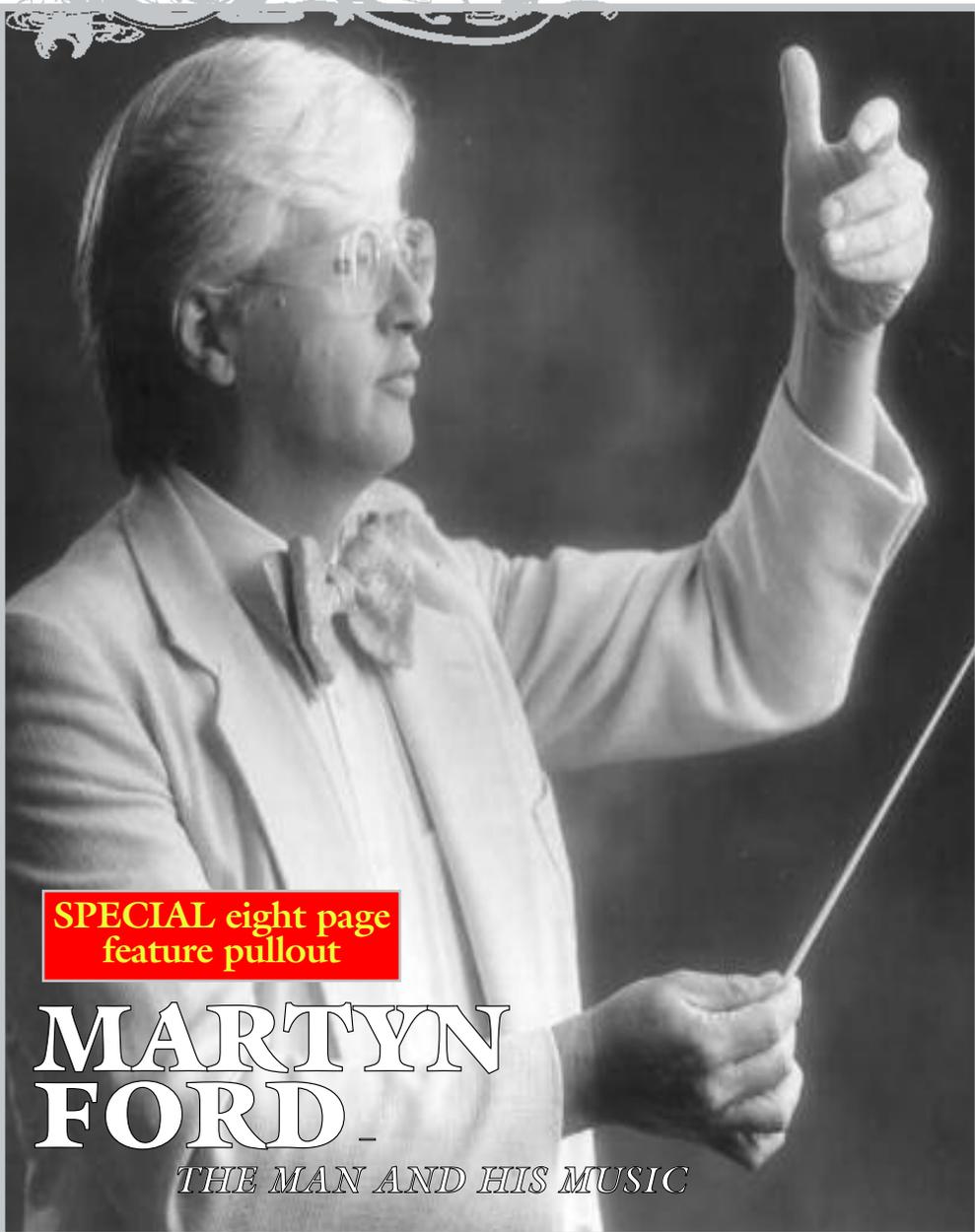




*Where but for  
Caravan  
Would I?*



**SPECIAL** eight page  
feature pullout

# MARTYN FORD

*THE MAN AND HIS MUSIC*

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## *THE MAN AND HIS MUSIC*

As you have probably realised distribution of this edition of the newsletter was slightly later than usual. One of the reasons was that, just a few days ago, I had the unexpected opportunity of undertaking an interview with Martyn Ford who you will know worked with Caravan on "For Girls" and was a crucial element in "Caravan and the New Symphonia". When you read on I'm sure you will agree that it was worth the wait for what I consider to be a fascinating interview.

*Did you come from a professional musical background?*

Not at all, although my parents were amateur musicians who got involved in such things as amateur operatic societies. However, I do recall growing up in a musical household, and there was always classical music playing away in the background. My brother was an amateur violinist and outside the professional arena must be the most knowledgeable person I know on all forms of classical music.

*In your fourth year at the Royal Academy you formed your own symphony orchestra. How did that come about?*

There was always a keen rivalry between the four London music colleges, and little or no communication! I've always had a natural entrepreneurial streak and went to the four principals of the colleges to seek

approval to form an orchestra comprising students from the colleges. Happily they agreed. And the best way of learning all forms of repertoire is by joining a symphony orchestra or forming your own!

*With the orchestra up and running how did you get involved with rock music?*

The orchestra became known as the New Symphonia and had a number of good musicians who went on to greater things e.g. Wilf Gibson joined ELO, Helen Leibmann did a lot of work with the Penguin Café Orchestra and Richard Studt became leader of The London Symphony Orchestra! I was introduced, by my second bassoonist, to Robert John Godfrey (of the Enid), who worked as an arranger and conductor with Barclay James Harvest. BJH wanted to go on the road with an orchestra and chose mine. Robert sometimes played piano on stage

and I was invited to conduct some of the numbers as he and the band thought I would have a natural sympathy with their material. I'm indebted to him, as this led to me arranging and conducting the orchestra playing on BJH's 3rd to 5th albums and conducting many, many concerts. I am still in touch with Woolly Woolstenhome and John Lees.



*How did your involvement with the Caravan and the New Symphonia album come about?*

Having successfully completed some arrangements on the "For Girls" album, I recall being asked by Pye, David Hitchcock and their management to work with the band on a live album using the

orchestra. I also remember that the timeframe for putting the whole project together was horrendously short. There was no way I was going to be able to write all the orchestrations in the two week period requested, especially as Pye had to also complete a couple of new songs for the concert. So I contacted Simon Jeffes and Don Gould and enlisted their support to bring things together.

*This leads nicely on to my next question, the Caravan connection?*

I thought you might ask that and my recollection of the first involvement on "For Girls" is somewhat vague. I suspect it was through their producer David Hitchcock who I knew quite well. Also I was a "fixer" for session work and knew John Perry quite well having booked him for various sessions. I also used a Jimmy Hastings of north London on occasions! Interestingly, I was watching Top of the Pops 2 the other night when on came Quantum Jump with John on bass. I had great affection for that band as I had used their guitarist Mark Warner on a number of sessions – a brilliant player. I also knew Rupert Hine and Trevor Morais the drummer. In fact I bought my first house from Trevor.

*What were the rehearsals like?*

What rehearsals! I distinctly remember that we only had a couple of sessions the day before the concert and on the day itself to prepare. This was serious seat of the pants stuff! And I have to say that the music was extremely difficult. However, it all went well on the night and the audience went absolutely ballistic. The only disappointing incident I recall was when the band had gone off stage prior

to the encore. One of the horn players, a strict MU type, said that he wouldn't play the encore unless he got an extra payment as it was past the contracted time. I said that I had never let any player down before, gave him a bollocking and told him to sit down and play. He did, but he never worked for me again. I think it would be great to hear the concert again, although in my usual fashion I expect I would listen to it with critical ears.

*Any particular memories of Caravan?*

Actually, yes. Apart from Pye with the quirky songs, the one person who sticks in my mind is Richard Coughlan who I rate highly as a person and also as an absolutely brilliant drummer. And Geoffrey Richardson is one of the finest electric viola players I have come across. I also recall the band as being very innovative. Their music is intelligent, very challenging, complex and justifiably difficult (musically), although not deliberately so. Going back to the live concert, it still frightens me that the scores were written in such a short time.

*Any chance of working with the band again?*

Yes, this will happen shortly. Caravan's manager Mark Powell has contacted me and I'll be playing with the band in Quebec in early July at a large concert which Jethro Tull are headlining. My understanding is that Tull are using an orchestra and Caravan can use it too for at least part of their set. I'm waiting to hear further from Mark and Pye and am

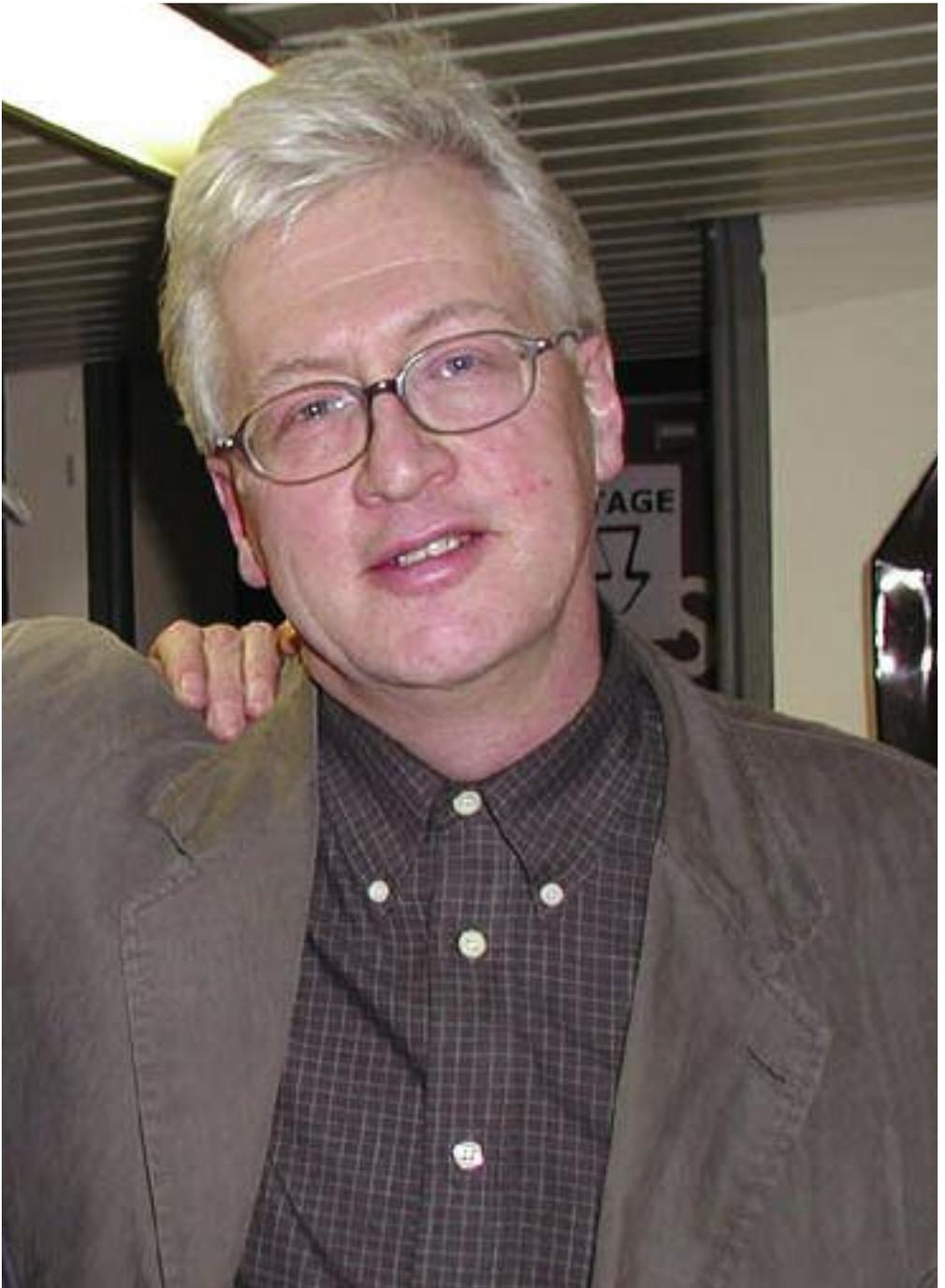
desperately trying to find the old scores. I have tracked down "Virgin on the Ridiculous", "For Richard" and "Mirror For The Day" and am busy looking for others. So after nearly 30 years, I get to conduct a Caravan concert again.

*Were you aware that the band had been awarded gold and silver discs?*

I wasn't, although Mark has promised that he will send me the re-releases, as I might have to get up to speed on certain numbers. It's great news and thoroughly deserved. As I orchestrated some of "For Girls" and was heavily involved in the "New Symphonia" album, I'll need to speak to Mark about the possibility of some silver discs! On the whole I've only good memories of working with Caravan.

*How do you go about orchestrating, say a rock record?*

Let's take a Caravan number as an example. I'd put one of their tapes in the car and play it continuously until I was familiar with the song in its entirety. I'd then imagine an orchestra behind the tune and start writing down various rhythms and melodies. Having spent years sitting in symphony orchestras, I am familiar with all the textures, sounds and capabilities of the different instruments, and I have assimilated numerous composers, their music and styles and I try and find which ideas and textures that might fit with the number. I suppose much of this has been logged in my brain over the years. In compiling the music I use scores, and have my own style of



voicing frequently using suspensions (fourths & ninths to those of you who are musically inclined!). In that respect I've been very influenced by Paul Buckmaster who became one of my closest friends.

*Any interesting recollections of those you have worked with?*

The New Symphonia eventually became known as the Martyn Ford or Mountain Fjord Orchestra (a play on words like Caravan albums – I also had a music publishing company called More Tinned Food Music, and even had T-shirts made with the obvious spoonerism printed on them, i.e. Fartin Maud!). The Orchestra became in demand for record, film, television radio and advertising music work and to a certain extent monopolised for a number of years those sections of the music industry.

I had the pleasure of working with many great bands and solo artists such as BJH, Caravan, Phil Collins, Elton John, Bryan Ferry, Lou Reed, Led Zeppelin, Toto, Grateful Dead, Bob Marley and Kate Bush.

I did the arrangements and played synthesiser on "I can see clearly now" by Johnny Nash. I got the job through my next door neighbour at the time, the DJ Dave Cash who introduced me to Johnny's manager. The song sold over 7 million copies, for which I received the princely sum of £35. At the time the record company representative, Dave Margerson, thought that £35 was on the high side!

Early in my career, I also had the good fortune to record with the London

Philharmonic Orchestra and the Peddlers (Trevor Morais on drums) "Suite London". While learning the horn I was taught by a chap called Ron Harris. Six months out of the Academy, Pete Robinson asked me to become involved with the Peddlers and conduct "Suite London". This was nerve-racking enough, but imagine my surprise when I turned up for the first rehearsal to find my old tutor Ron Harris, playing 1st Horn!

On "Physical Graffiti", I conducted the orchestra at Olympic studios, Barnes. John Paul Johns had written a number in 5/4 which at the time was fairly unusual for a rock band. I met Robert Plant on a few occasions, so it will be interesting to compare notes with Doug Boyle, who I understand played with Robert for a number of years.

I conducted the orchestra when the Stones recorded "Angie". To this day I recall Mick Jagger as amazingly professional, knowing exactly what he wanted. The same applies to Marc Bolan who I had the privilege to work with.

I think one of the best albums I worked on was "Hullo, I must be going" by Phil Collins where I was fortunate to arrange, conduct and co-produce several numbers. I think one of my best arrangements is on that album "Why Can't It Wait 'Til Morning". Phil was certainly happy with it.

*Any downsides to your career?*

From what I have told you so far, you will realise that the height of my success was in the 70s and 80s. I had a nice house, a



collection of gold and platinum discs and was doing really well with companies formed to look after my orchestral and recording interests. I was represented at that time by a hot shot New York lawyer who looked after all my interests. Unknown to me, my lawyer disappeared with all my money. I was left high and dry owing thousands to musicians etc. I was then blacklisted by the MU and found myself as persona non grata in the industry. It has taken me many years to try to re-establish myself. And I certainly found out who my friends and enemies were during this time.

The other downside was when I was moving house and a box of my LPs disappeared. Many were autographed and had sentimental messages on them. Forgetting the value of the albums, it felt like part of my life's work had disappeared.

### *What are you doing now?*

As I mentioned earlier, I've an entrepreneurial streak and like to be involved in a variety of projects. I'm probably still regarded as a classical musician and formed a freelance symphony orchestra, the Derby Festival Orchestra which comprises professionals, teachers, students and gifted amateurs. We have been quite successful and as well as playing our own concerts have accompanied solo artists. For example, we accompanied the renowned international guitarist, Nicola Hall playing Rodrigo's "Concerto de Aranjuez" to great critical acclaim. I also

work with the Nottingham Youth Orchestra and I am going to Edinburgh with them later in the year for the Festival.

I still come to London occasionally where I'm principal conductor with the London TeleFilmonic Orchestra, London's premier commercial session orchestra. We have done work for Mercedes Benz, British Airways, Sainsburys and a host of others. It's enjoyable getting the opportunity to work with the cream of London's orchestral players.

I've also done theatre work, like Les Miserables and am involved with a company which specialises in cruise and corporate productions. For the public sector I act as a music adviser to the Arts Council and East Midlands Arts. That said, I wouldn't be adverse to any offers from bands who wish some orchestral arrangements!



### *And the future?*

Well, in the short term to work with Caravan in Canada, and hopefully to build up more session work with bands.

## POSTSCRIPT

Those of you who read this will I hope agree that this interview turned into a fascinating discussion with Martyn which could easily have covered a number of issues. In our interview Martyn came across as a thoroughly interesting and decent person. He has evidently had his highs and lows in the music business and it has to be hoped that he again builds up his work with the rock side of the industry. Martyn has a tremendous musical knowledge (and stories) given the vast number of artists he has worked with. To end this piece, I'll leave you with a small selection of the albums Martyn has worked on. All have made the charts in at least one country and the majority have received either silver, gold or platinum awards:

**Bad Company** – Straight Shooter

**David Bowie** – Space Oddity, Fashions, Changes Bowie

**Kate Bush** – Never for Ever

**Camel** – Snow Goose

**Style Council** – My Ever Changing Moods

**Phil Collins** – Face Value, No Jacket Required

**Julian Cope** – World Shut Your Mouth

**Curved Air** – Phantasmagoria

**Spencer Davis Group** – Gluggo

**ELO** – Eldorado

**ELF** – Carolina Country Ball

**Bryan Ferry** – Let's Stick Together, More Than This, Bride Stripped Bare

**Focus** – Hamburger Concerto

**Martyn Ford Orchestra** – Smoovin, Hot Shoe

**Grateful Dead** – Terrapin Station

**Japan** – Tin Drum, Quiet Life

**Jethro Tull** – Heavy Horses

**Elton John** – Friends, Blue Moves, Too Low for Zero

**LSO & Royal Choral Society** – Classic Rock, 2nd Movement, Rock Classics

**Paul McCartney** – Live and Let Die

**Harry Nilsson** – Nilsson Schmilsson

**Lou Reid** – Transformer

**Rolling Stones** – Goat's Head Soup

**Toto** – Toto 4

**Various Artists** – Saturday Night Fever

**Who** – Tommy. Film Soundtrack