



(Banner by Sven Kramer)

Less than a month ago, we had the very sad and shocking news of the sudden death of Jim Rodford. Many words have been written about Jim and not one of them bad. Instead of his usual review, this month Dave Williams has written his own tribute to Jim.

Those of you who expressed interest in the get-together will have had the "Party Time" email announcing the date and place. For anyone who hasn't yet replied, it will be on the evening of **Saturday 7th April 2018** in Ware, Herts. About 20 of the people on the get-together mailing list have not yet replied to the last mail. Now you know the date could you please either confirm that you will be there so I can put you on the guest list.... or let me know that you won't be so I can take you off the mailing list and then you won't keep getting emails with arrangements. We have a number of new readers since this was put forward towards the end of last year and you are invited too. Anyone who would like to come and hasn't yet told us, please email me at this email address and I will add you.

This is a private event, at Russ's invitation, for newsletter readers and their spouses, partners, etc. **There will be a guest list and you will need to be on the guest list to get entry.** Those who have already responded to the "Party Time" mail are already on the guest list.

Sue

THIS MONTH

Russ: "Hi Everyone,

Many of you will have heard about the sad passing of our dear friend Jim Rodford. Jim, apart from being a Husband, Father and Grandfather, was also, for me, the best bass player I've ever known. The first group he formed was a Skiffle group called, The Blutones, that was in the late fifties - [He played tea chest bass] - He first turned professional with the great soul band The Mike Cotton Sound....After the MCS, Rod Argent [his Cousin] asked him to be a part of the new group that he was forming along with Bob Henrit and myself. I spent three years with Argent and spent a lot of time on and off stage and don't remember ever having a cross word. Jim's gift of being positive was reflected at the attendance at his funeral/memorial service....It was held at St. Albans Abbey and was full - It was obvious every person there admired him as I did. It was sometimes difficult to listen to the Eulogies from his Cousins, his children and grandchild....It was obvious how greatly loved he was. After playing with Argent he joined the Kinks for twenty years.... Oh, what a great journey he had...

I had a few minutes talking with Jean on Monday. She said "Wasn't he lovely, Russ?" I agreed, he was...Then she said, "I miss him Russell" - "of course you do, he's part of you" - But isn't it wonderful to know, many of those "good vibe", caring and talent genes will be inherited by Jim and Jean's grandchild and indeed their children.

I know Sue will have updated you on the 'RB Ware Experience', which is confirmed for 7th April....It's developing well and I've invited some good friends to join us. As it's fifty five years since we started playing together, 'The Roulettes' will reform for one night to celebrate....Oh! I wish Adam Faith was still with us to party for the night. It'll be a hoot! - Sue will update you as things develop and I look forward to meeting you...Life !...What a Gift - Be Happy!! Russ x"

TRIBUTE TO JIM RODFORD

By Dave Williams

Drowning in Tears – Jim Rodford Remembered

It was late afternoon on Saturday 20th January at the Great British Rock and Blues Festival at Skegness when one of my friends walked up to me, mobile phone in hand, and said “Hey Dave, have you seen this?” There was a serious tone in his voice. What he showed me was Rod Argent’s post on **The Zombies** facebook page announcing the tragic death of **Jim Rodford**. My heart sank immediately. How could this happen? Only recently I’d been marvelling at the hefty touring schedule of **The Zombies** and wondering how they could cope with all the globetrotting, not to mention the live performances at an age where others of their age have given up touring or announced their intention to. The guys from **Argent** and **The Zombies** are dedicated musicians who thoroughly enjoy what they do. Age doesn’t appear to affect their performance and they themselves claim that their singing and playing is as strong, if not better than ever.

The elder statesman, **Jim Rodford**, would barely reach home from one of these tours before he’d be back out gigging locally, most likely with his sons in the **Rodford Files**. No doubt he had similar plans having just returned from Florida. Sadly, a fall on the stairs would bring his life to a tragic and premature end, and in an instant the world lost one of its most loved bass players. The news was reported in virtually every national newspaper, as well as on radio and TV, not just here in the UK but right around the globe, an indication of the high esteem in which he was held.

I first met **Jim** on May 8th, 1976, the start of a very long hot Summer. I would meet him again at the end of that Summer, but I will get to that later. I’d travelled by train that day to St Albans to see **Russ Ballard** perform at the Civic Hall, now known as the Arena. On visiting the upstairs bar, I found myself standing next to **Jim Rodford**. Whilst we were waiting to be served we got into conversation. Picking up that I wasn’t local he asked where I was from, how I’d travelled etc. He was impressed that I’d made the journey and said he’d mention it to Russ later, and that Russ would be thrilled. I didn’t mention that I was planning to tell Russ myself of course! Anyway, **Jim** insisted on buying me a pint and then informed me that he was working on a side project with **Argent** colleagues Bob Henrit and John Verity with an album release planned and a tour.

It would be more of a rock band, and they were thinking of calling themselves HRV. It was not common knowledge, so I felt rather privileged.

The gig took place, I met my hero afterwards and caught the 'milk train' home and climbed into bed around 4am. Later in the Summer there was an announcement in the music press that a band called **Phoenix** was rising from the ashes of **Argent**. A clever name, with great marketing potential. A single was announced, and a tour set for September. It was September 24th when they made their first official appearance at **Wolverhampton Lafayette**, and I decided to catch their debut, which involved a one-hour drive from one side of the Midlands to the other. I might have changed my mind had I heard the weather forecast, but after a long hot Summer with virtually no rain, nobody really listened to the forecast anymore. Even as we approached the end of September we were still enduring dry and warm weather.

I arrived at the venue far too early. I walked in to discover I was the only person there. The band had virtually set up and I had an uncomfortable feeling that I shouldn't be there. Suddenly the band struck up. It was their soundcheck and they completely blew me away. Such incredible power from just three musicians. Barely had they completed the song when the club owner appeared and explained that the venue wasn't open and asked me to return later. Needless to say, the gig was phenomenal. **Jim** used his Fender twin-neck guitar as seen in his early **Argent** days and added some keyboards courtesy of a Godwin organ. I went over to speak to him afterwards, referring back our meeting at St Albans. He remembered me instantly and was pleased that I enjoyed the show. When it was time to leave, there was a crowd of people huddled inside the exit door. They were talking about the heavy rain outside. I thought they were joking until I heard a big rumble of thunder. I should have sheltered with them, but being eager to make tracks, I ran out of the club, the door closed behind me and I was unable to return. I ran to my car and set off for home.

To cut a long story short, the driving conditions became impossible, the roads quickly flooded, visibility was virtually nil and the lightning was vicious and relentless. I was lost, and I needed to stop. Just as I was looking for somewhere to pull in, I saw a van appear from nowhere and we collided. The van driver was uninjured, but I suffered a minor cut to my forehead, which I can only assume resulted from the rear-view mirror shattering, with a shard of broken glass

hitting me between the eyes. The car appeared to be only slightly damaged but looks can deceive and it was written off. Some years later I read a book about the great drought of 1976 and the last chapter describes that very same weather system on 24th September that brought the drought of 1976 to an abrupt end.

Two weeks later **Phoenix** had another gig in that area at Dudley JB's. A good friend agreed to join me, using his car to drive us there. By this time, the album had hit the shops, so I was familiar with most of the songs. One of my favourites was **Drowning in Tears**, which was one of **Jim's** songs. He'd previously written two songs for **Argent**; **Trapeze** and **Time**, which were well received. Again, **Jim** came over for a chat afterwards. He thanked us for coming and showed genuine concern when he heard of my accident after the previous gig. He listened attentively to the details before going on to explain the science of aquaplaning. I was impressed with his knowledge.

I saw **Phoenix** again a few months later in Sheffield. This was an informal promotional event for the new Phoenix guitar amp that John Verity had a hand in designing and developing. There were big plans for **Phoenix**, but following a support slot for **Aerosmith**, **Jim** got the invitation to replace **John Dalton** in **The Kinks** and it was too attractive to turn down.

I'd never seen **The Kinks** before but loved their singles. When they played Nottingham Rock City on their **One for the Road** tour, I made the short journey to see them. They were phenomenal and far heavier than I expected. **Dave Davies** played his guitar solo on **You Really Got Me** and, presumably seeing we in awe of his playing, leaned towards me and gave me his guitar pick, which I still have. I didn't expect to meet **Jim** but our paths crossed by accident. It was during a brief conversation that he broke the news that **John Grimaldi** had just been diagnosed with MS. I already knew that John had been suffering problems and was going into hospital for tests, then everything went quiet for a few months. It was a miserable drive home.

There would be other meetings with **Jim**. These included his gigs with the **Kast off Kinks** at my local music venue, the Flowerpot in Derby, and with the **John Verity Band** at The Boot in St Albans, plus around half a dozen appearances in various towns and cities with **The Zombies**, not forgetting the **Argent** re-union

concerts. I always enjoyed our conversations and he was always generous with his time. I've always tried to avoid outstaying my welcome, but there was one thing nagging me that I needed to put right, and I'm glad I managed to do so a couple of years ago. On one of his **Kast off Kinks** visits to Derby, I insisted on buying him a pint in return for the one he bought me in 1976. He found that funny and gratefully accepted a glass of red wine. The last time we met, he mentioned that he'd seen me in the crowd on the previous night. I informed him he was mistaken as I wasn't out the previous night. He thought I was kidding at first, then realising I wasn't, he laughed and said, "In that case I wonder who that guy was that I kept smiling and nodding to all night"?

One nice moment to witness was at St Albans Arena when a couple of his little grandchildren recognised him and ran towards him shouting "Grandad". **Jim's** eyes lit up and a big smile beamed out from him as he scooped them into his arms and gave them a big loving hug. Images like these make it so difficult to take in that **Jim** has left us. My thoughts go out to his family and friends, including the many musicians who were close to him. He really was a true gentleman as well as a brilliant multi-talented musician, a very competent vocalist and a dedicated family man. Like thousands of others around the world I will miss him. **R.I.P. Jim Rodford.**

Sue: With Jim taking centre stage and with its strong bass line.....

<https://youtu.be/9zI17rn5-oU>

NEW * Hold Your Head Up Argent HQ {Stereo} youtu.be Single Version / Live Performance Edited/Synced with Studio Sound 1972....#5 U.S. Billboard Hot 100, #5 UK Singles Chart

LETTERS

From Darren Bender

By the way Sue, New York Groove also gets a mention in the great new movie Lady Bird. It's written and directed by Greta Gerwig who is the coolest actress working in American Independent cinema today. Its a fantastic movie and is currently winning lots of awards. [And is Oscar nominated]

Darren

From Dave Williams

I was woken in the night by the gales. The wind kept growing in strength and kept me awake. At 4.30am I heard a big bang on the roof above and the sound of a dislodged tile sliding down the roof. This happened twice to the same ridge tile in the last couple of years and the repairer assured me that this time he'd made it extra secure. For fear of it falling into my car I ran outside in my pjs and jumped into the car to move it back on my drive. As I started the engine the radio came on. What was blaring out? Only Hold Your Head Up by Argent. I thought I was dreaming and even more so in the morning when I saw the roof tile still in place. It definitely happened though! Those gusts were some of the most severe I've ever experienced.

Dave

INTERVIEW

Bob Harris celebrated The Old Grey Whistle Test programmes on his own BBC Radio 2 show. Each programme looks at a series of TOGWT. Programme 2, originally broadcast in 2011 and repeated on 25th January '18, covered the series that ran from September '72 until July '73. During the programme Bob speaks to Russ, Rod Argent and Colin Blunstone. The interview starts at about 34 minutes into the programme and lasts 10 minutes and ends with GGRnR. [Please note that this is available for a limited period of 28 days from the broadcast date]

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b013wvvyz#play>

BBC Radio 2 - Old
Grey Whistle Test 40,
Series 1, Episode 2

www.bbc.co.uk

Bob Harris celebrates the
classic music TV show. Each
programme looks at one
complete series of the original
Old Grey Whistle Test and
includes archive recordings ...

RECORDED BY OTHERS

I had put in Sweet's version of Where Do We Go From Here, a song from Into The Fire as reviewed by Dave last month. However, between my adding it and my proof reader (husband!) checking before this goes out, the video appears to have been blocked on copyright grounds.

Here instead is Elkie Brooks with Don't Want To Cry No More from her 1986 album No More The Fool.

<https://youtu.be/cJOou7WEQG0>