chants of gondoliers across the water in Venice.

Throbbing, Gristle and Franco Fabriti Stormy, Shaker, long-haired Italian blues which form part of Rock In Opposition will play in the studio. But now, with Robert Wyatt's week over, it is Fred Frith's turn. He was invited to think about the substance of the blues for his work.



Some of the ideas will come out, some of them won't - it's a fantastic chance to work more freely."

This ties up very closely with Pasquale Santoli's ideas, and in fact the invitations to Robert Wyatt, Fred Frith and others mark a fresh direction for the recording it was planned. "We've used to listening to music as a finished product, signed and delivered. If you write a letter and scrap the first attempt, that's just as interesting as what you finally write, so we wanted to look at the different drafts, to show the work in progress. Then we can use the drafts in different ways, maybe just play one of Robert's tracks, or mix them differently."

This is a long way from the active producer, this programme encourages listeners to be creative. "In fact we get criticised because we

Hannah Charlton reports from Rome. Pic by A. Roggero

Listeners say they can't get on with anything while the programme is on, which means they have to make a choice to participate, it can't just be background noise.

"Some listeners wrote in to say they didn't only listen, but they played along, so why not use Robert's drum tracks and leave people free to play what they want..."

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OPPRESSION

Originally he was not attracted to the idea: "What has a white, middle class Englishman got to say about the blues, which comes out of black oppression?"

But then he realised that he had spent several years playing the blues, and worked on material which was a reaction to the blues. He began working meticulously through a tight schedule of tracks, from the sound of a toy factory - produced with the help of Karen Irving and Miles Boisen - to vocal and guitar tracks which were then transformed into tape loops and fed into the mixing machine.

What will happen to it all, only the Italian listeners will know, unless the words are written down. What is clear is that ambitious, creative, radio is being produced down there in Rome. It's a real voice with a real difference.

RW
Bloomington Centre Hotel 10 am - 7pm
E. C. R. I. A.
DZHU AHN VU

Metaphorically, in the music biz supermarket you'll find the glossy romance novels (Madonna, C&C Music Factory) in the checkout lane alongside the comic books (Van Halen, Bon Jovi, etc.). The classic literature (R. Wyatt, B. Nelson), on the other hand, is on the dusty, private library shelves and in the unpublished manuscripts.

David Hawkes
Ripley, NY

FROM DEC 1992 MUSICIAN
MAGAZINE USA (b/p mission)
LETTERS TO MAGAZINE SECTION

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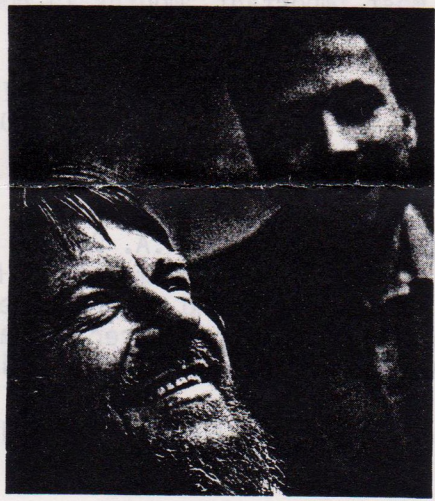
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I've got half of a wit which functions very well, and another half which is not so good..
Wyatt quote
from Magazine USA 1992
thanks to
MARK PRINDERGAST



Given their shared public persona as Wayward English Genius, and their common international outlook and political commitment, then a collaboration between the singular talents of **Robert Wyatt** and **Jerry Dammers** was perhaps inevitable. Less predictable was that the freedom fighters of South West Africa would effect the encounter. The Namibian Support Committee asked Wyatt to sing and Dammers to produce a benefit single for them, specifically for their Repression and Political Prisoners Campaign. The result — "The Wind Of Change/When I Think About My Country" — has just been released by Rough Trade and is as fine and powerful a record as the duo's respective past glories would suggest. Both sides are deft adaptations of Namibian songs. The first is a swaggering singalong with fat ska horns and tingling African guitars or as Wyatt puts it, "basically a group of exhortations and morale boosting one liners." The flip is a pulsing Afrobeat rap delivered by a Namibian student of agriculture resident here, and illuminating the horrors of the prisons maintained by South Africa in a country it occupies illegally, in defiance of UN resolutions. The brutalities of the South African occupation have not stopped Britain importing huge quantities of Namibian uranium, which is now destined to be a mainstay of the Trident programme. Both men enthuse about the venture, and Wyatt was beguiled by the fabled Dammers exactitude in the studio. "I usually make records in about the same time as it takes to play them," he admits, "it was a real lesson." The central concern of both, though, remains the overlooked plight of Namibia and the banned South West Africa People's Organisation, **SWAPO**. As Wyatt explains: "The South Africans are trying to deal with SWAPO the same way as the ANC; trying to pretend that it's not representative of the people, that it's only a revolutionary elite. But you only have to read a book like John Ya Otta's *Battlefront Namibia* to see that SWAPO is as near as possible to the genuine voice of the Namibians." Dapper Dammers, back from a New Music Seminar panel on South Africa, concurs: "The feeble attempts at reforms which have been so well publicised are just cracks in the structure of apartheid, they can't keep it going. When South Africa is free we'll find that in music and culture it will be a world leader. Certainly the SA revue *Amandla* was the first time I've seen electric pop guitar music presented as a revolutionary force." Do pop and politics mix? Is Africa a big place? "Politics is about power," answers Wyatt. "It affects everything you do — what you eat, what you listen to, what conversations you have. Even if you don't consciously engage in politics your responsibility to yourself as an artist is to reclaim the issues." Neil Spencer
Namibia Support Committee: PO Box 16,
London NW5 2LW.

ROBERT WYATT: AN APPRECIATION

Since we're all part of the Soft Machine*, let's give some credit where it's due. The SOFTS, along with PINK FLOYD were the pioneers who developed the musical genre known as "progressive rock". Even before KING CRIMSON'S 1969 release In the Court of the Crimson King, they were performing and recording music which was an astounding amalgam of rock, jazz, and experimental forms. Certainly their early releases are essential volumes in any serious rock collector's library.

The person who was of primary importance in forming Soft Machine and also it's predecessor, THE WILDE FLOWERS, was a "soft" spoken fellow from Bristol named Robert Wyatt. His influence on European progressive rock cannot be underestimated. When, due to differences in direction, he departed the SOFTS in Sept. of 1971, the group had lost it's most essential aspect, for he was irreplaceable. Gone forever was the humour, haunting vocals, intricate arrangements, and certainly not least, his transcendent drumming which was always uniquely inventive and exciting. Take the time to listen again to "Moon in June" from Third very carefully, and be amazed!! The piece is essentially a solo effort by Wyatt since the other band members decided they didn't like it and didn't really want to play on it. Yet, it's an unqualified masterpiece, which for this writer ranks as one of the absolute finest compositions ever, period. Taken as a whole, Third is an extremely mature effort that forges many paths which are yet to be explored today, over 22 years later. All of the other seminal British progressive rock bands (YES, E.L.P., GENESIS, and KING CRIMSON) generated a boat-load of emulators and wanna-bes. To do so with the SOFTS proved too monumental and few, if any true attempts made, since they were so totally unique. Especially, time has shown, Robert Wyatt is one-of-a-kind. When Robert's MATCHING MOLE made it's first appearance, they were very misunderstood by the critics and underated. It took a brave and happy crew to perform such silly, bold, and thoroughly charming music. Those who knew their music remember them fondly to this day.

And so Robert continues his subtle musical odyssey with the release of his current album, Dondestan, another cause for joy amongst Wyattphiles. Another opportunity to hear one of the most important "mouths" in rock music. Thank you, Robert; we are still listening.

CRAIG SHROPSHIRE
K.E.R.A. FM, Dallas, Texas

(Craig hosts a weekly radio programme on K.E.R.A. 90.1fm every Saturday night at 1 a.m. through 6 a.m. [which's actually Sunday morn!!]. He caters to progressive rock heads with his soulful blend of old and modern adventurous musics. Craig is also our Senior Writer, contributor, and wearer of many hats!! When in Dallas Texas, listen to Craig's show; it's the best goddamn radio show in the South! T.V.)

NOTE*: Soft Machine being the Williams S. Burroughs novel and generic term for the human race.

Reprinted from Vol I Issue 1 by request

MY FAVOURITE WYATT SOLO RECORDINGS

This list of five took me two weeks of contemplation, listening, and list-making!! But if I could only make the usual Greatest Hits package (without the record companies' influence or red-tape), and I only would have this CD on the desert island...

Terry the Iberian

1. "TEAM SPIRIT" (MacCormick, Manzanera, Wyatt)-My favourite track of all. With the above mentioned collaborators playing, this track also features the talents of George Khan wailing the Sax solo. Hey, is that Gary Windo joining in on Tenor at around the 3:48 mark, adding that twist of Ayler?! Robert's voice is remarkable, and the words are a twist of visions that always has you singing along. Amazing song!
2. "Sight of the Wind" (Benge, Wyatt)-My Wife, collaborator, confidant, and best friend of seven years, Tonja, and I once made love on the beach one anniversary to this song. It's both of our favourites (not just for the sentimental reasons, squire), as we always bring Dondestan on our beach trips. The visions the words and music weave in the mind are echos of the ocean. It is a satori in itself, this song. I think I will go play it now, since it will always turn me on, ever to be.
3. "United States of Amnesia" (Wyatt)-Being born and raised (razed?) in these United States, I feel this song rings true. Sure, I was a college student who dabbled in Marx, Engles, Chomsky, and Henry Cow, and I still have very Left Wing ties...label what you will. It's a fucking shame that we screwed the native Americans...have a dominant youth culture tied to neo-Nazi Aryan Seperatism...and there are so many streetcrimes.. The issues brought up in this song are very evident, now, nine years after it's recording. Robert's melody and chordings are just perfect.
4. "To Caravan & Brother Jim"-(Wyatt)-The total spectrum of Robert's 1970 influnces are on this song's sleeve. I hear lots of Tony Williams, and Ayler, Mingus, and Softs in the playing. And of course, the mighty dose of Caravan from David Sinclair on Hammond. I also love the echoed drum sound, the pulse of the piano, the understated melody. When programmed to repeat via CD, it becomes a mantra of sorts (I once played it over 15 times consecutively while doing Kundalini breathing).
5. "A Short Break"-(Wyatt)-This is anew one that appears on Robert's new CD5 available from VOICEPRINT U.K. at your local import shop or catalogue. It sounds like it was meant from recording after listening to 78RPM Jazz records. Very modern in this hip new phase of lo-fi mania (bands like SEBADOH and PAVEMENT are popular due to lo-fi's new surge), yet it echos Robert's ever forward philosophy of looking to the past for now. This song rolls you a stride piano phrase, an indeciferable lyric, and a counter melody that is stressed as the dominant solo. Very new in it's sounds, and a seemingly new feel to Robert's composing. This newest on Robert's block makes anticipation easy for his next projects.

HONORABLE MENTIONS go to "TO CARLA, MARSHA, AND CAROLINE", "SEA SONG", "grass", and "THE AGE OF SELF". Hey now, I guess "MOON IN JUNE" counts as a solo recording!!!!

Ultramarine



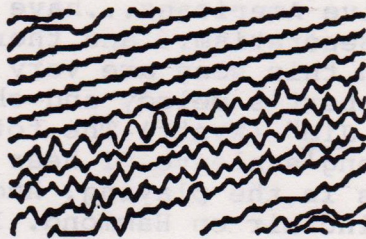
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OLD ROTTENHAT'S JOURNAL

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CONTRIBUTING WRITERS, RESEARCH, and SUBMISSIONS DEPARTMENT:

TERRY R. VALDERAS: Editor, Publisher, Writer, Drummer, and Tristano Fan

CRAIG SHROPSHIRE: Writer, Chef, D.J., Research, and one Prog-Rock Bible

TONJA M. VALDERAS: Layout, Design, at the Beach, Plays Guitar and Sings

HAWTH BRIDGE: Contributing Writer, lives in Portland and never calls me

MIKE KING: Contributing Research, the most helpful man with nice advice

PLEASE SEND ALL SUBMISSIONS, CARDS, AND CHEQUES TO:

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ROBERT WYATT

