

Where but for Caravan Would I?



Issue No.18

June 2004

WITH TONY VISCONTI

I was absolutely delighted when Tony Visconti agreed to be interviewed for the newsletter. As you will know Tony is one of the biggest and busiest record producers in the business, and for him to spare the time is something of a coup. The artists he has worked with are legendary: David Bowie, T Rex, Thin Lizzy to name but three. I was particularly impressed by Tony's preparations for the interview and the thoroughly professional way it was conducted: he searched out his vinyl copy of "Better by Far" to re-familiarise himself with the recording which in turn jogged a few memories. Read on:

How did your involvement with Caravan come about (e.g. was it simply a commercial assignment or had you an interest in working with the band)?

I would have to say, from a very sketchy memory, that I was probably contacted by Dick Jordan. I see his name in the 'special thanks' list and I knew him quite well because he managed other artists I had worked with. He was also a part owner of a nightclub in North London called Klooks Kleek (or Kooks Kleek). I was, however, very aware of Caravan and I enjoyed their music. I wouldn't work with a band if I didn't like their music.

Prior to starting work with the band Jan thought you had just finished working with Bowie, but Pye thinks it may have been Thin Lizzy - are any of them right?

That was probably the busiest year of my life. I think I produced 7 albums that year and Bowie and Lizzy were certainly among them. Judging from that Harmonizer snare drum that I probably just finished working on 'Low' by Bowie.

Had you heard much of Caravan's work prior to recording with them?

Yes, but I didn't own a Caravan record. I saw them live or on the telly.

How did you rate them as musicians during the recording?

Oh, they were fabulous musicians. They reminded me of Gentle Giant, whom I also worked with in '71, both bands having real virtuosi. Whereas GG were extremely experimental,

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FOREWORD



From the letters I have received, those of you who attended the Un-authorised Breakfast Item tour around the UK at

the end of last year were hugely impressed. A set comprising a mixture of old and new material was executed by a band at the top of their game. It certainly seems that the more they play together, the better they get. For me the highlight of the tour was the Edinburgh gig at the Liquid Room. Thanks to all of you who were present for making the evening such a great success - I know the band enjoyed themselves.

I'd also like to take the opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to this edition, particularly to Martin Milarky for the photographs of the Edinburgh gig. I'm grateful to Tony Visconti for agreeing to the interview and to Rob Adams for his further reflections on the planet Caravan. And talking about planets - the May edition of Record Collector focussed on Caravan as one of the major influences on some of today's younger (and successful) bands e.g. Air. It was also great to see "If I Could..." mentioned as one of the "must have" albums.

Thanks again to Codge for all his production work. I hope you enjoy this edition.

Eric

WITH TONY VISCONTI *continued*

Caravan were experimental and more melodic, with an eye for a possible radio hit.

How much input had you into the recording and development/arrangements of the songs?

There was a lot of mutual respect during those recordings and a great sense of humour was shared between us. We spurred each other on. The arrangements were basically all Caravan's, but they were very open to suggestions and tried virtually anything I'd thrown at them. I'm listening to "Silver Strings" right now and I'm hearing loads of little 'tastes' I asked them to try out. I love this track. What I loved about working with them is that they would take my suggestions and build on them, taking them to a higher ground. My son, Morgan, was about 5 at the time and very interested in making records (well, can you blame him)? I remember him inventing a name for the synthesiser sound at the end of "Silver Strings." He named it "Smew." (Morgan is a professional writer for music commercials).

Oh, I just heard me playing recorders on "The Last Unicorn."

Any favourites from the album (Nightmare has become a stage classic)?

Actually, there isn't a bad song on the album. Nightmare is great, so is The Last Unicorn. I love Give Me More, because we booked the gorgeous Vicky Brown (at Pye's request) because she was extremely easy to look at. Pye says he wrote the line, "Would you like to touch," for her. When she spoke it I think he turned into a puddle before my eyes. We had to make her say it over and over again 'just to get it right.' Of course, Vicky was one of the best singers that England has ever produced and it's a

shame she didn't have more of a solo career.

Do you recall if any of the material was written in the studio?

I can't remember if they actually wrote fresh material in the studio. But we were inventing fresh arrangements by the seat of our pants.

At the time was Utopia one of the leading studios?

Yes it was and it was short lived. I think it was owned by some very successful producer who needed a tax write off. Then I think they actually overspent and it became a liability. I loved the studio, it had all the latest gear and very professional staff. I also mastered the discs there with a great mastering engineer, Ian Cooper.

How has studio technology changed from then until now and how do you keep up with it?

It's changed in so many ways, but mainly records are made almost entirely in computers these days. There are only two tape manufacturers left, but no one is making new multi-track tape machines anymore. For me, I just grew with the new technology as I'm always making records. I don't wax lyrical about the good old days. I love the new technology (but I still have an old analogue machine).

You play on two tracks - how did that come about?

Somehow I manage to play something on everything I produce. I play, besides guitar and bass, some unusual instruments for rock, mandolin, recorders, upright double bass and I am considered a decent and versatile backing vocalist. I do back ups on all the Bowie records I've made. Hey, Alfred Hitchcock made an appearance in every film he's made!

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In the last but one newsletter, I asked Jan (keys) what it was like working with you on the album.

"Tony was a lovely bloke to work with. I recall that he was a quick worker and relied a lot on instinct. At the time of Better By Far, I think he had just completed Low with David Bowie and we were his next clients. He carried some of his techniques used with Bowie into the studio with us and you might notice that the overall sound on Better by Far is a bit different to some of the other Caravan recordings. That's because Tony used a lot of harmonised snare drum, similar to that used on Low. He was always pushing the boundaries of recording and was interested in new technologies."

Do you think that is an accurate description and could you tell me a bit more about the harmonised snare sound (sadly I'm a non-musician!)

Yes, a very accurate description. I innovated putting a snare drum through an Eventide Harmonizer. You can hear it's debut on Bowie's Low. Basically the Harmonizer changes the pitch of an instrument without changing the speed, as tape does when you slow it down or speed it up. But the Harmonizer also had a feedback function. So I dropped the pitch of the snare by about 20% then fed that sound back into the Harmonizer so it kept dropping more and more. Are you any wiser? This was quite an impactful sound. It was never heard before and I got lots of phone calls from producers and musicians asking what the heck it was I did. I guess it makes the snare drum sound like it's moaning.

Prior to recording the album Caravan had received much critical acclaim and a good following but never quite made the leap to the premier division. Did you think at the

time that the album might have propelled them to greater heights?

I can't remember. We just set out to make the best album we could. I think it would've been great if we had a hit single, but they tend to write songs that were too long for the radio, with too many unexpected turns.

Prior to your involvement Caravan albums had been produced mainly by David Hitchcock (also Genesis, Marillion, Thin Lizzy?). In the world of record producers did you know David at all and how did you rate his production.

I never met David Hitchcock as record producers hardly ever work together. I thought he was an excellent producer.

Around the time of the recording, was there any truth in the rumour that Pye was asked to consider writing some songs for Mary Hopkin?

Again, I can't remember. I'm sure Mary would've been open to that, but I don't remember if any discussions took place.

What was the background to naming your production Good Earth?

I was so impressed with Pearl S. Buck's book The Good Earth. I'm an earth sign (Taurus) and I had that title in mind for many years if I was to form my own company. Unfortunately I had no idea that many Chinese restaurants also used this name. I can't tell you how many times my studio buzzer went off with people asking for a table for 8 on the intercom.

Any up and coming bands you can recommend that we might not have heard of?

I'm not going to recommend

any bands, I am not a big fan of most of today's music. Although I adore Ween and The Flaming Lips. I love the rap star Ludacris. He's so funny and clever.

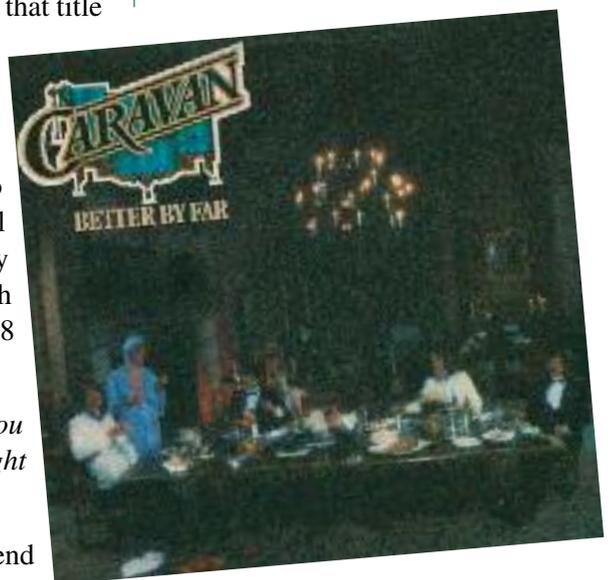
Any hints on who you will be recording with in the future?

There is another David Bowie album beginning sometime later this year. I just did some work with the Finn Brothers and The Manic Street Preachers, but not entire albums. I am working with a new artist, Kristeen Young. You can read more about her on my website, www.tonyvisconti.com I am also remixing most of the David Bowie albums I've made in the new surround sound format. So far I've done the new ones, Heathen and Reality, but I've just finished David Live and Stage.

A shameless plug - you probably know more musicians than I ever will. But if you ever need a guitarist for any sessions you might check out Doug Boyle, Caravan's youngish guitarist. He is exceptional and came to the band following six years with Robert Plant and a spell with Nigel Kennedy.

Okay, I will, thank you. Many, many thanks Tony.

Eric



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ODDS and SODS

The discussion forum on the Caravan website is back up and running. Thanks to Ralph's son Simon who has done sterling work on improving the forum. The site will also be getting an upgrade in the coming weeks which should hopefully result in recent back issues of the newsletter being posted on the site.

Dave Sinclair has been visiting Japan where he played material from his new album at concerts: 2 in Tokyo and one in Osaka. Unfortunately a bad back with a subsequent delay in returning to the UK resulted in a missed appearance with Richard Sinclair at the Borderline, London.



Geoffrey and Jim have been working with Murray Head (who in turn recently featured with a leading part in the Bill).

A certain eating establishment in Edinburgh (yes guys, you know the one) is in great danger of wearing out their copy of the Unauthorised Breakfast Item.

Caravan at Leeds Irish centre (13th November). Dedication put me and my daughter Kimberley in the "queue" 1.5 hours before anybody else! first viewing for me since Newcastle (1974). Highlights included richard drumming in striped pyjamas and the hippie who only danced to the new numbers - otherwise motionless! great fun.

Kim Raine

TOUR DATES

HOLLAND

Sunday 13th June 2004: Arrow Rock Festival, Lichtenvoorde
Caravan appear live at 2.30pm. Yes will be headlining that day. Other acts appearing at this weekend festival include Alice Cooper, Blue Oyster Cult and Porcupine Tree. <http://www.arrowrockfestival.nl/>

FRANCE

Saturday 19th June 2004: Marcq-en-Baroeul Festival. Further details will be posted when available.

GERMANY

Saturday 17th July: Burgherzberg Festival <http://www.burgherzberg-festival.de/>

UK

Saturday 21st August 2004: Radio Caroline Rockinbeerfest, Huntingdon Racecourse, Cambridgeshire (part of three day festival). www.rockinbeerfest.co.uk

Monday 31st August: Coventry Jazz Festival www.visitcoventry.co.uk/jazz/

Sunday 17th October: Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury
www.canterburyfestival.co.uk

USA (WITH NEKTAR)

Wednesday 8th September 2004: The Egg, Albany, NY

Friday 10th September: Regent Theatre, Arlington, MA

Saturday 11th September: BB Kings, New York, NY

Sunday 12th September: The Birchmere, Alexandria, VA

Tuesday 14th September: Neighbourhood Theatre, Charlotte, NC

Wednesday 15th September: The Variety Playhouse, Atlanta, GA

Saturday 18th September: The Pageant, St. Louis, MO

Sunday 19th September: Martyrs, Chicago, IL

Wednesday 22nd September: Odeon Concert Club, Cleveland, OH

Friday 24th September: The Keswick, Glenside, PA

CANADA

Tuesday 21st September: Toronto Opera House

JAPAN

Saturday 9th October: Club Quattro, Shin-Sai-bashi Parco Bldg. 8th floor Osaka, Japan

Sunday 10th October: Club Quattro, Parco IV Bldg. 32-13 Utagawa-cho Tokyo, Japan

BRAZIL

Wednesday 10th November: Rio ArtRock Festival, Canecao, Rio de Janeiro

Further North American dates are possible, depending on success in negotiations with promoters



THE CARAVAN ON LINE SHOP NOW OPEN

Full secure cardtaking facilities. All orders delivered within 21 days and all prices include postage anywhere in the world. The site also has a mailing list facility if you would like to be kept up to date with any new Caravan or Caravan related products/releases.

THE UNAUTHORISED BREAKFAST ITEM Can be purchased on line at www.eclecticdiscs.com or via chq or PO or cash to Eclectic Discs,

The Old Brewery, 75 Stour Street, Canterbury, Kent. CT1 2QL. All cheques for new album to be made payable to eclecticdiscs.

All other items cheques to be made payable to Mark Powell-Caravan account.

New album is £11.50 including postage to anywhere in the world.

Prices for other items as follows

All over You/All over you Too/Canterbury Collection £9.50 inc P&P

Nottingham Live 75/Cool Water /A Nights Tale (CD) £10.00 inc P&P

Caravan 1990 Classic Rock Legends DVD £13.50

A Nights Tale (USA 2002) DVD £13.50.



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I'm grateful to Robert Allen for allowing us to use his review of Caravan at the Stables, Wavendon on 21st November, last. The review featured previously in the Classic Rock Society Magazine. Thanks Robert.

Apart from a gap for most of the 1980s Caravan have been making albums since 1969. this tour was to promote their latest offering "The Unauthorised Breakfast Item". The title comes from an incident in the USA when one of the band (Ed -Geoffrey), faced with a long day, ordered a full American breakfast and pocketed a couple of croissants from the continental buffet table only to be challenged with "Sir, you have an unauthorised breakfast item about your person".

Current band line up is original members Pye Hastings (guitar, vocals, principal songwriter) and Richard Coughlin (percussion) plus Doug Boyle (lead guitar) and Jim Leverton (bass and vocals). Completing the line up are two musicians who were with the band in the mid 1970s, Geoffrey Richardson on viola, flute, whistle and electric (and electrified!) spoons, and Jan Schelhaas on keyboards. Jan returned to the band recently as a replacement for founder member Dave Sinclair who he also replaced back in the 1970s. Jan brings his own "who let the cats out" wailing synthesiser style complete with dramatic poses which works well with the material.

The band started with two pieces from the 1995 Battle of Hastings album "This Time, and, "It's not Real" before digging into the vintage 30 year old material "The Dog, the Dog, He's At It Again", "Why, Why, Why" and "Golf Girl" with Geoff putting on his rubber gloves to play electric spoons. The 20 minute epic "Nine Feet Underground" closed the first set.

The second set included 4 tracks from the new album including the title track and "Revenge", a song inspired by a particularly bad manager. Not the first time that Pye has used this theme. "Nightmare" (1977) concluded with an amazing eyeball-to-eyeball duet between Geoff on viola and Doug on guitar punctuated by a yell of "fantastic!" from somewhere in the audience.

Near the end of the set, the band played the slower jazz piece "Backwards" featuring Jan on piano and Geoff on viola. A Caravan recording in 1973, this was a cover from Soft Machine "Third" from 1971. Caravan and Soft Machine were formed at about the same time following the split of Canterbury band Wilde Flowers.

The band closed with "For Richard" which they have used to end nearly every gig for 30 years. Still a great piece, which features a memorable drum roll from Richard Coughlin. Much noise and applause brought the band back for encores "Memory Lain" and "Headloss".

Robert Allen

BLOOMSBURY - 30 NOVEMBER 2003

With the last sumptuous chords of Sunday's concert still ringing in my ears, I felt I just had to put pen to paper to record my heartfelt appreciation for Caravan's 35th Anniversary Show.

Like so many of us 40 or 50 somethings I suspect, it was a long time since I'd seen them - the Better By Far Tour of '77 at the Roundhouse in my case to be precise - and I did wonder with slight trepidation what we'd be in for at the Bloomsbury. We were not to be disappointed. joining a small band of Canterbury and Whitstable Caravanners we took our seats 2 rows back from Geoff Richardson's elbow, flipped the tops of the Beck's, sat back and drifted in paradise all evening.



Photo: courtesy Steve Marsden

The band were on superb form from the opening bar to the last and I was particularly pleased to hear so much material from "Plump" and "Grey and Pink". Pye and Richard were just as excellent as they ever had been and although I really do miss the haunting, achingly brilliant phrasing that has always been David Sinclair's trademark, Jan was in top form with his forceful, sharp and vivacious playing. Geoff Richardson not only gave his usual virtuoso performance on viola and flute, but introduced us to the new and magical world of electric spoons and of course the hedge clippers, impeccably played of course! Keep an eye out for him at selected B and Q's for a clue as to his next musical direction!

And what a find in Doug Boyle. It is as if he was born to play with Caravan. The man has Caravan blood coursing through his veins, and his duets with Geoff were sensational - as if a lifetime of musical empathy had been infused into their work. Excellent and understated bass and vocals from Jim Leverton too, but for me Jimmy Hastings just stole the show with his brilliant flute and alto. This man just seems to go on for ever and ever.

A wonderful evening then, and we were specially privileged to witness the superb acoustic set between Geoff, Pye and Doug. Musicianship at its finest. We were also very impressed with the new album. "Breakfast" sees them back to their "Blind Dog" standards, and I shall be ordering. The political edge of "Smoking Gun" went down very well too.

I looked round the audience. There was more than one 50 something like me with a tear in his eye, but there were young people too. We launched into the night with a spring in our step and hope in our hearts. My 16 year old son, for whom Travis and Coldplay could hitherto do no wrong, is completely hooked, and my 11 year old daughter can't get enough of "Memory Lain". It's wonderful to see the Caravan still rolling along and now starting to gather a new generation on board. I can't wait for the next tour and would plead with the boys to keep on playing just as long as you possibly can for the health and sanity of this crazy world.

Patrick Coffey

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EDINBURGH REVISITED?

- Rob Adams



I'm very grateful to Rob Adams for his further reflections on all things Canterbury. Rob wrote an excellent piece for the last edition of the newsletter and maintains his excellent standard with the following:

So the world didn't end, then. The loaded jiffy bags that arrived via editor Eric didn't detonate, the envelope bearing tickets for Caravan at The Liquid Rooms in Edinburgh led to no recriminations.

In fact, as storms in teacups go, the Sinclairless Caravan and the Caravanless Sinclair hoo-hah has ended up as no more than a further instalment of the too many CDs for one house problem. But that's another story.

Speaking as someone who goes to concerts for a living - and is sad enough to go to half as many again for fun, I have to say that I really, really enjoyed the Liquid Rooms gig. And I obviously wasn't alone. I don't remember people responding so exuberantly at Caravan gigs in the old days. Heads used to nod quite

vigorously when For Richard's doop-doop-da-da, doop-doop-da-doop-doo riff broke out, but here there were people dancing and leaping up to shake Jan Schelhaas's hand. Such a lack of decorum.

Actually, the bloke who kept leaping up to shake Jan's hand used to roadie with the band that supported Caravan when they'd last played in Edinburgh, twenty-five years before. Being one of Tam's former employers, I kept hissing that Jan wouldn't remember him but Tam wouldn't be told. Sorry, Jan.

But Tam was right: one of the first ingredients you look for in a Caravan gig - keyboard breaks that make you want to leap up and shake the keyboard player by the hand - were being delivered with impressive brio. The descant that flies behind Pye's "I was getting the message" line on The Unauthorised Breakfast Item was a case in point. Marvellous stuff.

The fact that such examples pop into my head so easily as I write this months afterwards reinforces my

immediate impressions of that November night. Because what came over most forcibly was how well the new material sat amongst the Caravan classics. There was no sense of, Oh we'll put up with this until they play Nine Feet Underground. It was great to hear the oldies - it always will be and they sounded great, too - but this was very much the current edition of a long-serving band putting the same thought, enthusiasm and oomph into everything.

Doug Boyle's presence in the band and his importance to the live performance continue to grow. His guitar lines have a terrific immediacy, his solos are always excitingly creative, and his vying and eye



contact with Geoffrey bring a visual dynamic, a stagecraft that may have been lacking in the Caravan of old.

Pye is the first to concede his lack of rock god status. That doesn't matter now. I'm not sure it ever did - my referring to him previously as having the rock credibility of an off-duty cabinet minister was intended as gentle teasing and accepted as such, because I now have the limp to prove it. His voice, songwriting and rhythm



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guitar playing are as much a part of the Caravan sound as Richard Coughlan's absolutely certain, directional drumming.

Of course, when it comes to absolutely certain, directional drumming, Coughlan is the cat's pyjamas - and at the risk of having two limps, wasn't it good to see him wearing them as he and the undemonstrative but always apposite and assured Jim Leverton formed the band's backbone?

No sooner had Caravan's MOT been issued and their return to Edinburgh as swiftly as possible been hoped for than a CD arrived from Dave Sinclair, Full Circle, quickly followed by another one, Into The Sun, a companion release with alternate takes and collector's items.

My initial impression of Full Circle was, I must confess, that Dave had produced an expensive sounding demo for songs that might make him a few bob through Pop Idol contestants covering them. But as with many an album that's gone before, something called me back. And back again.

After half a dozen plays several things became clear. One was that, while Pop Idol contestants might well fancy their chances with some of these songs, they wouldn't be able to sing them half as well as Roxane does.

We live in era when singing standards are, to say the least, pretty poor.

Without mentioning any names, there are current sweethearts of the jazz and folk music worlds, people who get South Bank Shows made about them and copious awards, who couldn't carry a tune in a bucket.

With her big hearted, soulful and true delivery, Roxane is streets ahead of such drivel. She reminds me of Elkie



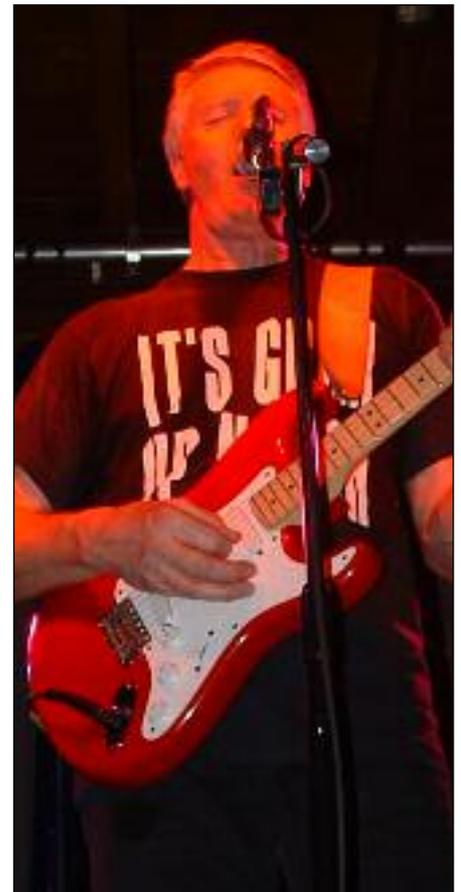
Brooks, oddly enough, round about the time Elkie Brooks edged into the wider Canterbury family circle by contributing some huskily suggestive lines to Quantum Jump's Barracuda. (I saw Elkie Brooks last year, singing blues with Humphrey Lyttelton's band, and she was fabulous, so no letters, please.)

Listen to Roxane smouldering on Peace In Time or chewing out Thru The Night. That's class.

Full Circle has lots of class, though. It's beautifully produced. No end of pains have been taken with the arrangements, and although it doesn't sound much like a Caravan album, it has plenty of links to the Canterbury tradition, not the least of them being Richard Sinclair's singing on O Caroline and That Day.

The flute intro on Without You could be Jimmy Hastings. The aforementioned Peace In Time is a 'round' from the same school as - and I think predates - Richard's It Didn't Matter Anyway from The Rotters Club. And Dave's entry on his solo on Nowhere To Hide, a cracking version of the Unauthorised Breakfast Item track that's worth the admission price alone, is one of those moments that used to cause Sinclair freaks to wear out their vinyl through lifting the pick-up and playing them over and over again. The solo itself and Dave's sparring with Doug Boyle aren't so bad either! Talk about life in old dogs.

And talking about life in old dogs, my Caravan thirty-fifth anniversary badge recently earned me and Caravan Brownie points. Years ago, I worked in a record shop and we had a window display for Blind Dog at St Dunstons, complete with a large blind dog. When we were finished with it my niece and nephew, who were then just tots, had a disagreement over this



obviously prized cardboard 'cut-out' which resulted in some diplomatic solution as to visitation rights.

I assumed such childish things would all have been put away until I produced my badge and discovered that Joe Cool, for thus the pooch had been named, was remembered with major affection. News that the band in question was still playing was met with cries of "wicked" and plans to check them out at the earliest opportunity. I was quite chuffed at this small cross-generational triumph, although whether the guys in the band want to assume the Buena Vista Social Club vintage that Joe Cool's fans have bestowed on them is another matter.

Photos: Martin Milarky



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BRISTOL GIG

27 NOVEMBER 2003
The Fleece



Having a round trip of 200 miles gave me plenty to think about on the journey to Bristol. All the gigs I have seen since 1971 from Coventry Poly

Technic, in early 70s, Birmingham Various venues, Leicester, Milton Keynes, The Astoria, Diss concerts, Wolverhampton, The Fleece last year and many many more were running through my mind as me and Phobe my daughter blasted out the old faithfuls on the car sounds system on the way to the gig. Having seen the reviews I was torn with decision as to buy the album before or at the gig. I decided to here it live first, and duly

purchased the album when I walked in to the fleece. It was reported to be the best album for 25 years, could it live upto that? Well I can only describe the gig as truly awsome and the album as a MUST for any album/cd collection. I am truly blown away by the cd and felt that I had had one of those nights that will stay in the memory box for ever. The fan base in Bristol is strong and the age group is noticably getting younger, even Phobe aged 18 was taking the micky out of me saying "you're outnumbered now". Great, the legends will live on, I just hope the boys can make a few bob out of the hard work that has gone into this truly fantastic new album. If anyone has not gone out and purchased the album yet and reads this JUST GO AND BUY IT, YOU WONT REGRET IT.



Steve Suddens

ODDS and SODS



Pre sales for the remasters of **Back to Front and The Album**

are now available on www.eclecticdiscs.com. Expected release date of early July.

Alternately Chqs for £10.50 per release including postage can be made to Eclectic Discs, Unit 8, The Old Brewery, 75 Stour St, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 2QL.



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Letters & Emails...

Photo: courtesy Steve Marsden

I once went through my dad's record collection (I would say more than 200 records!), one of those records was Caravan-In the Land of Grey and Pink. I listened to it and I was absolutely fascinated! Now, about a year later, I still am! Do you still play these songs at your gigs? Because I would really want to hear them live. And most of your gigs are in the UK some in Holland and a few in Belgium. But I live in Switzerland. Couldn't you go on a trip to Switzerland and play there? That would be so great, because I just enjoy you're music so

much! Wishing you all well and hoping to be able to hear you play live,

Ben Müller

I thought the Band were excellent again. They've been "freshened up" with the arrival of Jan and the new record. The choice of material and the variety was well judged and I did enjoy hearing them do A Place of My Own again. Also, they're now striking a better balance in the "solo" areas with Doug, Geoffrey and Jan than they were a while ago when it was more or less the Doug Boyle

show. Whilst Doug is most certainly a top man on the guitar it is essential to maintain the overall Caravan sound and identity.

BUT I don't like having to sit down to see them. We were in Bristol on Thursday night and I think we all preferred seeing the Band at the Fleece and Firkin rather than at the Bloomsbury, as nice a theatre as it is. The smaller "pub" type venues are more suited to seeing Caravan in our opinion. All the best for now and we look forward to seeing Caravan and yourself again early in the New Year.

Best Regards Dave Butcher

Hi there

Could you please pass on the thanks of a couple of long time fans for last night's performance. It's the 10th time since around 1986 that I've seen the band and it was by far the best of those evenings. The sound was fantastic, the playing superb, and the choice of material excellent. We all loved the acoustic set and urge the band to consider more please! Keep up the good work ... it's surely for the love of it because there can't be any money in it for any of you/them! Best wishes and thanks again to the band

Martyn Allen & Eamon Connor

On a Saturday evening on a date sometime (probably) between 1974 and 1976 at Bradford (my home town) University I saw Caravan live for the first and only time. At that time I had a few of their albums. It was undoubtedly best live music event of my life and had not been bettered until last night ((nearly 30 years later!) when I saw the band again at Milton Keynes. (I now live in Peterborough). How I had not managed to take the trouble to find out about the band in the meantime is a mystery. The internet and your excellent website are however the reason for my renewed interest - thank you! I could write pages saying how brilliant last nights music was and how it left me feeling uplifted and exhilarated. Even my wife, who only begrudgingly agreed to come with me really enjoyed it. Were you there last night? - when I was looking at the CD's for sale I overheard mention of the village of Hethersett so I assume that was you! Please pass on my comments to the band if you can - I'll certainly be telling all my mates who liked Caravan in the early mid 70's to see the band if they get the chance.

Cheers

Phil Halmshaw

Where but for Caravan Would I?

How amazing to see two of my photos on page 1 and 2 of the Caravan web-site! Racking my brains as to how they could have got there I suspect I have to blame my sister Liz.. right? I don't mind, only I would appreciate a credit. Mind you I suppose it's not that sort of web-site is it? The shot of Richard Sinclair tuning his bass was taken at 'St Elmo', an isolated bungalow in the midst of a huge cabbage patch just outside Canterbury, Circa 1970. My girlfriend Lucinda and I were in correspondence with Richard (sort of) in the days when she and I were both living in a hostel for Harwell scientists in Abingdon. I had dragged her to innumerable gigs at Oxford Town hall (awful acoustics) and spent quite a bit of time with the band, whenever they were on my patch. Every gig west or south of London, there I was! In fact I introduced so many people to the band that I was probably 'you' in those phase 2 days! I was the lunatic who introduced the whopping Meteorological Office 35 gram pilot balloons into Caravan gigs! Pye would boot them into the audience near the beginning of 'Where but for Caravan Would I' and the audience would usually fly them around for ages. Richard always insisted to me that Canterbury, not Oxford, was THE place to be, and in his typical brief informal hippy way, 'invited' us down. In writing. Sort of.

But this was actually my second pilgrimage to Canterbury. The first time I camped on the edge of some playing fields on the west side of the town and went looking for Dave. I met a couple of girls in the 'Foundry' and still have the collected poems from one of them in my mathom box. On that same first trip I was allowed to sit on an amp in a practice room down the road from Dave Sinclair's

basement dive (he had a bar top made from old church pews..) and was privileged to listen to them practising the stuff for the second album.

On my second pilgrimage me and me bird were actually accommodated in Richard's own 'music room'... the empty front room on the left side of St Elmo and he had us tucked up right behind those bass touring speakers in my photo.. the ones we all knew so well! Richard's idea of 'early morning tea' was to stumble in around 10.00am (crack of dawn... honest) plug in his Fender Jazz bass and turn on the cabs. WOMP. WOOM it went! Still at least we got two mugs of nice hot bubbling tea out of it. Actually the tea didn't bubble but, like Richard, one can't help feeling that nice fresh hot tea really ought to.. I'm sure most of Richard's substances must have bubbled somewhere along the line.. hence 'Golf Girl' and so on. I recall stomping round Westgate or was it Northgate... anyway some medieaval archway near Pye's place... nibbling brown rice stuff from some highly alternative take-away. The band were into macrobiotics at the time, but then, wasn't everybody? I didn't really know what macrobiotics was. I still don't for that matter! I guess it's a phase you go through... like Pre Raphaelites. And I got that from Geoff Richardson who regarded my taste for Arthur Hughes' paintings as a bit quaint.

The shot of Pye circa 1971 was probably taken at Oxford Town Hall. This was firmly on my patch and I used to help Maurice lug those blasted awful WEM columns up the spiral stairs at the back. The acoustics were always appalling at OTH and there were often little technical troubles in those days as well. Usually it was Dave's Hammond N100 organ (I

hope I've got these details right... it's been a long long time you understand...) and definitely there was always tech-trub at Ewell tech college. (Can I 'ave some real light on here... not that purple stuff' muttered Maurice into an open mic one murky night as he peered into the dreaded Hammond yet again.. brandishing a soldering iron in a threatening manner! He did eventually fix it and these diversions were almost a cherished part of any early Caravan gig.. but I digress..

I actually stayed at Pye's house too! Just the once... I had with me one Trevor Tickle.. an out-and-out hippy friend whose conversation consisted entirely of pointed comments about music, and, er, also, substances.. and absolutely nothing else! That was it.. spliffs and riffs. Period. We had both dossed in my light blue van outside Kent Gliding Club at Challock (I was re-visiting the site of my first solo when aged 18!) and out there on the chilly wet downs we had both caught one hell of a cold. Next night we turned up at Hanover Place.

I had seen Pye's house from the air (it was a Tiger Moth) so I knew exactly which house it was! Both Pye and Cathy were very hospitable, it has to be said. The evening was spent in his lounge with sniffing Trevor and sneezing me quizzing him about how he got the chords to 'Place of My Own'. He demonstrated on his Framus which he always played when pootling about acoustically. Then my lasting memory is of him standing on the landing outside his airing cupboard with a cat in one hand and some sheets in the other saying.. "You do think of us as friends don't you?" "Hey, he looked just like a Normal Person" I said to Trevor later. "Far Out Man" came the predictable reply.



Photo: courtesy Steve Marsden

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I asked Pye about Jimmy and he gave me his address. I wrote to Jimmy. I said that his solo on Love Song With Flute had inspired me to take up the instrument myself. Had he got any tips? One Sunday at my parents the phone rang. It was Jimmy Hastings inviting me up to Muswell Hill for a free flute lesson! The solo on the album was Ravel inspired he told me. I tried to see the connection but couldn't really but came away with some useful exercises for my emboucheur... honest! Then I worked for the BBC, and in the Transcription Services disc archives in Kensington House I found the sound track of a BBC 'Paris' theatre concert in Regent Street by that I myself had attended a few years earlier. Gate-crashed in fact! No I didn't... I think I had tickets for it but turned up very early around 4pm and just kind of slipped in unannounced leaving the girls to go and eat.

I remembered the gig well, which was recorded for John Peel's radio show. It was this same recording that I found at Transcription Services. I made myself a professional stereo tape copy of the unreleased 'Feeling Reeling and Squealing' with which Caravan finished the set.. and I still have it somewhere. Mathom box presumably. This was the BBC Paris theatre in Regent Street, now long gone. Tir N'an Nog were doing the opening. I'd never heard of them but they played the stuff from their first album.. and I later learned to regard it with great affection. I wasn't listening at the time, however, because while Tir N'an Nog were playing, high up on the umpteenth floor of the 'Paris' theatre, in the Caravan dressing room no less, Dave Sinclair had just announced that he was thinking of leaving the band! It was a profound and alarming moment. Richard Sinclair tried to talk him out of it, but Dave was clearly distressed in some way. Bang in the middle of all this rivetting social and historical drama the dressing room door opens and round it appears the hairy head of John Peel. He shuffles self consciously in. He was not actually looking for Caravan. "Is there a Geoff Martin here?" he asked. He was looking for me! "Your sister thought you'd need some food" he said.. "and she sent this in. I hope it's not too cold... it took me ages to find you!"

It was a hot dog. Only it was a perfectly cold hot dog. In those carefree days one did such things. It all seemed quite natural at the time...

Geoff Martin



The Gig of Caravan

Bloomsbury Theatre London 30 November 2003 Does anyone still remember the legendary star of Canterbury scene from the seventies – the band Caravan? From 1968 to 1974 they recorded 6 absolutely marvellous albums (the following records, however, were somewhat worse, as it typically happens), which offered a different perspective to progressive rock, at that time, enjoying its heydays. Albums such as "In the Land of Grey and Pink", "If I Could Do It All Over Again..." or the best one though slightly undervalued "Waterloo Lilly" were then unquestionable hits and still today are breathtaking. It's enough to recall a 22-minute piece "Nine Feet Underground", 15-minute ones "For Richard" and "Love in Your Eyes" or slightly shorter "Golf Girl", "Memory Laine" and many more. Why Am I evoking those memories today and right in the section "Gigs"? Well, a couple of days ago (30 November) I happened to be at their gig in London. It was organised within the tour promoting the band's new album released in September 2003, entitled "Unauthorized Breakfast Item", but it was also Caravan's 35th anniversary show, and that's why there were guests present on the scene and Colin Bass performed as a support. It was slightly too lengthy a gig to report it briefly... So off we go! To start with, the band has proven an excellent form to say the least. Secondly, the band's line up has also changed a little in comparisons to that of 30 years ago, and the changes are nothing but positive. (A superb guitarist Doug Boyle joined the band almost ten

years ago). Thirdly, the band has recently released a pretty good record although, to my taste, it is inclining towards pop a bit too obviously. (Their previous album "The Battle of Hastings" (1995) unfortunately crossed that fine line). However, during the gig they kept a healthy distance from that border. And thanks God, otherwise I'd have to treat the trip to London as a great misunderstanding. But nothing of that kind. The Show was amazing and it would be extremely difficult for me to recall a better one, in my 30- year affair with old, good rock alive- that began in 1970 with a gig of Blood Sweat & Tears in the Congress Concert Hall in Warsaw. The band started off, slightly tensed, with "This Time", and "It's Not Real", but they got into the swing with the historical pieces "The Dog, The Dog..." and "I Wish I Were Stoned". When they played "Golf Girl" from 1971 and coming from the album declared their best: "In the Land of Grey and Pink" they were again professional in every inch. What's more, in this particular piece Geoff Richardson had his incredible solo. It was incredible because he played not on electric viola as usual, but he used electric spoon (!). Don't you know what that is? Well, I didn't even know its name. But when after the concert I asked one of the fans what kid of instrument Geoff had played on, he gave me the kind of look as if I acted as if I was born yesterday What do you mean what kind? Electric spoon of course! He said. I didn't carry on. After "Golf Girl" there came the time for "what Tiggers like most". Although "Nine Feet Underground" lasted "only" 19 minutes, every second of it was perfect: keyboard

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solo delivered with that jazzy fantasy and rock zest, viola solo so thrilling that you could actually feel your teeth ache and the guitar solo produced at the speed of a machine gun. A total trip. After a thing like that I needed a moment to cool down. And it came, the following 14 minutes were the most surprising part of the gig. Surprising because acoustic! The first slot of this kind by Caravan for 35 years! Two acoustic guitars, viola and flute interchangeably with clarinet. The two latter were in the powers of the guest; Jimmy Hastings. A digression. Although Jimmy (the brother of Pye Hastings – the band's frontman) participated in recording of the majority of Caravan's records (also in case of Soft Machine), he was never a formal member of the band. Those beautiful moments were filled with the tunes of three songs coming from the first (1968) and fifth (1973) album, including the famous "Love Song With Flute". Calm, soft and melodious solos by Jimmy were enslaving.

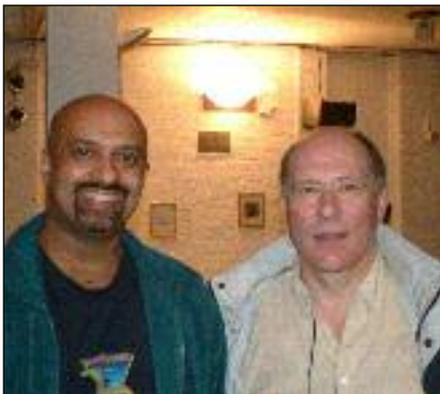


Photo: courtesy Steve Marsden

After the acoustic slot and return of the remaining members of the band onto the stage, there came again the time for dynamic "Hello Hello" from the album "If I Could Do It..." from 1970. And again Geoff came up with an original idea for an instrument - hedge clippers (!). Before he actually played, he deliberately took his time putting on a pair of big, green garden gloves. Apparently, the clippers were treated as a rhythmic instrument. So it was not a solo as in the case of the electric spoon nonetheless the effect it made was impressive. The 500 spectators applauded him heartily. And then there came the moment I dreaded. The band played 5 pieces from their latest record. Why did I dread it? I abhor pop! And I feared that it would be pop. But it wasn't! It was progressive rock in its pure form which sounded as if it came from the beginning of the 70ties. And Geoff's solo in "Nightmare" was perhaps his best solo during this gig. The band smoothly proceeded from the pieces from 2003 to the year 1973 and the album "For Girls Who Grow Plump in the Night" to the best turn of the gig: "Backwards" combined with "A Hunting We Shall Go". Instrumental slots, beginning with beautiful piano accords developing into wonderful melody, replaced, at one moment, by a rather rapid rhythm of "A Hunting". Something absolutely astounding to the point that it eclipsed the piece coming after it, which in other circumstances, would have glimmered like a diamond: "For Richard" – a 15 minute piece with an unexpected Jimmy's flute solo. Unexpected because everybody thought Jimmy had

been hired only for the acoustic-recollections slot, and yet he wasn't. Typically, it would have been Geoff who should have played the viola solo, but Jimmy was truly excellent. Apparently, the flute solo was barely an earnest to what was to happen. The two guitar solos by Doug Boyle that came afterwards should be engraved in the history of rock music (and perhaps even jazz music too). A technical perfection combined with ingeniousness and creativity. A splendid closure of the great gig.

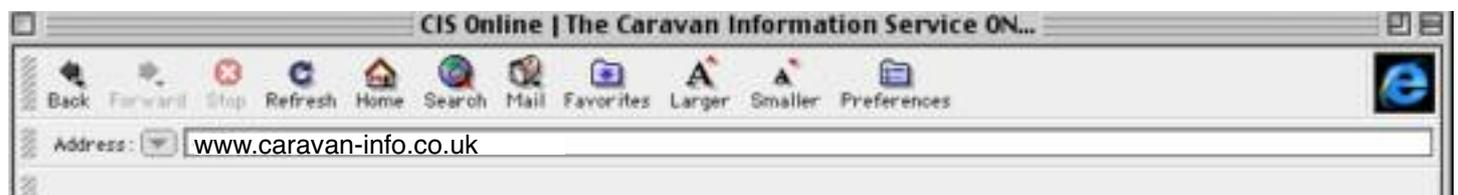
Followed with two encores. And again back to the 70ties. The band completely relaxed since aware of the greatness of the show they had just performed. Three pieces including one with such a long title I won't dare to cite here. It was a great gig.

Janek Adamski

Just heard the 'Breakfast Item album.....my goodness. It is soooo good and moving.... The band continue to plug at my heart strings with those evocative, engaging minor chord structures, key changes, time signatures.....and the guitar solos always seem to reflect my own thoughts/feelings.

AND....what makes it better are the lyrics that are so profound/profane but at the same time topical and relevant..... Can't stop playing it !

Peter and Debbie



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Manfred Bress publishes 'Canterbury Nachrichten' which covers the whole Canterbury scene. This can be obtained from Nikolaistr. 90, D-47055, Duisburg, Germany.

Calyx, Canterbury Website:
calyx@club-international.fr

I get lots of people saying how difficult it is to find Caravan's material in the shops. Try the following:

Piccadilly Records of Manchester. Tel: 0161 839 8008

GFT of Surbiton Tel: 0181 339 9965

www.kelkoo.com An excellent source for material supposedly unavailable elsewhere: in addition this web site searches out the cheapest copies from a variety of suppliers.

Many thanks to Codge Barber who is helping compile this Issue of the Fanzine - I couldn't do this mag. without you.

The latest Newsletter remains FREE i.e. all that is required is an S.A.E. in a decent sized

envelope or International Reply Coupon for Europe and The World (*any donations are welcome however, simply to defray costs of production which are down to Codge and myself*).

Back copies i.e. combined issues 1/2 and issues 3-17 as well as the booklets for the 1990 and 1991 concerts at Old Buckenham can be obtained for 2 x 1st class stamps per issue as well as a stamped addressed envelope (2 x 1st).

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