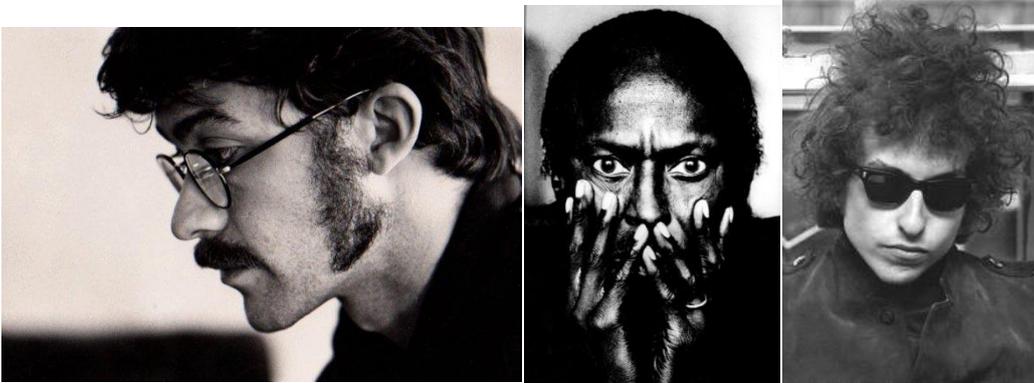


Introducing Michael Waddacor

Passionate music writer, critic and documentarian



"Michael Waddacor is without a doubt one of the finest rock music critics and writers I have had the pleasure of working with. His knowledge of the music business is mind-boggling and he has always demonstrated an almost child-like enthusiasm for all things musical. I would dearly love to see Michael back at the helm doing what he does best — writing and commenting on the music scene. His contribution can only enrich our industry," Georg Voros, drummer, composer and educator, 2011, Johannesburg

A rare master of his craft — and a man of great passion

THE REALMS of music burst open with lustrous colour, rich textures and enrapturing vistas when a certain artist, album or trend is subjected to the searching vision and exacting skills of an adroit music writer and commentator. Over the years, commendable music publications in America and Britain have exposed us to the distinctive voices and engaging styles of respected music writers. Among them, we celebrate and admire Ralph Gleason, Greil Marcus, Nick Kent, David Fricke, Rob Young, Ian MacDonald, Stephen Holden, Dave Marsh, Robert Christgau, David Cavanagh and Timothy White.

In South Africa, our music fraternity has Michael Waddacor — a master of his craft, both as an original and engaging writer, and as an erudite and passionate music commentator and historian. An uncompromising music enthusiast since the age of eight, Michael has been writing on rock and other forms of contemporary music since commencing his journalism career in January 1979 at *The Herald* newspaper in Zimbabwe. He published his first weekly music column, *Sound Waves*, for *The Herald* before deciding to return to South Africa.

A lively reputation

In 1980, at the age of 24, he began his South African career as a journalist, writer, editor and music critic at *The Star* newspaper, before moving on to write on music for the *Sunday Times* and the *Rand Daily Mail*, among other publications. For almost three years (1982-1984), Michael was the *Rand Daily Mail's* respected and outspoken music editor and critic, where he earned a lively reputation for his sharp, succinct and uncompromising reviews of the Johannesburg music scene. He also contributed reviews and feature articles to other newspapers and magazines, including *Top 20* and *Top 40*. He also edited seven editions of *Top 40* in 1985-1986.

Michael co-hosted the popular *Vintage Vinyl* Saturday lunchtime radio show with Charlotte Lavine during 1985 and 1986. He served as an editorial consultant, creative advisor and artistic sounding board for several well-known artists and bands in the 1980s, including Keith Berél, Carte Blanche, éVoid, The Helicopters, No Friends of Harry, Petit Cheval, Neill Solomon and Tribe After Tribe.

A lifetime love of music

Despite moving into the mainstream world of business and technology in 1987 to work as an influential, award-winning corporate writer and editor, Michael did not neglect his passion for music and his love of writing about it in its many forms. Over the last 25 years, he has continued to write essays, reviews, profiles, biographies, fact-sheets and obituaries on various bands and singers, as well as liner notes for South African bands of the 1980s like The Dynamics, éVoid and Via Afrika.

Today, Michael continues to research and write on music. Besides maintaining his music-themed Facebook profile, Waddacor on Rock, he is researching and writing manuscripts for a series of mini-books on rock music, including one on the late English singer-songwriter, Nick Drake. Over the last five years, he has researched and written in-depth articles on artists as diverse as Syd Barrett, The Beach Boys, The Beatles, Chuck Berry, Leonard Cohen, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Nick Drake, Bob Dylan, East of Eden, David Gilmour, King Crimson, Arthur Lee, Love, Bob Marley, John Martyn, Joni Mitchell, Spooky Tooth, Van der Graaf Generator, Warhorse, Brian Wilson and Neil Young. The official Joni Mitchell (www.jonimitchell.com) and Joni Mitchell Distribution List (www.jmdl.com) websites are among several websites that host some of his feature articles and reviews.

Insightful, fair, balanced, witty, diligent and more

PRAISE for Michael over the years has almost always been warm, enthusiastic and indicative of his intrinsic value to the music fraternity and the media world. Here are just a few random endorsements of him as a music writer and critic:

Ian Osrin, record producer, recording engineer and owner of the Digital Cupboard, Johannesburg:

"I have always enjoyed your writing and music coverage. I found your analysis to be fair and objective. Your articles are well-researched and informative. Our association goes back a long way and you were prepared to cover my sometimes way-out music when others wouldn't give it the time of day. Any publication would be lucky to have you! Good luck in the future."

Jon Selby, singer-songwriter and leader of SA rock group Petit Cheval, now living in Israel:

"References come and go but Michael is here to stay. His compelling prose, lucent insights, witty appraisals, and balanced wisdom make him one of the finest music journalists I know. This is no easy statement. At the time of my music career I was usually flying too high to talk to anyone, let alone read what they had to say. It is also the reason I am still an MW fan and subscribe to his Internet posts."

Mike Ford, composer, producer, retail media specialist, founder of FrequencyWorxAfrica and former station manager of Classic fM, SAFM and RPN Stereo (East Coast Radio), Johannesburg:

"I would endorse and recommend Michael as a contributor to any intelligent publication that targets the 'thinking' market segment. He has a thorough knowledge of all media formats (current and those ahead of the curve) and he is a superb journalist, editor and free thinker. Over the past 30 years he has certainly garnered the respect of the South African music industry. He has a natural affinity to write about music, popular culture and current affairs. His work ethic has always been impeccable."

Lionel Bastos, singer, songwriter, musician and producer, Cape Town:

"Michael is, and has always been, an insightful and passionate writer about all things musical. He has a depth of knowledge and a love for music, which is a very rare trait in an industry that is increasingly filled with mediocre journalists whose passion lies in racking up the 'star' names they meet, as opposed to giving us the information that true music lovers seek."

Steven Howells, drummer, songwriter and ex-Asylum Kids and Dynamics, now living in Hawaii:

"I played drums for a variety of hard-working, enthusiastic and influential bands in South Africa during the dark, state-of-emergency 1980s and into the post-democracy 1990s, a vibrant and exciting time in South Africa's musical history. It wasn't always easy to get the support our 'rebellious' and 'deviant' music needed from the mainstream press to spread the message of hope for a peaceful and necessary change in a turbulent country to the general populace, but writers such as Michael stood out in the cultural wilderness by voicing their support of the cultural importance of many of the fringe artists with informative and critically fair reviews of the music, art and performances reflecting the multicultural facets of South Africa's population."

“Without the support and expertise of journalists such as Michael, our music might not have reached as many people as it did during difficult times. Many of the publications Michael wrote for went on to become important voices in the new democratic South African press, on a foundation laid down by the writers who supported their freedoms in more oppressive times. I look forward to reading some more reviews by Michael Waddacor!”

Brian Currin, music enthusiast, blogger and co-founder of the Rock SA website, Cape Town:

“Michael’s knowledge of rock and pop music reflects a depth of insightfulness that many aspire to, but very few attain. He has an ability to make the dry facts interesting, and adds new angles to information that everyone thought they already knew. His Strange Brew series (<http://rock.co.za/strangebrew>) makes fascinating reading and I often refer back to it.”

Stan James, journalist and singer-songwriter, now living in Hong Kong:

“Michael’s name is inextricably tied to the world that is South African music. He is respected by his peers and by the country’s musicians, and is seen as one of the leading commentators and writers around. Michael contributed to shaping the careers of many of our artists, with his incisive and well-written critiques and reviews. He is an independent thinker, a scholar of modern music and a fine journalist with a distinctive writing style. I am a journalist and a singer-songwriter, and count Michael as one of the guiding lights in both the media and music industries.”

Dawie Jacobs, librarian and music enthusiast and collector, Johannesburg:

“Michael is an accomplished writer on all things musical, but what makes him a special writer, is his love of music as a cultural expression. He has the keen eye of an experienced fiction writer for relevant detail, and the discipline of a seasoned journalist.”

Steve Harris, marketing director, Universal Music South Africa:

“Over the 30 years I have worked in the music industry, one of the greatest pleasures has been working with Michael. The professionalism and enthusiasm he has shown to our artists and ourselves has been an absolute joy.”

Georg Voros, drummer, composer, author and educator, Johannesburg:

“Michael is without a doubt one of the finest rock music critics and writers I have had the pleasure of working with. He has written biogs and commentaries on a few of the major South African bands that I worked with in the '80s. His knowledge of the music business is mind-boggling and he has always demonstrated an almost child-like enthusiasm for all things musical. I would dearly love to see Michael back at the helm doing what he does best — writing and commenting on the music scene. His contribution can only enrich our industry.”

Charlotte Lavine, former broadcaster and director of BDG Communications, Johannesburg:

“For me, Michael will always, from the days we worked together [co-hosting 5FM’s Vintage Vinyl Show in 1985-1986], be exemplary as a man of words, music and dedication to his craft. His formidable talent as a writer, researcher and music enthusiast brought insight and credibility to the show. He is a great guy and the fans loved him. It was easy to elevate him to guru status as a result.”

Barbora Tellinger, musician and lecturer at the University of Pretoria, Johannesburg:

“Michael has been one of the foremost authorities on music for many years, particularly on rock. In South Africa, his opinions and reviews are very much sought after and his knowledge of the genre is unmatched. He also has a unique drive to constantly keep his finger on the pulse of new and developing artists and bands. If I was launching an album, or needed the most informed opinion on any musical project that I was involved in, Michael Waddacor would be the first person on whom I would call. And, likewise, if I needed any information on any popular or rock music of the last 50 years.”

Alison O’Donnell, singer-songwriter and ex-Mellow Candle and Flibbertigibbet, Dublin, Ireland:

“Michael Waddacor has had a long and distinguished career, primarily as a writer. I know him from my time in the music industry when I lived in Johannesburg and he was employed by the *Rand Daily Mail* as a music editor and critic. His comprehensive articles on Joni Mitchell, one of the most influential singer-songwriters on the planet, are reference enough to his considerable journalistic abilities. His creative work has covered a vast roster of highly regarded artists over three decades. Aside from his breadth of expertise and knowledge of the music industry, Michael has also researched and written on topics such as popular culture, the environment and current affairs. His versatility and long-term commitment have earned him much respect.”

Penny Stein, entertainment publicist and former record company marketing and A&R manager:

“Michael Waddacor is one of the few credible and brilliant writers in South Africa. His broad and extensive knowledge of global music, history of SA music and current trends would be an asset to any media outlet. Michael has his own style of entertaining and clever writing that keeps one amused, enlightened and current.”

Rafe Lavine, broadcaster and music enthusiast best remembered for his music shows on Radio 5, SAFM, Classic FM and Talk Radio 702, Johannesburg:

“Michael is one of those rare individuals who combines a keen eye on current affairs, and an encyclopaedic knowledge of popular culture and the broad palette of music, its history and the business of music itself with an attractive, highly articulate, probing writing style that I have found to be consistently magnetic over the years that I have been following his significant body of work. In fact, without hesitation, I would rate Michael as one of the finest music writers in the business. One would have to go far to uncover the natural, effortless talent he possesses. Michael has an enviable depth of experience, which he translates into the written word with unerring skill and flair. All in all, Michael would be an asset to any journal or publication.”

Harvey Roberts, musician, composer and ex-Dynamics, Johannesburg:

“As a founding member of the band, The Dynamics, I can say without hesitation that Michael’s writing, specifically on matters musical, has always captured the true essence of his subject. It was an inspired choice by Benjy Mudie, CEO of Fresh Music, to get Michael to write the liner notes for our retrospective compilation released on that label a few years back.

“As a journalist who had seen the band on many occasions in the early 80s, Michael had particular firsthand knowledge of the significance of the band in its social context from that historical era, and his easy style of writing, without being too highbrow, for me perfectly captured the relevance of what the band represented to the larger public at that time. His notes accurately spelt out the brief history of the band, and gave meaning to the reminiscences of various members, putting them into context, painting a colourful portrait of time and place, accompanied by the music itself. In short, Michael’s sleeve notes illuminated, to those of us whose memories had blurred the picture, and to those seeing it for the first time, a slice of uniquely South African musical history!”

Lance Rothschild, communication consultant and former station manager of 5FM, Johannesburg

“Michael Waddacor is an exceptionally talented writer. He has a broad knowledge base and his skill at interpreting the essence of a story shows tremendous insight and intellect. I have frequently been impressed at the way in which he can write on many and varied subject matters, with a constant understanding of the requirements of the audience for whom he is writing. I am envious of his skill and talent and have no qualms in recommending him.”

Kim Saville, former A&R and marketing manager at WEA Records and owner of KSP Media & Marketing, Johannesburg

“Michael is one of the few media people who truly love music. He has a tremendous knowledge, history and passion for sound. He knows his music, both on global and local platforms, and has often let me know about some fabulous music that I would have missed. He always states exactly how it is and, during the 1980s, he helped WEA Records tremendously in establishing our new talent such as Lesley Rae Dowling, Madonna, Prince, Alphaville, Petit Cheval, Neill Solomon and the Passengers and eVoid to name just a few.

“He — along with Gus Silber, Arthur Goldstuck and Richard Haslop — is a force to be reckoned with. The standard of his writing is welcome in a time when I cringe with embarrassment at the quality of some journalism out there today. I relish reading his work in the future. And his Facebook page [Waddacor on Rock] is also long overdue.”

Writing to engage, inspire and enlighten music fans

THE BEATLES: Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band

- Extract from a fortieth-anniversary celebration of The Beatles' *Sgt Pepper* album
- Headline: "Remembering tangerine trees and marmalade skies"
- Written and published in May 2007

WHILE the themes of *Sgt Pepper* are richly varied, loneliness is one of the album's strongest elements, as are those of alienation, drudgery, escapism and the search for metaphysical meaning and emancipation, whether in the form of Harrison's Eastern-flavoured reflections on egoism and oneness ("Within You Without You"), or Lennon and McCartney's search for ecstatic relief from the treadmill of Western etiquette, mores and tribal rituals (as on "She's Leaving Home" and "A Day in the Life").

In many respects, the fictitious Sgt Pepper alter ego symbolised The Beatles' quest for a better, if not transcendental, human experience. Evolving out of *Revolver*, *Sgt Pepper's* explores, lyrically and musically, many polarities and contrasts: sadness and joy; drudgery and ecstasy; confusion and clarity; incarceration and emancipation; loneliness and companionship; alienation and belonging; nostalgia and a sanguine longing for a new world and, perhaps, a better future. On this album, more than any other previous work by The Beatles, fantasy embraces realism; the ornate weaves with the plain; and the comically frivolous dances with the gravely serious.

THE BEATLES: The Beatles (The White Album)

- Extract from a fortieth-anniversary celebration of The Beatles' White Album
- Headline: "Fractious, flawed, free-spirited and fabulous"
- Written and published in August 2008

ON *The White Album*, George Harrison, John Lennon, Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr indulged in their greatest period of studio liberty, anarchy and creative assertiveness to record material, whether it was a fully formed love song, an affectionate satire of The Beach Boys and The Kremlin, the sketchy outline of a potentially serious piece of social commentary, or pastiches of zany experimentalism and studio existentialism. In the end, they pasted together a bizarrely endearing and memorable collage of exquisitely written songs, adroit song sketches and quirky or bizarre electronic aural paintings that were at times fully realised in concept and near-perfect in execution, while, in places, their music seemed rough, disjointed and begging for a more polished and rounded production.

Despite their self-indulgence, The Beatles realised some of their most creative songwriting moments (eg, "Julia" and "Blackbird") and delivered some of their finest instrumental performances (eg, "Back in the USSR" and "While My Guitar Gently Weeps"). Lennon and McCartney, too, delivered some of their most compelling and assured vocal performances.

ROBERT PLANT: *Band of Joy*

- Extract from an 800-word review of Robert Plant's *Band of Joy* album
- Headline: "Plant plumbs his plaintive Americana roots"
- Written and published in 2010

WHILE some of his search for novelty and breakthrough may have resulted in a few patchy albums — notably his mixed-bag '80s oeuvre, it enabled him, eventually, to discard his heavy-rock-god mantle and be taken seriously as an accomplished and versatile singer, as well as an adroit songwriter and a sensitive interpretive artist. Plant's return to masterful form was marked by 1993's sadly overlooked *Fate of the Nations* album. Since that turning point, his artistry has been inspired mostly by his strong affinity for Celtic history and music (with a distinct fondness for Wales) and British folk music, as well as many of the American songwriters he has admired over the decades, including Bob Dylan, Tim Hardin, Skip Spence, Tim Buckley, Gene Clark, Jesse Colin Young, Tom Waits and Townes van Zandt.

The singer's exquisitely performed, produced and packaged *Band of Joy* album demonstrates his impeccable — and delectably eclectic — taste and seemingly inexhaustible ability to retain his excellent form as a genre-hopping singer and musical director. Further, as he proved so convincingly on his previous album with Alison Krauss, 2007's peerless multi-platinum *Raising Sand*, he has found a new and more inspirational musical home by returning to the US to record — specifically Nashville, the capital of country music. Anyone familiar with Plant's short pre-Zeppelin career will know the album's name is that of his English Midlands psychedelic blues-rock band, which also featured the late Led Zep drummer, John Bonham.

MILES DAVIS: *Bitches Brew*

- Extract from a comprehensive fortieth-anniversary celebration of Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew*
- Headline: "Miles' daring journey into a dark, dense netherworld"
- First published in 2010

FREQUENTLY tenebrous, brooding, menacing and angst-laden, *Bitches Brew* was — and remains — an unsettling, rhythmically intense and elaborately textured work. Even today, the album sounds as if Davis intended it to be the perfect antidote to the naïve, ill-considered and overly hedonistic elements of the rock- and folk-orientated idealism of the American counterculture that peaked around 1969-1970.

While given to his characteristic restrained, sensitive and introspective moods on this album, some of which are delivered with an understated and reflective lyricism peculiar to the trumpeter, Davis mostly dares his fellow musical journeymen to traverse uncharted aural territories. In these sometimes explosive and wildly abstract realms one is transported into the shadow lands of insanity and mind-altering desolation — notions which fast emerge on the album's bold opening piece, the 20-minute aural essay that is "Pharaoh's Dance".

JONI MITCHELL: *Hejira*

- Extract from a retrospective celebration of Joni Mitchell's *Hejira* album (1976)
- Headline: "Flying high on inspiration and insight"
- Written and published in 2007

IN MANY respects, Joni Mitchell has never sounded so gorgeous in her candid, intimate, warm and breathy singing, so engaging in her confessional, poetic recollections and insights, and so free-spirited, sincere and deft in her combined approach to singing and playing guitar. *Hejira* is an album of almost childlike marvel, adventure, flight and freedom. This idea is reinforced not only by the finely photographed and art-directed monotone conceptual cover art, but also by the greater use of free-flowing jazz motifs, unorthodox chord structures (those “weird Joni chords”) and enrapturing rhythms. She allows her simple and subtle melodies to flow freely, and the playing and the arrangements are kept loose and easy, almost spontaneous and unaffected.

The greatest musical performances, even 30 years on, remain the adventurous and lyrical bass lines of the late Jaco Pastorius, who, unwittingly, gained accolades normally reserved for a high-performing lead guitarist. While Pastorius went on to become one of the musical heroes of the monstrously talented jazz-fusion group, Weather Report, led by Joe Zawinul, he never again sounded so hauntingly beautiful, inspired and communicative. It seemed Pastorius hungered to develop a new, deeply humanistic language exclusively for the fretless bass. He developed it serendipitously while recording *Hejira* at the A&M Studios in Los Angeles in the summer of 1976. For many fans, Mitchell found in Pastorius her perfect musical soul mate and sparring partner.

BOB DYLAN: Together Through Life

- Extract from a comprehensive review of Bob Dylan’s *Together Through Life* album
- Headline: “The master song-poet sounds sagacious, sexy, acerbic and bittersweet”
- Written and published in 2009

TOGETHER Through Life is a far cry — both from a literary and musical perspective — from his glorious formative days, whether he was furiously writing an epic antiwar song through the night at New York’s famed Chelsea Hotel or sketching light-hearted ditties, *à la Self Portrait* material, in quieter, rustic upstate Woodstock. One cannot help picturing a bizarre fringe world encapsulated in his lyrics — even if between his lines or obscured amid the tones and shapes of his music: a place of unadored freaks, ageing losers, unscrubbed truckers, cheap whores and drunken misogynists. At the same time, for all the pared simplicity of his lyrics, they seem to say so much — and with moods ranging from the sweet and charming to the acerbic, remorseful and even disgusted, perhaps irascible. Dylan has not gone soft; in fact, there is a strange, leathery robustness and gritty, bittersweet realism coursing throughout his new album.

In sections of this album, too, we sense Dylan reflecting on his own life, mostly from a romantic stance, as well as the malaise of a divided country that has been his home since his birth at Duluth, Minnesota, on May 24 1941. The promise of the American Dream — something that must have affected him in his formative musical days of the 1950s and the 1960s — lies shattered in some faraway, dusty tract. Today, he surveys an America slipping, perhaps inexorably, into amorality and atrophy. We know, too, that the man has undergone at least two heart-wrenching divorces and a series of religious and spiritual explorations and conversions. All the wiser now, he seems plagued by an existential angst. He may be acerbic, wry and cautious in his personal world view, but one doubts if he has plummeted into a deep cynicism or lack of concern. On *Together Through Life*, one senses glimmers of compassion and hope, even if their hues are muddied.

The perennial Dylan question comes to mind: Does he still cut it — and is his music still relevant after almost 50 years? The answer is a resounding double “yes”. The enduring Dylan fan, however, should not be expecting him to revive the spirit and sound of any of his definitive career classics, whether it is the rambling, elevated poetic excursions of *Highway 61 Revisited* (1965), the delicate intimacy and poignancy of *John Wesley Harding* (1968), the cutting emotional and barbed political outbursts of *Desire* (1976), or the aloof and otherworldly, neo-Goth hipness that shaped his late-career comeback album, *Time Out of Mind* (1997).

LOVE: *Forever Changes*

- Extract from a 2,250-word fortieth-anniversary celebration of Love's *Forever Changes*
- Headline: "Inside the weird, kaleidoscopic mind of a fringe visionary"
- Written and published in 2007

GOING further, [Arthur] Lee and company had the intuitive good sense to dispense with most of the more obvious and florid aural tricks of the day. To *Forever Changes'* credit, the album is devoid of indulgent mellotron atmospherics, dope-humour concrete sounds and hysterical screeches, backward tapes, fairytale-like reciting, goofy stoner platitudes, multitracked vocal harmonies, excessive reverb and exotic instruments such as the sitar, tabla, koto or dulcimer.

At the height of hippie naïveté and indulgence, Lee appeared to be sensing some impending doom and, at the time, was convinced he was about to die and that this would be his swansong at the age of 22. Even today, 40 years later, *Forever Changes* is a paradoxical and dichotomous work of art — a rare album that sounds like the final, happy-sad acid-fest before Mother Earth succumbs to the final pangs of a post-nuclear fallout.

By far the dominant spirit on the album, with his commanding voice and lucidly enunciated lyrics, Arthur Lee is at once cheerful, witty, adorable, carefree and optimistic, and yet also sardonic, aloof, concerned and dejected. We sense his belief in, or quest for, something higher or greater than himself as a mere mortal — a superficial willingness to love and embrace people, and dance on sunbeams or something else of poetic significance. Yet, we also sense, more keenly, a wounded loner, a strange, disenchanted visionary, pining and pondering from an elevated platform on the fringes of the counterculture, wondering if anything at all makes sense or has meaning in his deeply private and personal world.

BEACH BOYS: *Pet Sounds*

- Extract from a 1,000-word celebration of The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* at 40
- Headline: "Brian Wilson's crowning glory continues to glow"
- Written and published in 2006; refined in 2007

THE BEACH Boys' creative guiding light, Brian Wilson, wrote, recorded and produced most of the album's material in Los Angeles between December 1965 and April 1966. To add depth and freshness to his vision, which was fast shifting away from The Beach Boys' frivolous trademark sun-and-surf themes, he drew profound inspiration from The Beatles' *Rubber Soul* album and Phil Spector's mighty Wall of Sound production method, and went as far as appointing Los Angeles adman Tony Asher to act as his alter ego by writing the lyrics.

The near-faultless *Pet Sounds* is mandatory listening if you want to gain any meaningful appreciation of the music of the latter half of the twentieth century, particular the mainstream American rock and pop music of the 1960s.

Wilson was obsessed with pursuing perfection, innovation and, above all, outsmarting his admired rivals, The Beatles. In the process, he turned one of his curses to his advantage. He hated touring and travelling, and, it seemed, was starting to loathe the adulation and demands of audiences and the media. Preferring to concentrate his energies on writing and recording, as The Beatles would do after performing their final concert in August 1966, Wilson immersed himself in the studio. Bar by bar and riff by riff, he sketched on the piano the inspired material that would become *Pet Sounds*, including "the one that got away", his masterful psych-pop "pocket symphony", "Good Vibrations".

NEIL YOUNG: On the Beach

- Extract from a 1,500-word reappraisal of Neil Young's *On the Beach* album (1974)
- Headline: "See the sky about to rain"
- Written and published in 2006

ON THE Beach, symbolically, took Young to the waterfront to reflect and regenerate himself. He escaped the city and, more significantly, the "crystal canyons" (such as Laurel Canyon) he would later allude to on *Rust Never Sleeps* in 1979. Young was rebelling not just against The System but, perhaps, more significantly, the excesses of the hippie counterculture and, worst still, the hollow hedonism of his wealthy rock-star contemporaries, Crosby, Stills and Nash included.

To compound matters, Young had to deal with the dissolution of his relationship with Carrie Snodgrass and the emotions of loss, regret and uncertainty. Like Dylan a year later with his evocative, emotionally raw *Blood on the Tracks* (1975), the demise of Young's once cherished romantic partnership provided the extra impetus he needed to plumb the depths of his psyche and deeper musical talents, and create a masterpiece of timeless disenchantment, poignancy and urgency. It also is significant that he draws on the spirit of the blues more so than any of his 1970s albums and uses the word "blues" in three of the eight song titles.

As with many of America's great bluesmen, from early Robert Johnson through to latter-day Muddy Waters, Elmore James and John Lee Hooker, Young knows the "blues" is about being laid bare and telling the truth without sugar coating. Young gets straight to the point on the opening track, "Walk On", when he ruminates: "I hear some people've been talking me down / Pick up my name, pass it around / They don't mention the happy times".

NEIL YOUNG: Living with War

- Extract from a 2,100-word review of Neil Young's *Living with War* album
- Headline: "A damningly fine protest album with good melodies"
- Written and published in 2006

THERE are no adventurous and hypnotic guitar solos as on "Like a Hurricane" from *American Stars 'n Bars* (1977). There is no desperado wailing from the angst fringes of desolation as he did so convincingly in *On the Beach* (1974) and *Tonight's the Night* (1975). Even more disappointing against the backdrop of the post-9/11 political quagmire that has beset America, there is none of the scorching beauty and raging lyricism of those two classic Young political songs of 1970, "Ohio" (a Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young single) and "Southern Man" from *After the Gold Rush*.

Yet, Young seems to have brought a spectre of his best musical moments of the last 35 years into the spirit of *Living with War*, and he can still sound poignant, imploring and relevant. Significantly, just as much as he has chosen to dispense with fine musical arrangements and production, he has abandoned his characteristic penchant for enigma and ambiguity in favour of messages that are plain, pointed and (in some countries) patently treasonous. For this reason, some larger American retail outlets (notably Wal-Mart) refused to stock the album.

CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL eulogy

- Extract from a retrospective celebration and reappraisal of Creedence Clearwater Revival
- Headline: "Walking on water"
- Written and published in 2010

DELVING deep into the roots of established American idioms, notably rock 'n' roll, rockabilly, blues, Memphis soul, Southern Creole idioms, gospel and country 'n' western, and building their richly melodic songs around simple, compelling guitar riffs and the fervent, imploring, soul-tinged vocals of John Fogerty, CCR astutely shunned the West Coast psychedelic fixations of the day. Instead, they brazenly sailed against the prevailing counterculture currents to develop and nurture a sound that outlived that of most of their Californian contemporaries.

Eschewing beads, bells and hippie platitudes, stoner humour, superfluous sound effects and indulgent experimental studio techniques, CCR unleashed the natural power and seductiveness of their electric guitars and drum kit (first a Ludwig kit and then a Camco one). In the songwriting, singing, arranging and production skills and foibles of lead man John Fogerty, a veritable spectrum of American greats springs to mind, including Hank Williams, Carl Perkins, Elvis Presley, Little Richard, Fats Domino, Roy Orbison, and Booker T and the MGs, as well as distinctive Americana sounds drawn from famous US stables like Atlantic, Chess, Motown, Stax and Sun Records. Trying to sidestep The Beatles (whom John Fogerty admired) and almost anything British, there could hardly have been a more American rock band than Creedence in their 1969-1971 heydays.

To their credit, too, CCR were no flash-in-the-pan, get-rich-quickly rock stars. Moving around sock hops, parties, fairs, bars, halls, military bases and wherever else a gig promoter or venue manager would have them play, the quartet had been a hard-working gig band for almost nine years before they released their eponymous debut album.

JOHN MARTYN obituary

- Extract from a 7,000-word John Martyn obituary and career overview
- Headline: "Bless the weather that brought you"
- First published in 2006

MARTYN's Jamaican sojourn, which coincided with the popular global rise of reggae, ska and associated West Indian musical idioms, inspired him to record a reggae-dub-and-ska-inflected album, *One World*, produced by Chris Blackwell and released by Island Records in November 1977. The featured musicians included fellow Island stable-mate Steve Winwood (ex-Traffic and Blind Faith) on keyboards, bassists Dave Pegg and Danny Thompson, and former Family Stone drummer Andy Newmark. In an unusual development, Blackwell, Martyn and the engineering team produced two distinctive mixes of the album: the UK and the US mixes for obvious geographic reasons. Island used the UK mix for the album's international re-release on CD.

With its inventive fusion of dreamy tones, gentle textures, unusual time signatures and ambient, jazz-inflected guitar and keyboard passages, among other noteworthy features, *One World* remains Martyn's most eclectic, experimental and timeless studio album. Rock writers often cite *One World* as an essential work that inspired the birth of trip-hop in Bristol, England. It influenced artists like U2's Edge, Jah Wobble, Portishead, Massive Attack and The Verve's Nick McCabe. Here, it is worth listening to the most ambient track, "Small Hours", with its funereal, echo-delayed guitar, subdued vibes and barely audible bass-drum heartbeat (as well as the chattering geese and a few other subtle background ambient noises), to appreciate the wider influence of Martyn's sonic palette and textures on subsequent generations of musicians.

SYD BARRETT obituary

- Extract from a 2,000-word Syd Barrett obituary
- Headline: "Shine on you crazy diamond!"
- Written and published in 2006

LESS than a year later, after a high-octane surge into the stellar realms of rock heroism and counterculture improvisation, Barrett's art and career plummeted in the wake of releasing *The Piper* album. His tragic decline was underscored when his Pink Floyd colleagues decided not to collect him from his London apartment one spring day, as agreed, for a gig in the south of England. On April 6 1968, it was announced that Barrett had left Pink Floyd and the band would work with its newfound guitarist and singer, fellow Cantabrigian David Gilmour, who had augmented Barrett on stage for a few weeks prior to the latter's departure.

By this time, Barrett's increasing taciturnity, eccentricity, moodiness and unreliability were deemed far greater liabilities than his assets as an erratically gifted songwriter. It has long been argued by music fans and journalists that the combined excesses of pop stardom, inner struggles for creative leadership and, most of all, excessive recreational drug use in Pink Floyd led to Barrett's emotional, mental and creative demise.

RICHIE HAYWARD obituary

- Extract from a 1,600-word Richie Hayward obituary
- Headline: "The master of rhythm remembered"
- Written and published in 2009

HAYWARD had an uncanny instinct to play what was needed in any moment, whether in the studio or on stage, to enhance the mood of a song, enrich its arrangement and ensure alluring signature beats and rhythms that became his own unmistakable trademark sounds. His technical proficiency, as with all commendable drummers, was built around his metronomically precise timing, vibrant energy, immaculate finger and wrist control, and his exceptional ability to swing because of his deep love of jazz since his childhood.

Using a larger-than-standard Drum Workshop (DW) kit, Hayward developed elaborate tom fills and imaginative cymbal patterns that seemed to marry style with substance, and beauty with vigour. From a tender, downbeat blues shuffle and laidback, country-inflected ballad to a hearty Southern rock 'n' roll stomp and an intricately arranged jazz-based funk groove, he displayed remarkable adaptability, versatility and empathy. Amazingly, too, his brand of rock 'n' roll class found a rare balance without ever becoming too subtle and understated on one extreme, or too finicky and conceited on the other. Richie Hayward had a special feel ... a style that emphasised heart and soul beyond pure technique.

C O M M I S S I O N S

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Michael Waddacor 

A rapid-read overview of just a few career highlights

Music-related clients serviced

- BBC Paris
- Keith Berél
- Lesley Rae Dowling
- éVoid
- No Friends of Harry
- One Night Stands
- Neill Solomon's Uptown Rhythm Dogs
- Neill Solomon's Passengers
- Son of a 1000 Blues
- Tribe After Tribe
- Artone Press
- Capital Radio
- Compact Disc Technologies
- EMI Music SA
- Fresh Music
- Gallo Records
- Millennium Entertainment
- Radio 702
- Penny Stein Promotions
- Top 20 magazine
- Top 40 magazine
- Tusk Music
- Universal Music Group
- WEA Records
- World of Music

Editorial contributions to publications

- The Herald newspaper (Harare)
- The Star newspaper (Johannesburg)
- Rand Daily Mail newspaper (Joburg)
- Sunday Times newspaper (Joburg)
- Art Director (AD)
- Chemical Technology
- Commercial Transport
- Computer Week
- Construction Week
- Engineering Week
- Exclusive Getaways
- Forbes Atlantic (Europe)
- Leadership SA
- London Mining Journal (UK)
- Marketing Mix

- Moneyweb
- Oil & Gas (UK)
- Petroleum Economist (UK)
- SA Builder
- Technology SA
- Which?
- World Coal (UK)

Topics and subjected covered

- advertising, branding and marketing
- banking and insurance
- building and construction
- defence technology
- design and innovation
- energy and fuels
- engineering and manufacturing
- entertainment and leisure
- environmentalism
- food and beverages
- forest products
- geology, exploration and mining
- information technology
- laser technology
- music and music technology
- oil and gas
- petrochemicals and polymers
- pharmaceuticals
- printing and publishing
- professional services
- research and development
- science and technology
- social investment
- transport and logistics
- travel and tourism
- water management

Primary fields of interest

- music and music technology
- branding and image management
- current affairs and super trends
- design, creativity and innovation
- engineering, science and technology
- environmentalism and sustainability