

The story behind the making of

# Like The Young And Brave Do

by Richard Lamplough

I have always enjoyed writing stories. I'm not the best writer in the world, but I'm certainly not the worst. For brief periods of my life I have kept diaries. I rarely look back at these but when I do they always bring back memories of the time a smile to my face.

And that's the key. This story is for **me**. I will be able to look back on it in ten years time and not only will bring back memories of the time I describe, but memories of the time I wrote it. And in case you've hit senile dementia early Richard, you started it in Riga on 29th December 2010, and you finished it on a train between London and Newcastle on 5th February 2011.

## Remember now?

So having established this story is for me and that senile old man pushing sixty, it's for you too if you have the inclination and patience to wade through it. I guess if you've found this particular inside pocket of the Fakes' website there's a reason you want to be here and, hopefully, you will enjoy the tale.

Please accept my apologies if there are parts that send you to sleep (unless this was the purpose of you reading it). There's a reason for every paragraph and hopefully the story trots along at an interesting enough pace to keep your interest.

Okay, enough waffle and maple syrup. If you're sitting comfortably, I'll begin.

*Like The Young And Brave Do* took about three years to arrange, record, produce and mix. That wasn't three years "full-time" of course; I needed to earn a living and, by and large, that meant being paid for doing non-musical things. And whilst I was in non-musical mode, it was always hard to find the creative energy to get on with the album.

I remember there was one track; it was *Oh My, Butterfly*... I switched on my computer to "carry on" with the track, only to find that the last time I had worked on it had been a full two years previously!

But this didn't bother me much, and of course I couldn't let it bother me; I really didn't have a choice in the matter. And, in fact, *Like The Young And Brave Do* became much like one of those huge 1000-piece jigsaws; you set up on a table in the corner of your living room. You make a start, you leave it for a while, you add some more pieces, you leave it for even longer, you add some more pieces, and so on.

Usually, none of the pieces that you added early on are "wrong", and none of them move in the time that you leave the jigsaw. And as time goes on the jigsaw looks more and more complete, until there are only about 50 pieces to place, and with one last push you're there.

The way I recorded *Like The Young And Brave Do* was slightly, but significantly, different from the way I recorded *Promised Land*. For reasons too complicated and boring to explain my home studio set-up was less advanced than it was in the *Promised Land* time and I had less "toys" at my disposal. So, for example, I only had two channels of compression at mix down, whereas for *Promised Land* I had twelve.

At this point maybe it's best to paint a picture for you which I will call *Snare Drum Reverb*.

Stay with me, folks, it's a cracker. There's a band, in a studio, and they are recording a song. As is usually the case with multi-track recording, they record the drums first. And when I say *multi-track* I mean recorded digitally on a computer, not on analogue tape.

The engineer decides to use a large *room* reverb for his snare drum as the working reverb, because it makes the track sound great. The whole production team lives with that reverb and get used to it until the vocalist steps up to the plate... and which point everyone decides that the drum reverb leaves no space for the vocal reverb, so with the click of a mouse the drum reverb is changed to smaller *gated* one.

This wouldn't have been possible twenty five years ago.

In the "old days" of analogue tape recording bands only had a limited number of tracks. In the sixties, seventies, and even eighties, recording engineers were restricted in all sorts of areas, including that wonderful place you now know so much about, *Snare Drum Reverb*.

What I mean is, they weren't restricted in the choice or amount of reverb they could apply to the snare, but once they made their decision, they had to commit their choice to tape, and that couldn't be changed later on.

I **know** you're still with me.

When it came to recording *Like The Young And Brave Do* you need to imagine that although I wasn't working with analogue tape I often

had to apply the principal principles as if I was. And what this meant was that I had to be smarr in the way I used my instruments, voices, and recording effects.

It's actually a very useful and disciplined way of working, but it takes incredible patience and adds hours and days to length of time a track takes to compete.

To give you an example: listen to track ten on the album. *Then It Will Be Spring*. Put your headphones on and checkout the second vocal line when the song actually starts (i.e. after the long introduction section). You hear two of my voices singing a slightly *processed* version of the line "*like it all seems kind of weird*" in stereo. Five minutes work, you're thinking.

More like five hours (plus coffee breaks).

Okay, so I'm starting to give you an idea of why my 1000-piece jigsaw took so long to put together, but before I talk about the picture on the jigsaw perhaps I should give you a little background of where I feel my main musical talents sit in the whole *let's make a record* thing. It will help set the context of the rest of the rest of this account.

### **Richard's talent list**

First, I am a song-writer. This is what I believe I do best. I have no problem in giving myself nine out of ten for this. You might disagree, but you're not on the panel, so tough luck.

Second, I am a vocal arranger. Eight out of ten, maybe even a nine.

Third, I am a singer. Sure, I wish I had a few more notes at the top of

my register but I have always been able to hold a tune or a harmony. Seven out of ten here folks, six once I've been singing an hour and am exhausted.

Fourth, I am a keyboard player. Six out of ten at best, but because the technology is so great these days I can cheat like hell when I can't get something right.

Fifth, but only a fraction below fourth I am a record producer. Again six out of ten.

Sixth, actually, maybe equal fifth I am a drum programmer and bass programmer. Six out of ten.

Seventh, and as about as far away from sixth as you can imagine, I can play some rhythm guitar until the chord shapes start hurting my fingers too much Two out of ten at best.

And finally, spanning across the entire list, I am a good enough recording engineer (six out of ten) to be able to record all my music to a technically high enough standard. I would, however, never trust my mix engineering skills to mix any of my songs without help from a few trusted professional engineers.

### **End of list**

Right, that's that out of the way. Now I need to get a little technical for the second time in this account, but please bear with me.

Thirty years ago there were no such things as home studios. How things have changed, much to the detriment of traditional recording studios.

But let's make things a little clearer here: there are **HOME** studios and there are home **STUDIOS**.

### **A HOME studio**

This could be just like the one my friend Hip-Hop has. He's a guy in his mid twenties who lives with his girlfriend on the fifth floor of a tower block about five miles from me. His little studio set up nestles nicely into an area about the size of a banker's wallet, and the only time he needs to turn down the volume on his five metre wide flat-screen TV in the other room is when he records his vocals.

### **A home STUDIO**

This could be just like the one my friend Hippy has. He's a guy in his mid-fifties who also lives about five miles away from me (the other direction).

Hippy lives in a large detached house, with his wife, his four kids, his and an exceptionally long-eared pet rabbit called Peace. The entire basement of Hippy's house is converted into his music studio, including a specially sound-proofed room suitable for recording 3-minute drum solos.

And that folks, is the key. Not *drum solos* as such (beastly things in my opinion) but **live** drums.

My home studio, in truth, sits at the mid-point between Hip-Hop's and Hippy's. But with the best will in the world, I cannot possibly record live drums there. I don't have the space, I don't have the soundproofing and I don't have the microphones. And that's all before questioning whether or not I have the engineering expertise.

All this is rather a shame, because some of my favourite *pop* music ever recorded (circa 1972 to circa 1985) is recorded with real drums.



**Richard soap-box moment** coming up... skip a page if you're getting bored.

Here's an example: *Like A Virgin* by Madonna, released in 1984. It was written by Billy Steinberg and Tom Kelly and produced by Nile Rogers. I happen to believe that if this pop song was written and released in 2011 (and you can pick whatever artist you like) it would still be a hit. But most of the magic, for me, of Madonna's 1984 version is wrapped up in the drum part by Nile's great mate, Tony Thompson.

I may be wrong, but this might be one of the last *pop classics* that had real drums. By 1985 even one of my all time idols, Stevie Wonder, himself an amazing drummer, had become hooked on the new drug: the drum machine. And it was all downhill after that.

I love great pop music - but the best pop music needs real musicians: in particular real bass players and real drummers who work on a song together, and then say at the end of take 5: "You know what, we both slip out of the groove for a split second on verse 2, but the way we slip back in is **so** delicious, this just **has** to be the version to go with."

Try telling that the computer programmer who arranges the backing tracks for the X-Factor.

I'm not talking about rock music here. Rock will usually always use real drums and real bass and can constantly sound fresh for this very reason. But good pop music, for me, died in about 1987. David Bowie, 1972 to 1984? - I would call him more of pop act than rock act, and as pop music goes, there's nothing much finer.

Okay. Enough already.

One of my favourite songs from the *Promised Land* album is *Criminal Crack*. Have a listen to it: I'm sure you will agree, it simply **has** to have real drums. But on *Like The Young And Brave Do*, my studio set-up wouldn't give me this luxury so when I chose the tracks for the album I had to bear this in mind.

My drum machine tirade just now might make you think that I'm totally against *programmed* drum (and bass) parts. Far from it, they can be JUST what a particular pop song needs, but it's all how you use them.

So, to take a perfect pop song from the errr... *modern* era - Kylie Minogue's *Can't Get You Out Of My Head*. This was written and produced by Cathy Dennis and Rob Davis. The music that pushes the track along is clever, catchy, and absolutely brilliant. It is, of course, programmed more than played.

Rob Davis was the guitarist for seventies pop group Mud, and Cathy Dennis had a few hits of her own in the 1980s, so these two people, more than most know about using real drums and bass. But, I'm sure the idea of using these for *Can't Get You Out Of My Head* wouldn't have even entered their heads.

Quite simply, the landscape that pop finds itself in the modern era is one where Jo Public only expects to hear *programmed* music underneath glossy, faultless, vocals. That's all they've ever had for the last fifteen years, and it's they'll probably ever get for the next fifteen hundred.

But as I've just said, programmed drums can sound great, if you know how to do programme them. And I like to think I know how to

programme them to a good enough standard, as I detailed in my talent list a few pages back.

My rule with programmed drums is *Don't try to be a real drummer*. Sure I follow the *rules* of drumming, by and large, but I never, for example, try to programme a tom-tom fill. They just sound rubbish. Or rather, they sound rubbish when I do them. Instead I do things that add character to the rhythm of a track but might, in fact, not be actually possible if a real drummer was playing the part.

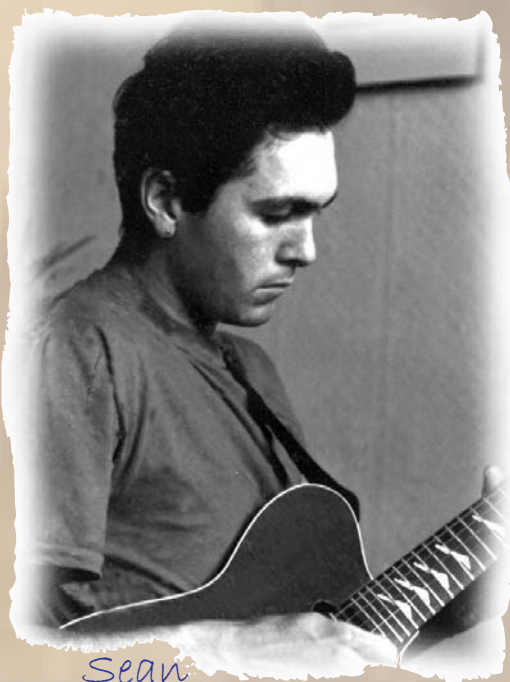
An example would be what I do with the verses of *Looking Inside*. The hi-hat part pans from left to right with a practically impossible 16th type trill when it's 75% to the right. At the same time there are four different tunings of the snare drum, playing in the same order, low to high, every two bars.

I know I seem to have been droning on and on about drum parts, but going back to that 1000-piece jigsaw, I feel I need to get over just how long I spent working on the drums for the album, bearing in mind it's only *Words Are Falling*, *Stay A Little Stronger* and *Oh My, Butterfly* that don't use them.

And much of this work was quite challenging for me. Looking back at my talent list, this isn't really surprising. At the age of seven or eight I was sitting at the family piano, picking out Beatles tunes by ear or singing the various harmonies. I didn't even get behind a drum kit until I was about seventeen, and when I did it only took me five minutes to realise I definitely was **not** a drummer.

But I can still hear drum parts, and that's crucial I guess. My left hand will tap out the kick drum part whilst my right hand does the snare. And in my head, somewhere, the hi-hat pattern will gently be going tick-tick-tick.

I programmed all the drum and bass parts for *Like The Young And Brave Do*, with the help of Sean Anderson on a few tracks. This is a good point to mention Sean, who played all the guitars on the album, except the solo on *The Sweetest Taste*, which was played by Andy Roberts.



My relationship with my chosen guitarist is one of the most important factors in making my music. That's because, everything else I can do myself (well, okay, I can't belt out a tune like Aretha Franklin,

but you know what I mean). When it comes to guitars, I simply haven't got the ability to do anything more than basic. And I don't want basic; I want guitar parts that shimmer, shout and shine, like the young and Sean's do.

Sean and I go back to when we were both 25, in a band together, convinced that we would be famous when the most we became famous for was writing off a succession of vans whilst touring in France. They were **genuine** road accidents of course, but perhaps were a sign of things to come for the future of our band.

But when the band split up, we stayed good friends and continued to work together. For *Like The Young And Brave Do*, Sean would come round when each track was about 60% complete. Most of rhythm and keyboards part would be done, and there would usually be a guide vocal so that he could hear a pretty total song.

I would usually have a rough idea of the sort of principal parts I felt a song needed, sing Sean my ideas and he would then fire some sounds at me and start playing along.

Normally within 15 minutes or so he would be cooking. I would then record as much as I needed before we'd move on to what I would often call the wild stuff. At this point I'd just let him do whatever he wanted... some wouldn't quite work, but some would be absolutely amazing. A few takes after this we would have everything wrapped up.

Sean and I have much respect for each other's opinions, musically, but will fight our corners when we're both convinced we're right. The only time remember we reached a stale-mate was with the rhythm part for *Looking Inside*. I wanted a funky little thing that played, by and large on the downbeats and for the first few takes that's what Sean did, but he became dissatisfied with it and started to play more on the upbeats, almost a reggae kind of thing, and the more I asked him to go back to downbeats, the more he stayed on the upbeats.

But hey, I already knew I had enough good stuff in the first couple of takes, and listening to it now Sean baby, I'm right aren't I?

Sean's sessions with me were always really relaxed (apart from that one Looking Inside moment!) and it was

often when he was at his most relaxed, usually when the main parts of the track were done that he could come up with some absolute magic.

One example of this was when we'd finished the main sections of *Then It Will Be Spring*. I think I was in the kitchen making us a both a cup of coffee, and I heard Sean change the settings on his guitar and start to play an arpeggio type thing around the main chords of the song. By accident, I had left my tape recorder running, so once we'd had coffee, we played it back, both loved it and he then added a solo over the top. This became the long instrumental introduction... I never planned for this song to be over seven minutes long!

Apart from Sean and me there are only three other musicians on *Like The Young And Brave Do* and two of them play on *The Sweetest Taste*. Barnsley's finest, Andy Roberts plays the guitar solo on the outro and Balham's finest, Phillip Ojo contributes the clarinet solo in the middle section. Old friend Graham Lipscomb helped me out with the organ part on *Can't Quite Believe*.

And before I talk a little about the vocalists who helped me with the album, I need to mention my good friend Mike Dignam, a very talented drummer and guitarist, but who trained as a sound engineer. What a great friend to have! When each track was complete Mike would come round and play the lead role in mixing the song.

So, let's talk about the vocals for a moment or two.

Over the years I've built up great relationships with fantastic vocalists. They have tended to come from different *stages* in my musical life: some from the time when I was



signed to Virgin, some from the time when I was getting my name around London, as a "useful" guy to know with a good little recording set-up, some through gospel choirs I have sung with and some, simply, through friends.

I always remember the voices I really love and I asked some of the owners to help me out on *Like The Young And Brave Do*. Luckily for me, they all said "Yes."

I quite like my voice; it has its own unique character I guess and there are so many of my lyrics that are so personal to me, I can only imagine me singing them.

But I know my voice's limitations, for example my vocal register. I've mentioned this earlier in this account. Whilst my vocal register is just about large enough (two octaves) it's rather on the low side. I wish I had just a few more notes at the top of my range, before I have to go into my falsetto, which I very rarely do because it's a bit rubbish. I think the only time I do on the album is towards the very end of *Looking Inside* where I sing a little ad-lib over the chorus structure (the part where there's no lead vocal and no rhythm.)

So, because I know my voice's limitations I know how to combine it with people who have fantastic voices. And what I often do is create a solid wall of these voices, and just balance mine, rather precariously, on top.

This probably has much to do with the fact that when I was about twenty, I spent about two months immersed in David Bowie's glorious *Young Americans* album. I loved it then and I still love it now. In truth, my *Promised Land* album leans more towards this approach than *Like The*

*Young And Brave Do*, but the album's opening track, *It's Kind Of*, is a definite nod in that direction.

The various vocal walls on *Like The Young And Brave Do*, whilst not the largest in the world were provided with soul and intimacy by Janet Kumah, Judi Grant, Annette Anderson, Jordan Bailey, Chyna, Rebecca Leigh-White, Danny Williams and Ali Maas. Sometimes two or three of them would be singing together, sometimes they would be signing individually.

Meanwhile, Ali sang what I would call the *delicate* stuff for me on *Words Are Falling* and *Oh My Butterfly*. And wow, how beautifully she did that for me.

I loved working with all these guys. Arranging backing vocal parts come near the very top of my talent list so, usually, I would have every part written out before they would turn up for a session. My rules were pretty much the same each time "Follow the parts I have written, please, but interpret them the way you really feel you should sing them."

That's not to say, I wasn't open to ideas, and on some songs I would deliberately leave plenty of room for musical embroidery, for example, Rebecca's chorus melody on *Sure Feels Like You* (I then matched my vocal to exactly what she did, the octave underneath) and, in particular, Ali's outro on *Oh, My Butterfly*.

So perhaps I should move on to talk a little about how I write my songs. There is no set pattern, but it usually follows one of two approaches.

**MUSIC FIRST:** I sit at the piano doodling with chord structures and a rhythm and tempo that appeals to me, and when the chords are 90%

there I start humming along until the right melody pops up from somewhere in my heart or head. There might be a lyric idea that crops up at the same time and if so I will write what I can at that particular moment, but I probably won't finish it. This might not happen for days, weeks or months.

**LYRICS FIRST:** I write a complete set of lyrics to a rhythmical structure that's in my head. Sometimes that structure that can be a song by another artist - I simply write my own set of words! Again, I might not finish the song for days or weeks or months and by this time I might not even remember where the original inspiration came from.

Actually, I say there are two principal ways I write my songs - maybe I should mention a third because it's the strangest thing in the world for me.

Very occasionally I dream a melody or lyric idea. I promise it's true; I am fast asleep, I am having a vivid dream, and within the dream I am singing a melody or saying some song lyrics. Then I wake with a start, and I've got all of a minute to crawl out of bed, switch on whatever recording device is nearest to hand and record the ideas - otherwise they are gone forever.

Sometimes the ideas are pretty good, and sometimes they're pretty terrible.

**Good idea:** My opening line on *Then You're There* from the *Promised Land* album is "I just dreamed of a melody somehow." It was weird; I dreamed some sort of tune. Now whether or not the final chorus melody that I settled for was the one I dreamed is slightly more difficult to say. But even if it wasn't the point is, my dream inspired the song.

**Terrible idea:** Best not to say, actually.

When I write songs, for me the chords are **everything**, often more important than the melodies. I don't listen to much classical music but when I do it's to people like Rachmaninov, Elgar and Prokofiev, you know, the *big chord guys*. I can leave Mozart and his buddies,.. "too many notes" to pinch a line from Amadeus (I think!) And it's no surprise my favourite composer of all time is John Williams. I am completely swept away by his chord structures.

As for my words.... Well, they seem fall into three categories.

**A-types:** I might write words that are very personal to me, perhaps about a loved one, or something that's affecting me greatly at that particular time.

**B-types:** I might write a set of words that aren't about anything I am going through at that time or about anyone I am close to at the time. They will probably tell some sort of story that I have completely made up. Alternatively, they might be a set of words that just errr... sound nice.

**C-types:** These are B-types that have a few random A-type bits thrown in here and there.

My favourite songs are usually always A-types and of the twelve songs on *Like The Young And Brave Do* ten of them fall into this camp. The exceptions are *Peachy Blue Obsession* and *Can't Quite Believe*, which are C-types.

I've never really had the inclination to write pop lyrics about "weighty" issues. The two words, *pop* and *weighty* simply don't sit very well



together for me, and so many songs I've heard that try to combine the two fail miserably and sound hideous.

There are notable exceptions, and it's no surprise they tend to be written by truly great song-writers like John Lennon, Stevie Wonder, Elvis Costello and Sting.

And, let's face it; I am not worthy to tie the bootlaces of those four.

So, I make no excuses about the fact that what I tend to write most about in my songs is love and lust. But there's a twist. I can be love and lust for an individual, but it can also be love and lust to "make it" as some sort of successful muso. It's not an obsession any more (I'm too old for such nonsense), but hey, I'd at least like to sell enough albums to cover my accountant's fees.

So I mix and match. One of my favourite sets of lyrics from *Like The Young And Brave Do* is *Kooky Hooky Floosie*. It's written as if it's a letter to a loved one. But the loved one is, in fact, the bloody music business. (We're still not speaking very much by the way, but I guess, things have been a little easier since we started our trial separation.)

Since 1986 I have had a small book made of recycled paper. The cover has drawings of all sorts of flying and non-flying insects. I call this book my *butterfly book*, and it holds all my song lyrics. It's full now and the scribbles within it are a complete mess, but whenever I want to write a new song, somehow I manage to find enough space to get my ideas down.

And whilst I think I'm a good song-writer I am certainly not a prolific one. I can go two years without writing a single one. Then maybe two or three will come out in fairly

close succession. Not surprisingly, if I making an album, and perhaps need to write new songs, then that's what I do. But somehow, I think I will only ever need one butterfly book.

I think this account is almost complete now. Hopefully, I have got over the 1000-piece jigsaw analogy. Making an album this way might not very exciting, but there are always some magical moments. To try to convey some of these I will end this story with my favourite memories of each song. These memories will also act as the icing on the cake as to how I made *Like The Young And Brave Do*.

## It's Kind Of

Have you ever had one of those nights out with somebody filled with lustful heartache and poorly hidden innuendoes and then woken up the next morning thinking "Damn, if only I hadn't...."?

Of course you have.

So here's the story: Boy meets girl. He's optimistic and she's beautiful. They knew each other well when they were much younger. He invites her over to his place for errr... a meal.

She comes over, she's even more beautiful and he's even more optimistic. She's wearing a T shirt that cost £35 and should have had a health warning attached to it. He's wearing a T shirt that cost £1.99 from Primark.

They drink, they dance and they laugh about old times. He's desperate for her to stay the night, but, of course, she makes her excuses and leaves.

It's quite unusual for me to write a set of words without any music, but occasionally that's what I do, and I'm often pleased with the final results. I explained the process briefly a few pages ago.

When I write this way I don't hum a tune as such, but I write using some sort of poetical stanza that scans.

For *It's Kind Of*, the song started the morning after the night before, tellingly, as I was doing the washing up. I simply started trotting out words that appealed to me: "It's kind of you to see me; I'm such a lonely child. It's cruel to wear that T-shirt; you should know it drives me wild..."

The rest of the song just flowed from there and though they took me most of the day to complete, the words were finished by early evening, and I deliberately hadn't been anywhere near the piano.

When I did put myself into Studio-Land the next day I concentrated on a tempo and groove rather than any sort of melody or chord sequence. The earliest musical event was the constant meandering synthesizer line that ran throughout the track, and once I was happy with that I added a few percussion events and a bass line.

By the end of the next day, the actual writing of the song was finished. After toying with various musical adventures I realised that all the track really needed was a simple sort of rock n roll chord sequence for most of it with some sort of change for what needed to be a very big bridge. Melodically, I didn't think the song needed anything very special...

just one of my low "groove-type things" that took off at the bridges.

When Sean came round he suggested a bass line change and added some percussion to make the track lift a little more. As for his guitars, I can safely say that out of all the tracks on the album this featured his loosest brief. I just told him I wanted a wild noisy part, a cute funky part and a something else completely manic.

So that's what I got, and I can remember thinking when he left: "Err... what a complete mess."

But that's what I wanted or rather, what I wanted was a perfectly controlled mess, and it would be my job to sort it out. And that's what I did, over a two to three day period.

If there was any pain in the track it was recording the backing vocals. Well, not recording them, as such, layering all the harmonies and putting them into stereo. It's a four part harmony, and it's all sang by one girl: Janet Kumah.

So, I'd sing her each part I wanted, she'd do

a fantastic job on each, and I'd record about 12 versions of each part, using the best 8 to create that wonderfully enormous wall of sound. The singing took about two hours, but technical stuff afterwards took me about two days.

It killed me.... kind of.



## Looking Inside

Like many of my songs, *Looking Inside* just came about from meandering around on the piano, although in truth it was as much due to meandering around with a bass line and a drum pattern.

The song came out in a rush really; I only had a sketch for the words for the first verse after my first writing session, but as I the chorus was done and dusted. The more I sang the chorus the more I was convinced somebody had to have come up with that melody before - it's just so simple.

I remember I sang the tune to a few of my friends. "Are you sure it doesn't remind you of anything?" I kept saying.

The actual recording of *Looking Inside* was loads of hard work, and these almost overshadow the magical moments

Almost but not quite.

Creating Annette's vocal symphony was very rewarding and when I came up with the string movement to support her in the third verse I was thrilled. As for my vocal, I remember the third verse in particular when I just screamed it at the top of my voice and practically nailed it all in one take.

As for working with Danny - that was great, and very interesting because it

was the first time we worked together properly, and I wasn't sure how much I could push him to get that ultimate performance. Him having had a number one record and toured with The Beatles, and all that.

The production of *Looking Inside* was very challenging but what I love about the song is that despite all the hundreds of events and production ideas I can listen to the final version and still hear it as a simple song with a set of lyrics that mean so much to me.

When Danny died of cancer, I lost a good friend, and the world lost a wonderful singer. But I can be happy that I have so many happy memories of spending time with him, and this all kicked off when we recorded *Looking Inside* together.



## Words Are Falling

Recording *Words Are Falling* for the album was quite straight-forward. The key for me was always finding the right string arrangement for the entire song, but once I had done that it was pretty much plain-sailing.

I worked hard to create a sort of organ-noise type of sound to take the place of the strings for the first half of the song and I'm really proud of that *up-lift* feeling you get when the strings come back in on the second chorus, with the bass to give it extra weight. (Well, you might not get that *up-lift* feeling, but I do!)

I created the little noises and events from a selection of Sean's guitar



out-takes from a completely different song we recorded together four years previously. Sometimes I feel I'm like a homing pigeon - I know exactly where to find those little moments of inspiration!

Recording the lead vocal was a little tricky but I got there in the end and recording Ali's vocal was relatively easy.

Ali has always loved this song. When she came round to sing for me I didn't even need to give her a lyric sheet, she just recalled the words instantly. And, of course, she's so professional; she heard every nuance in my delivery and matched it perfectly.



Finding the vocal reverb for *Words Are Falling* was one of my highlights of recording the album. I coupled the reverb with a delay that I pushed manually through the desk using a couple of faders. It meant my finished mix was one of those nervy "you're on the last chorus - don't blow it!" kind of affairs and was, of course, a total one-off. There are no other mixes of the song apart from an instrumental version.

I could try to explain what *Words Are Falling* is about, but I won't because it's simply too complicated, (there's another dream in there!) and in some ways, recalling it all is slightly uncomfortable for me. So you can decide.

Whatever you want it be about, that's what it's about.

## Sure Feels Like You

Looking at my butterfly book I can't quite believe there was such a big gap between the two principle times of writing - eight months!

But the actual writing was pretty easy; a case of setting up a musical groove, dropping in a few simple chords and scating a melody.

And there was also something very rewarding to be able to write a love song that I wasn't disguising with mystery and metaphor, and just say: "Here, this is for you."

I approached the backing vocal arrangement for *Sure Feels Like You*, in a different way than my normal method. Usually I work out all my backing vocal harmonies, note by note, before my vocalists arrive, but in this case I sang the main tune to Chyna, Rebecca and Jordan and then let them find their own harmonies.

Chyna took charge as Musical Director for the session and within ten minutes they had the parts nailed. Part of the reason why I adore the vocals on *Sure Feels Like You* is that I let the girls find their own arrangement - they just seem so

*natural* and at ease with themselves. What's also telling is that they were recorded together using one microphone. I could not adjust the relative levels later on, so we had to stick to whatever *mix* we came up with live.



Jordan



Chyna



Rebecca

would have mixed the high *tune* harmony slightly louder, but from the day we recorded them, the main harmony I've always heard most is the middle one sang, I think, by Chyna. For me, that's perfect. With the backing vocals in the bag I said: "OK, who wants to sing the main vocal with me?"

"Go on Bex," said Chyna, "It's your kind of tune." So Rebecca turned over a few versions for me and then they all went home.

The mix was very simple; just a case of having a little fun with the synthesizer solo, and a few manual mutes here and there. Like many of my other tracks *Sure Feels Like You* is one of those songs when I can listen to the final version and remember how I recorded every note, sound and event. I think they all work together; I can't hear anything I'm unhappy with.

But whilst I am delighted with the final version, and loved how it all came together, my most cherished memories of the song revolve around the time I wrote it and when I put the roughest few ideas down on tape.

## Stay At Home Merry-go-round

With *Stay At Home Merry-go-round* I found myself in the fairly unusual position of writing and recording a song simultaneously. The lyrics took an age - for example the little section about being the "saddest for sure, cause every day as I open my door..." took about a week to get right. But, truth be told, I'm thrilled with every line and I feel the final result was well worth the effort.

The most interesting thing for me was that I never wrote a fixed melody for the verses. I left it completely to time of the actual recording of the vocal itself. Whatever I sang, and was happy

with, became the melody. There were many happy accidents: "my ansaphone curiosity creeps" for example.

Recording the vocal was difficult; I'd only have to stumble on one word and I'd lose it totally, but I'm delighted with what I achieved.

As for the backing track; we went from Earth to Mars and back again. I say "we" because it was very much a two way effort between Sean and me. It was hard, hard work.

Judi's vocals took a while to get right, but as ever she recorded a few spectacular adlibs that became good little hooks in their own right.



Judi

Of all the songs on the album, *Stay At Home Merry-go-round* was, I think, the hardest work. It also seemed to take forever. Sometimes, when a track requires so much effort to get right it's easy to lose sight of its original appeal. And bearing this in mind I can't be surprised that my favourite memories of the song are the events behind the lyrics of the last verse.

But I'm not going to recount them here, thank you.

## Kooky Hooky Floosie

I was watching some late-night Friday trash TV and suddenly had the urge to write something groovy, cute and smutty. So I thumped around on the piano for half an hour and came up with *Kooky Hooky Floosie*.

It's really just a rock n' roll song, but the work, the work the work! I spent an entire two hour car journey to the West Country perfecting the first bridge lyrics, and the entire journey back perfecting the second.

Recording Sean's various guitar parts was a lot of fun, but recording my various vocal parts wasn't. All the harmonies on the track are mine and to get the vari-speed effect, I had to slow the down song, thereby changing the pitch and sing each part. And to get the weight of the backing vocals right each part had to be sung eight times. It took days and days, bored me to tears, but I got there in the end.

I couldn't resist having all the fun in the world with *Kooky Hooky Floosie*, and whilst the backing vocals were hard work, the lead vocal was a breeze. What I'm particularly proud of are the words that make up the vocal sounds. There's a rhyme and reason to every one of them.

I can't help loving this song; it's just so ridiculously cheeky. The more I hear it, the easier it is to forget about those days and weeks I spent perfecting those impossible vocals. For me, they just sit now in the track playing their part with the other bits and pieces - no less important and no more.



## Peachy Blue Obsession

The writing of *Peachy Blue Obsession* came at a sort of turning point for me. I was toying with what direction my musical career should take and in the middle of a mass of forced and false promises *Peachy Blue Obsession* was my one little piece of honesty to keep me happy.

The song came about by doodling about on the piano, and feeling rather reflective. It's dominated by an F diminished chord. As I played this chord and the few others that support it, I hummed a melody and jotted down some words. So much in my life at the time was a sort of *I don't know*: picking something up, and then just putting it down again.

The song came on quite quickly, but as I was toying with the lyrical hook after the big diminished chord I realised I needed some headspace before I could finish it.

So I went for a half hour run. With three or four minutes to go I was waiting to cross the road by my *slump in a heap traffic* lights. Just at that moment a truly stunning mixed race girl in a pink jeep pulled up and stopped at the lights. She was poised and looked like a goddess. I was exhausted and I looked like crap. I half smiled at her, and she half laughed at me. For ten seconds she was my peachy blue obsession. Then the lights changed, she waved goodbye and drove off.

The recording of the song came together piece by piece, and I love all the events and noises. Musically, the journey's end was in sight once Sean had added his gloriously funky guitar part.

The mix itself wasn't too difficult either. I made sure to give the events and noises plenty of level, in particular the bass frequencies within the opening couple of bars. What's more important than the individual events, however, is the overall atmosphere that they create.

*Peachy Blue Obsession* will always be a very special song for me.

## Can't Quite Believe

I'd had, for a number of years, the lyrical hook *can't quite believe my disbelief* drifting around in my head. I'd even scribbled it down in my butterfly book but had never got round to doing anything with it.

Then one day I was rooting through my old cassette tapes (**kids under the age of about 20**: ask your parents about these) getting all nostalgic and having a good grin at the same time. I came across a little jazz chord sequence that lasted about a minute and a half. "There's a song here," I thought and before long I'd knocked *Can't Quite Believe* into reasonable shape.

I had, at the time, sufficient lyrical inspiration make it a half-love song, and I adored it immediately. I knew I wanted to stick to a traditional jazz structure and arrangement but I also knew I wanted to make the song my own type of jazz. Both characters, I feel, are pretty easy to identify.

The traditional parts are wrapped up in the bass line, the brush ride cymbal, the jazz guitar and the organ part. I knew from the outset that my keyboard playing was too limited to cope with what I wanted the organ to do so my old pal Graham came up one Saturday lunch time to knock it off for me.

So much for tradition. Lets move on to the Fake Lake Supernovas' style of jazz. **Rule one:** construct a percussion part out of silly noises. **Rule two:** add oodles of wild and wacky guitar: **Rule three:** come up with lyrics like "What sad news, found guitars hard to use." **Rule four:** Do lots of crazy things with vocal effects. **Rule five:** break as many traditional jazz rules as you can.

That's it really.

Perhaps it's that mix of tradition and non-tradition that makes *Can't Quite Believe* the most pleasing song on the album for me. Or maybe it's the wonderful memory of recording all the instrumental and vocal parts and the people who helped me with it. Or perhaps it's just the way the song seems to work as a finished piece. Probably it's a mixture of all of these.

Certainly, there are songs that mean more to me *emotionally* but if I was sent to a desert island and told I could only take one song from the album, this would be the song I would take.

## Stay A Little Stronger

When I found out about my dad's brain tumour and that he only had a three month prognosis I knew I wanted to write a song for him. My problem was that I just wasn't sure how I would approach it and, in fact, I wasn't actually sure I could do it all.

It was something I desperately wanted to do but I was determined not to force it. I made the decision that if whatever I was writing was turning into something dull and forgettable I'd abandon it.

But what I came up with, for me, certainly isn't dull and forgettable. One evening I started playing around with some piano chords. For me this was my crying time. When I found the movement from those three chords in D major to the same three in F major (and then back again) I cried quite a lot.

I played the chords repeatedly and as I played the melody and the lyrics fell into place. It was quite fitting that on the evening of my mum and dad's wedding anniversary after I'd finally cracked the bridge parts my melody, chords and lyrics became a song. That was at about 11.30 and the rest of the night became a blur. I grabbed a few hours sleep somewhere along the way and by mid morning the next day (a Saturday) the song was done and dusted.

It would be easy for me to write pages on what my dad meant to me and pages more on his strength and courage over that most inspiring of times, but I don't think this is the place. In a sense, *Stay A Little Stronger* says everything I need to say.

I knew for the recording of *Stay A Little Stronger* I wanted masses of guitars, a simple piano part and no drums. I heard the bass line instantly, recorded it, and then called Sean to come round and do the guitars for me. The only specific brief I gave him was the acoustic part, otherwise he had completely free reign. We had, as I remember, a magical evening. I adore his parts on this song: he's added so much I couldn't have imagined, I love in particular his acoustic arpeggio part on the outro.

With guitars done I made sure the rest of the instrumentation was there purely in supportive role and moved

on to the challenge of the lead vocal. It was another balmy evening, and I just shut myself in my vocal booth, thought of my dad, and sang my heart out.

And that's all I really need say about recording *Stay A Little Stronger*. From start to finish the song took just four weeks to record and mix, and every moment was an absolute joy. I took a version down to my mum and dad, couldn't possibly face playing it to them there and then, but was so thrilled when they phoned me a few days later to say how much they both loved it.

My dad's funeral was a joyous occasion really. Horsham Catholic Church was absolutely packed and as the day moved from dawn to dusk I appreciated more and more how much my dad was loved by so many people. My mum had asked me to read a passage from one of the Gospels at the service, but with her blessing I read the words to *Stay A Little Stronger* instead.

## Then it Will Be Spring

My mum has always been an enthusiastic letter writer. Over the years she has regularly typed the latest news on a couple of sides of A4, photocopied it five times, and sent it round to her five children and their wives or husbands. She even keeps copies of all of them and files them away as some sort of diary of her life, which I find touching.

In many ways her jottings have become a bond between all us children; the first couple of letters we received after my dad died were amongst the most heartfelt, and at the end of one she wrote:

*"I have done some more planting in the garden, so all I need now is the winter to come and go and then it will be spring."*

I repeated the words again and again. All I need now is the winter to come and go and then it will be spring. There was so much beauty, and rhythm in one sentence I knew I was going to turn it into a song.

So that's what I did. The completed song took quite a while, but the essential elements all came together on one afternoon.

I had always wanted one song on the album to be in triplet time and I knew this track gave me the perfect opportunity. So I fooled around with a simple chord structure in D major and started humming. And before long the song fell into place.

Within an hour or so I had written the chorus. I almost jumped for joy when I made the double tie up between *Let my love / Then my love* and *Then my love / Then it will be spring*.

Having come up with the chorus I recorded a simple rhythm track and bass line. As I worked, the verse structure started to take shape. I wanted the melody to just float around finding its own way with whatever words popped into my head. The first two lines set the tone:

*"Like we all feared,  
Like it seems kind of weird,  
To get your letters and four letters,  
Have just disappeared."*

The *four letters* I refer to are B-E-A-R which was an affectionate nickname my dad acquired many years previously and used by all of his children and grandchildren.



I would like to say that writing the two verses was easy. Not true. The words were so important to me, and the structure of the melody so challenging, I just couldn't rush it. Although I had the basic feel sorted out on the first day of writing, I only managed to complete about three quarters of the lyrics for the first verse and hadn't even started the second verse.

Over the next few days the words trickled into my butterfly book line by line. There was only one that was eluding me and finally, a week later, sitting in a coffee shop in Kensington, with my niece Helen and her friend Deborah it came to me. "What are you smiling at?" asked Helen. "So much truth and treasure," I replied.

The recording of the song took a while; there are lots of parts there, but all of it was really enjoyable, particularly doing the vocals with Janet and Danny. And sure, I know I got a little self-indulgent with the long intro and outro, but I can forgive myself that.

Whilst my mum has always been supportive enough over the years of my music but I think all she's ever really wanted for me is to get a *proper job*. So it meant a great deal to me when she told me how much she liked *Then It Will Be Spring*.

I've always had a dream to make a video for the song, featuring a young army captain and his sweetheart at a small-town dance just after the war. The band would be playing the song, everyone would be doing a waltz type thing, with the captain and his girl being the focal point. The whole video would have those glorious, if slightly musky colours of the late 1940s and early 1950s.

I'd be the singer in the band.

## The Sweetest Taste

*The Sweetest Taste* is the oldest song on the album. It's a song I have always had a soft spot for and one I always associate it with a few people who were close to me many years ago.

I wrote *The Sweetest Taste* in my usual way: a hour or so turning around a chord structure whilst I waited for a melody to blow through the window.

I knew from the moment I wrote the song that I wanted two voices, an octave apart, to hold the tune in the verses. In the simple two bar bridge I wanted to let the song drop before returning to a chorus with a chord structure very similar to the verse. At this point I didn't want a huge vocal change, just a slight lift with a simple lyrical hook.

*The Sweetest Taste* has been through a few arrangements in its lifetime. That said, none of them have drastically changed the character of the song and the only essential differences have been the tempo and the feel of the drums and bass.

I thought, when I started the recording for *Like The Young And Brave Do*, that the most difficult job would be recording the verse vocals. It would have been easy enough for one of the girls to record the *up-the-octave* part, but that would not have given me the effect I was after.

So I did it myself, and discovered the trick was to record this vocal first, and then track the main one to it. The high part was recorded, I seem to remember, a full seven semitones down from the original key which meant singing it incredibly slowly. It's weird and wacky, but exactly what I wanted.

Whilst have happy memories of recording the song, and taking so many different musical journeys to get to the final version that I was happy with, my favourite memories are of the moments that inspired me to write the words, and the people who made those moments possible.

One is a good looking boy, and one is a good looking girl. In the old days they were both single, these days they are both happily married (second marriages for each of them) and they both have children. And, these days, whilst I barely ever see them, they are both *Facebook* friends of mine, although one refuses to load up a profile picture.

Spoilsport.

## Oh My, Butterfly

Some songs seem to take me a month or two to write. Others seem to take an hour or two; songs like *Oh My, Butterfly*.

I had a melody floating around and a lyrical hook. Within a couple of hours I had everything just about sorted including the arrangement and instrumentation ideas. I even knew that I wanted the track to close the album.

There was no doubt that I was going through one of my self-doubt stages when I wrote *Oh My, Butterfly*. That's fine, the albums full of these sort of references, it's just they are most focussed in this particular track.

Technically, *Oh My Butterfly* was the most difficult song on the album to get right because I recorded it in real time. I'm sure there are easier ways of doing this than how I actually did it, but it worked fine for me so that was that!

What I did was to set up the computer to record me playing a guide piano and vocal. The computer had to work out what tempo I moved along at, and because I was slipping and sliding all over the place the poor little thing had its work cut out. Anyway, we got there in the end, and this meant I had my own unique version of the song on which everything else could be built.

I knew it wouldn't be that difficult because there wasn't much to go on top anyway. The bass was a little fiddly to sort out, but once that was done it was pretty easy and I polished off the strings and lead vocal relatively quickly.

Sean's acoustic guitar part was difficult to get right because of my erratic timing but, as I could have predicted, Ali didn't need long to get to grips with tracking my lead vocal. Between them they were inspired to add the events that make the song special: Sean's distant guitar noises and Ali's wonderful adlibs at the end. I should point out, however, that the producer deserves some credit for these!

When Mike came over he changed very little of my proposed mix which, like the recording, was a technical nightmare. The delays would fly in and out at random depending on how much I'd push a particular button. If I didn't push enough I wouldn't really hear them, but if I pushed too much they'd come back into the mix too heavily and I'd have to start again. And that's what I had to do. Again... and again... and again.

Eventually I triumphed, and the final mix was perfect for me. There seems nothing remarkable to say about *Oh My Butterfly*; I just think it's a very pretty little song.

*The end.*