

# BRUM BEAT

THE MIDLANDS ENTERTAINMENT MONTHLY

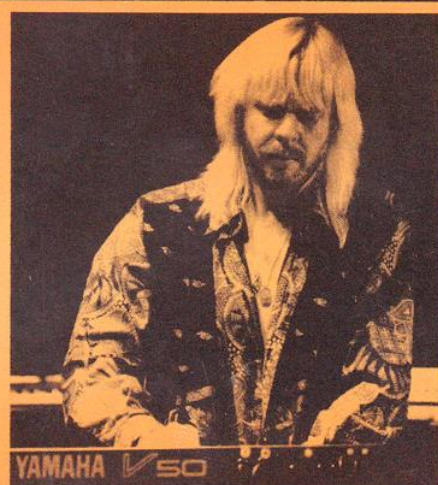
NOVEMBER 1990

# CALM

## WAKEMAN

IN THE COURT OF  
THE KEYBOARD KING

▼ INTERVIEW BY MARK HADLEY



# STORM

## ▲ HARPER

LIVE IN CONCERT  
& ALBUMS REVISITED  
RECORDED DELIVERY

▲ MIKE DAVIES ON BOSTON'S GALAXIE 500

PLUS

● JESSE 'GUITAR' TAYLOR

INTERVIEWED BY  
ARTHUR WOOD

● THE MONEYGODS ● FELONY

► NEWS ► REVIEWS ► GOSSIP ► HAW HAW ► AND MORE!

# ARTHUR WOOD

**"...ARE THE PUNTERS FINALLY BECOMING THE WISE MEN?"**

**APOLOGIES** once more, as promised gigs disappeared into thin air and promoters gave up the ghost. As far as the former is concerned, it seems that Aileen Vance's first tour of England, Scotland and Ireland was cancelled at the last moment. What appeared to be a string of firm dates from mid-October to mid-November disappeared in a welter of non-confirmation of bookings. The lady involved informed me that she is looking for a new UK tour agent. In the light of what follows... well, who can tell? Regarding the later portion of my opening sentence, Acoustic Roots have decided to call it a day - well, at least as far as promoting regular seasons of concerts during the Autumn and Spring is concerned. When the punters don't cross the threshold the castle falls down.

**COMMENCING** over ten years ago with concerts by visiting American acts such as Peter Rowan, Jim Rooney and Bill Keith, Acoustic Roots subsequently (and regularly) featured Townes Van Zandt, Guy Clarke and Butch Hancock, etc. on their schedule. In the last few years Scotland's Dick Gaughan, England's Richard Thompson and Kathryn Tickell, and a string of Irish performers, have also graced their promotions. Variation in the diet seems to have come to naught. I haven't always seen eye to eye with AR but at least they put their money where their mouth was. And that took real guts and commitment. In particular, main AR man John Atkin deserves a special vote of thanks. Maybe we're all destined to become dinosaurs. Really, I find all of this achingly sad. As a breed we intensely dislike the odour of change.

**BUT** there may just be a chink of light on the horizon. Despite a feeling of "crisis", the sweet smell of a "new day" may just be around the corner. It seems that AR in association with others, intend promoting a three day Festival at Himley Hall, near Dudley, commencing Friday August 30th next year. Bank Holiday weekend hoot time! Names like Robert Earl Keen Jr., Guy Clark and John Stewart have already been touted as possible participants.

**IT** seems to me that if this

Festival is to be promoted on the level of a national event, an overnight camping enclosure, adequate car parking and a full social support system are essential pre-requisites. Those provisions should attract an audience in keeping with an event of this stature. Without a camping enclosure, in particular, the Festival would appear to smack of putting all one's eggs in one basket. Planning, finance and subsequent profit are intimate bedfellows in this regard. Apart from the annual Cambridge extravaganza, could this turn out to be the final roll of the dice?

**IN** addition, it may be prudent for the promoters to consider booking artists other than those upon which AR/Bandstand etc. have valiantly depended in the past. In that regard I would include British as well as foreign performers (to present a list of possibilities here, would only smack of what could be). Of course, as far as those foreigners are concerned, a one-off appearance hardly justifies the price of an air ticket. In the light of 1992, if there is to be any future in acoustic performers crossing the Atlantic, formation of a European conglomerate of promoters appears to be an extremely logical move. From my personal knowledge of the European acoustic tour scene we already lag behind. That makes my suggestion of a conglomerate all the more essential. Although we may try to deny it, Europe is in the forefront of this fray already. I can only see benefits result from formation of such an organisation. We have remained an isolated island nation for far too long.

**BUT** there is something which I fail to grasp in all this. Even on a major label basis there appears to have been a burgeoning in the market of releases by singer/songwriters of late

which even outstrips the previous peak period of the mid-sixties to mid-seventies. Through all of this latest explosion, neither a Dylan nor a Donovan have come to the forefront. Subsequent concert tours by these new artists fail to consistently generate SRO signs. And yet further new names appear on the latest release schedules week by week. The mill has always demanded new grist. Are the punters finally becoming the wise men?

**AMONG** this new generation of singers who purvey angst-filled anthems, major record sales success surely goes to Suzanne Vega. Tracy Chapman's disappointing se-

the fact that we will never see musical phenomena of the stature of the Beatles, Stones, Who, etc. ever again. In an age when everything has become instantly disposable and renewable, despite the current flicker of green on the screen, who really gives a damn anymore. The latest fad comes and goes in the blink of an eye. One musician I spoke to recently, presented a picture of American youth which consisted predominantly of brain dead zombies who crave nothing more than a regular aural injection of 120 disco beats/minute. The jungle has returned to rule the city. What he indicated to be the root of this evil Stateside could be interpreted as being racially contentious. It retained the possibility of being true. Before it's too late, many more of us need to hark to the beat of an entirely different drum.

**AND** that just about wraps it up for another month. Except for the quick mention of a few local upcoming gigs currently scheduled for the penultimate month of

visit the area. And down in folk club land. Peter Bellamy appears at the Woodman in Kingswinford on Friday 30th. The Bell & Pump have R. Cajun and the Zydeco Brothers on Friday 2nd. Two weeks later they feature the reunion for the first time in many years of Johnny Silvo and Dave Moses while on Friday 23rd Cosmotheke are there. Acoustic Roots feature Liam O'Flynn at Trysull Village Hall on Wednesday 7th. I have a feeling that Kathryn Tickell is booked for an appearance at that venue during November. Check the date by ringing Kingswinford 295267. Saturdays at the Red Lion in Kings Heath open with Jake Thackeray (3rd) then You Slosh - apparently destined for national fame (10th), with Blowzabella (17th), Noel Murphy (24th) and the Steve Ashley Band (Dec. 1st).

**GIG** of the month goes to Tom Pacheco at the Bredon Bar on Thursday 8th but you \*\*\*\*\* never turned up the last time so why should I care so passionately? In my opinion



▲ R. CAJUN and THE ZYDECO BROTHERS

cond album failed to capitalise on the potential of her debut. The Michelle Shocked phenomenon I have never understood. And I saw the MS at Kerrville '86, one week before Pete Lawrence whipped out his Sony Professional. Come time, Tanita Tikaram will hopefully be viewed as a marketing exercise on a par with the Brinsley Schwarz scam. At least the Brinsleys went on to make some relevant music. And then there has been Steve Earle, Nanci Griffith, Jane Siberry, Lyle Lovett, Wendy Harry... the damned list is endless.

**MAYBE** the secret that no one dares whisper is

1990. Following the release by Awareness Records of much of his back catalogue plus the new album 'Once', Roy Harper hits the road during November. On Friday 2nd the venue is Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry whilst on Tuesday 11th he puts in an appearance at Birmingham Town Hall. If you failed to catch Gregson and Collier at the Adrian Boulton Hall on Sunday 4th, there's another local opportunity at the Wulfrun Hall, Wolverhampton on Saturday 22nd. Their new album (of cover versions) 'Love Is A Strange Hotel', should be available by the time G&C

this guy would see Dylan off, even on a good day. The true magic which he perpetrated on stage at Cambridge this year only happens a few times in a lifetime. John Otway is at the Bredon on the following evening, while a return by Albert Lee is rumoured. Ring 021-459 6573 to check that date. Seems that Channel 4 are scheduled to film Kathryn Tickell and Billy Bragg at the Cotteridge venue on Tuesday 27th.

**AND FINALLY**, congratulations to Katell Keen for scoring a major label record deal a few weeks back. Don't let them start messing with your music, kid.

# TAYLOR-MADE BLUES

## ARTHUR WOOD TALKS TO THE TEXAN GIANT

*EVERYTHING in the state of Texas comes in giant economy packs; her musicians are no exception. The proportion of classic guitar players bred per acre, per genre, must exceed the average of most other states over 'n' over.*

*His parents christened him Jesse Taylor. Joe Ely nicknamed him 'Jake'. He's also been known as Jesse 'Guitar' Taylor. Bob Moore calls him Hercules, and that's as much a testament to Jesse's blues guitar skills as to his bulky frame.*

*Kicking off in early October, Jesse undertook a thirty-five date UK tour to promote his rowdy and rhythmic, debut album 'Last Night' (Bedrock Records). Late one Thursday we retreated to the cavernous silence that is the Border Cafe Ballroom. Like a drive across Texas, our conversation went on 'n' on ...*

**AW:** You left the Joe Ely Band in 1983.

**JT:** I had been on the road with Joe for eight years and I was road burned-out. That's a real thing. It does happen. I decided to take a break and move back home to Lubbock. I had lived in Austin for many years. That move to Lubbock wound up lasting four years. It only took four or five months and I started going nuts about playing live again. So I started a band, I played locally, but in Lubbock you get caught in a trap. There's only a few places to play around there. It doesn't matter if you're Elvis Presley, you'll never get anywhere in Lubbock.

**How did the 'Last Night' album come about?**

I had an uncle who was a rich guy. Around 1987 he died. He'd never married or had kids. All of his money came to my mother, her brothers and sisters. She inherited a substantial amount of money and gave my brother and sister and me ten thousand dollars each. From the generosity of her heart. I had my guitars and a car, and a place to live. I figured that the money would be my one chance to make an album. We just started cutting tracks at (Don) Caldwell's Studios in Lubbock. The band was a

bunch of local guys. Good friends of mine. Lloyd Maines from The Maines Brothers Band. The bass player, David Heath is now in Jimmie Gilmore's band. And Don Caldwell, of course. Everybody has worked with him, since we were all kids. Up to that point I'd played on a bunch of Joe Ely albums, several Maines Brothers albums, Terry Allen, and with Butch and Jimmie. I'd never cut anything on my own before. We wound up spending about £15,000 on recording and mixing stuff. So I had a master tape and tried to shop it. I sent off about two hundred tapes in the States, to every record label known to man, but I didn't have any luck. Never got any replies.

**What happened next?**

I have been coming to England since 1978. As a matter of fact, this is my sixth tour - I had a lot of friends over here. I sent a couple of cassette tapes of the album to those friends and they wound up in the hands of Bill Gilliam, who owns Bedrock Records. He told me later that he got two copies of the tape simultaneously. At the time Bedrock were planning a compilation album of Austin artists. They're still working on the project and one of my songs will be included. When the Bedrock people got my tape they listened to it for days and couldn't decide which track to use. They each liked a different track. In the end they decided to put the whole thing out. Bill flew over to Austin last Spring and caught my show at the South By Southwest Festival. Then he signed me to Bedrock. I put the tape out in Austin in 1988 on my own label, Tornado Alley Records.

**I have a copy of the Austin tape. There's nothing on the liner to indicate who composed the songs.**

I wrote two of those songs - 'One A.M. Blues' and 'Gamblin' Man'. Funnily enough, on the album reviews I've seen so far, those two songs have been getting great write ups. I have quite a number of songs of my own that I'd love to record but I've never had the chance before this. For twenty years I've played with other peo-



▲ pic: Arthur Wood

ple. I didn't put more of my own songs on the album because I guess I felt that I didn't have anything strong enough to compete. I'm not a writer. I'm not an instrumentalist. I'm not Butch Hancock, Jimmie Gilmore or Terry Allen. I'm a guitar player first. Secondly, I'm a vocalist. Then a writer, third. I'm an interpreter. 'Struck By Lightning' was written by Mike Kendred. He played piano in the Joe Ely Band during the 'Honky Tonk Masquerade' period. Even toured Europe with us. Johnny 'Guitar' Watson, an old friend of mine from Houston, wrote 'Gangster Of Love'. The rest of the songs I picked off old, obscure blues albums.

**What guitar players have influenced you?**

Mainly the old blues players. If I had to peg one guy, I'd say Freddie King, B. B. King and Albert King. All those guys. But Freddie, more than anybody. When I was a kid playing in my first combo, I was twelve years old. Everybody played 'Hideaway'. If you couldn't play 'Hideaway', you weren't a combo. I started playing that song. Later, I learned more of his numbers like 'Sensation' and 'Drivin' Sideways'. As I got older and started to become a better guitarist, I wound up in Austin. Freddie

was still alive at that time. As a teenager I started getting to see Freddie play live. By the time I was twenty I was doing gigs with him.

**Did you ever play with the late Stevie Ray Vaughan?**

I first met Stevie, when he was fifteen years old. I had a band with Tommy Shannon. He was Stevie's bass player for the entire time that Double Trouble was together. At the time Tommy and I were in a band called Crackerjack. I knew Jimmy Vaughan first. Anyway, Stevie and his band Blackbird moved down from Dallas. A bunch of kids. I mean real kids. The first day they were in Austin they came to our house because they needed a place to stay. He was fifteen and had a Beatle haircut and fringe leather boots. We wound up doing a bunch of Blackbird/Crackerjack gigs. This would have been around 1971 or 1972.

**You play a custom built guitar. Tell us about it.**

The name of the guy who built it is Ted Newman Jones. He has been building guitars for about thirty years. I got the guitar in 1980 when Newman was at the peak of his career. I was making a bunch of money with the Ely band and I commissioned Newman to build a guitar. I have real big hands. I love Fenders but the necks are just too thin. They cramp my hands. I had played a couple of Newmans and loved them.

A by story to this story is that the guitar was to be ready in about a month. He takes his time and hand builds them. Newman had built a bunch of guitars for the Rolling Stones. He had even gone on tour with them for two or three years as head guitar roadie. The Ely band got an opening slot for the Rolling Stones in Phoenix, Arizona. They called us a week before the date. This was the 'Let's Spend The Night Together' tour of America. They were using local acts to open for them.

Newman found out about this and did a big rush job on the guitar. He surprised me when he showed up in Phoenix with the guitar at the concert. This was his plan, of course. Keith Richards and Ronnie Wood wound up playing my guitar that day, because they loved it so much. I had the guitar for eight years, and was playing a gig in Lubbock with Butch and the Sunspots. The guitar was stolen. I'd thought, 'If anybody opens that guitar case in the state of Texas, that guitar will be spotted' - because it is totally unique. Eventually, a guy went into a pawn shop in Lubbock and tried to hock the guitar. The guy behind the counter spotted it and I got the guitar back again. Now I've got the opportunity to make some more history playing it.

**I'll drink to that thought. A cocktail of Jesse's blues will fit the bill.**

*"I sent off about two hundred tapes ...  
but I didn't have any luck.  
Never got any replies."*