

# Dusty Relics Re-issues & Compilations



## Various THE AMAZING ZIGZAG CONCERT

Road Goes On  
Forever Records

★★★★★

Over four hours of aural heaven, mainly from (folk'n'country) rock's classic back pages

Let's not waste time and space—the vital point to grasp is that only 2000 copies of THE AMAZING ZIGZAG CONCERT, a five CD box set, will ever be produced. I harbour no illusions that they'll reside on a shelf for a prolonged spell. To get your copy visit the RGF Records web site: <http://www.rgfrecords.demon.co.uk/releases/zigzag.htm>

The brainchild of Pete Frame, the first issue of ZigZag hit newsagent's shelves on April 16, 1969. It was Britain's first monthly rock magazine—and the operative word is rock—because during the early/mid 1960s I clearly recall purchasing pop oriented publications such as RAVE and BEAT INSTRUMENTAL. The title ZigZag was inspired by Captain Beefheart's song *Zigzag Wanderer*, as well as a specific brand of cigarette rolling paper. Between the Spring of 1969 and the magazine's fifth anniversary concert held on April 28, 1974, ZigZag suffered cardiac arrest on a number of occasions, only to rise phoenix like within months.

In his box set liner note Frame relates how Tony Stratton-Smith, owner of Charisma Records, became the magazine's angel during January 1974 thereby ensuring future financial stability. The latter should explain why, instead of sixty issues of ZigZag, only forty-one had been published by dawn on the day of the anniversary concert. The front cover of issues number 1 through number 42 grace the rear of this set's thirty-two page booklet, although that's really a case for artistic symmetry, as in 7 in a row \* 6 rows. A poster announcing the 'initial' concert line-up appeared on the inside rear page of issue number 41 (it's reproduced here). Having already mailed

subscribers, in the Zigzag Wanderer Rides Again (aka the Editorial), Frame informs casual ZigZag readers: 'this issue is only published days before the gig, the rest of you will have to charge down and pay at the door.'

By late 1973, ZigZag's core of wordy wizards and grist-mining scribes amounted to Frame (and alter ego Mac Garry), John Tobler (who boarded ship with issue number 2), Andy Childs (founder of music publication FAT ANGEL) and Connor McKnight. For them 1974's opening months proved hectic, although Paul Conroy at the Charisma Agency assisted by booking the artists and arranging work permits for the American contingent. While Stratton-Smith and Conroy are to be commended for their magnanimity, by financing the recording of the concert Andrew Lauder executed a stroke of genius. Head of a&r at Liberty Records/United Artists at the time, later that decade he founded the Radar, F-Beat and Demon labels.

As for the non-appearance by Chris Darrow (Kaleidoscope, Nitty Gritty Dirt Band) and Kilburn and the High Roads (the late Ian Dury's pre-solo career band) the liner booklet relates that the former was: 'out of the country on the due date,' while the latter: 'withdrew because of time constraints.' Bristol bred folksinger Aj Webber was added to the bill, but her set wasn't recorded. As for the contents of the five CDs, here's the full blabber'n'smoke...stuff and nonsense some would say!

Disc 1—Starry Eyed & Laughing. Individually penned, in the main, by three members of this Northampton quartet, eight of their Roundhouse songs appeared on their self-titled CBS debut, recorded a few months later it was released before year end. By that stage drummer/vocalist Nick Brown was replaced by Michael Wackford. As for *Down The Street* it was saved for their sophomore THOUGHT TALK (1975). SE&L cover Dylan's *Chimes Of Freedom*, the closing verse of which begins: 'Starry-eyed an' laughing as I recall when we were caught.' While the

(sonic) reference points to the Byrds are legion, SE&L irrefutably prove that Brits CAN excel at vocal harmony rich country-rock. Tony Poole's *Nobody Home* is a hook laden delight, while the Rickenbacker sound-storms on *Everybody* would fit seamlessly into the Byrds' *Eight Miles High*. Enough said.

Disc 2—Chilli Willi & the Red Hot Peppers. This five-piece pub rock band's 1972 debut was titled KINGS OF THE ROBOT RHYTHM. Their manager Jake Riviera (real name Andrew Jakeman), during 1976, co-founded Stiff Records. The Willi's energetic fifteen song set embraces a handful of country-flavoured originals penned by front man Phil Lithman (who died in 1987), alongside covers from a diverse range of roots music sources. Country (*The Streets Of Baltimore*), Cajun (*Papa & Mama Had Love*), blues (*Walkin' Blues*) and western swing (*Choo Choo Ch'Boogie*).

Disc 3—John Stewart. While enjoying a late 1973 sojourn in California, Messrs. Frame and Tobler met with Stewart and Michael Nesmith. Stewart's songwriting and performing, at his peak, embraced genius—sadly we lost him two years ago January. Supported by bass man Arnie Moore and the Willi's drummer Pete Thomas, by late April 1974 Stewart was five years, three labels, and five studio albums plus the recently recorded/soon to be released 2-LP PHOENIX CONCERTS into his solo recording career. From the foregoing, and at his peak, he draws thirteen originals, many simply folk/country classics. The closing tune *Let The Big Horse Run* subsequently surfaced on WINGLESS ANGELS (1975). Forget the junk that is currently tainted by that ridiculous marketing term Americana, Stewart's early solo career roots inspired oeuvre was the real deal.

Disc 4—Help Yourself. Coalescing, circa 1970, around singer-songwriter Malcolm Morley, spotted by Lauder, he signed them to a recording contract. By 1973 having released four studio albums they disbanded. Reunited for the ZigZag concert, onstage Deke Leonard (Man, Iceberg) sat in

on two songs. He had deputised for an indisposed Morley when the Helps toured their third album BEWARE OF THE SHADOW (1972). In concert Morley lyrics are moulded sparingly around dense electric guitar led extemporisations, a heady marriage of blues, rock and jazz. Their four-song set includes an almost nineteen-minute long rendition of *Reaffirmation*.

Disc 5—Michael Nesmith. Commencing with his *real* solo debut MAGNETIC SOUTH (1970), by spring 1974 the Texan, ex-Monkee, had formed and disbanded the First National and Second National Bands and recorded/released five more studio albums. Accompanied on eleven songs by Red Rhodes (pedal steel), he opens with the hook laden country opus *Joanne* and closes with *Marie's Theme*. The latter tune appeared the following year on THE PRISON—A BOOK WITH A SOUNDTRACK. Four numbers hail from the ironically titled AND THE HITS JUST KEEP ON COMIN' (1972), while, for posterity, a typo credits Nesmith as the writer of *Wax Minute*. The composer was Richard Stekol a member of the early 1970s bands Honk and Funky Kings.

In the liner booklet Prologue, Frame recalls a publisher/music writer's life 1969-1974 as well as the day of the concert. Nigel Cross (founder of music publication Bucketful Of Brains), Childs, Tobler and Frame deliver reflections on each performer. The latter's piece on Stewart is particularly inspirational, just as the contents of ZigZag were under his tutelage. As for the musical contents of the five CDs, it's a case of grist glorious grist...

Congrats to Childs n' Cross for hitching the horses on this project, a round of applause please for Mr. Tony Poole who edited and mastered these 36 year old recordings. Finally, all praise to Messrs. Frame and Tobler majestic deity's in my world of musical ink. If not for their vision...

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<http://www.rgfrecords.demon.co.uk/releases/zigzag.htm>

## 2 On 1 Releases

Merle Haggard on  
BGO Records – The  
second batch of these  
important reissues

### Merle Haggard and The Strangers PRESENTS HIS 30TH ALBUM BGOCD 640 (2004)

★★★★★

A WORKING  
MAN CAN'T  
GET NOWHERE TODAY

★★★★☆

Perhaps PRESENTS HIS 30TH ALBUM, was not the most imaginative title



but numerically it was a milestone album. Released on Capitol in 1974, it proved to be this reviewer's favourite album that year and spent more time on the turntable than any other. It spent two weeks at the top of the Billboard chart and two singles from the album, the up-tempo *Old Man From The Mountain* and *Things Aren't Funny Anymore*, both topped the charts. Eight of the eleven songs were Haggard originals and one felt that, had *The Girl Who Made Me Laugh* and *Holding Things Together* also been released as singles they would probably have fared extremely well. Ronnie Reno and Tiny Moore wrote *Travelin'* and Hag generously allowed Reno to sing the lead vocal

As things turned out, A WORKING MAN CAN'T GET NOWHERE TODAY,

(1977), was Haggard's last album on Capitol (although he returned in 2004/5 to record two more albums for Capitol Nashville). Despite having penned five original songs, the album only managed to reach number 28 on the album chart. The title track, released as a single, reached number 16 and the only other single culled from the ten tracks was *The Running Kind*, which peaked at number 12, with *Making Believe* on the flip side. Older covers included the Delmore Brothers' *Blues Stay Away From Me* and Hank Williams' *Moanin' The Blues*.

### A PORTRAIT OF MERLE HAGGARD BGOCD 641 (2004)

★★★★★

KEEP MOVIN' ON  
★★★★★

Haggard wrote four of the original songs for this 1969 release and they were arguably the strongest on the album.

The insistent *Working Man's Blues* and the poignant *Hungry Eyes* were the only two singles taken from the album, both topping the charts, but oddly, *Silver Wings*, which was later covered by others, and *Every Fool Has A Rainbow*, failed to be considered for release as singles. PORTRAIT stalled at number 3 on the album chart but proved to be a steady seller, staying on the charts for 28 weeks.

KEEP MOVIN' ON, released in 1974, held the number 1 position on

