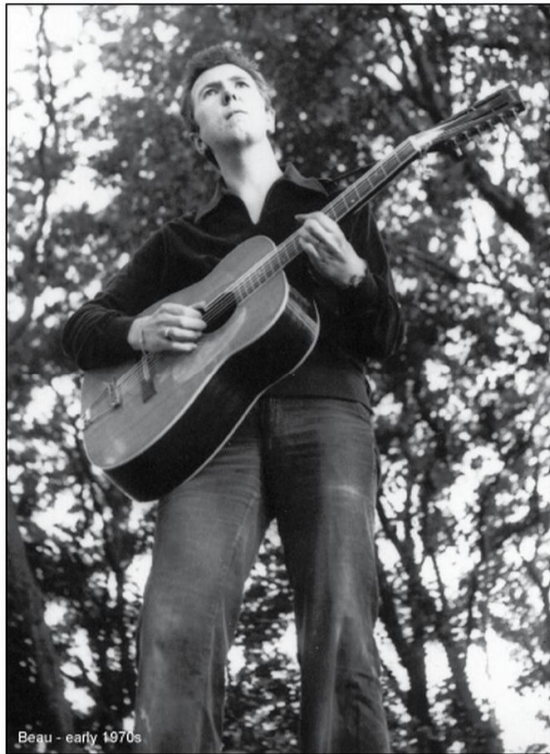


“In Beau Regard” by Brian R. Banks

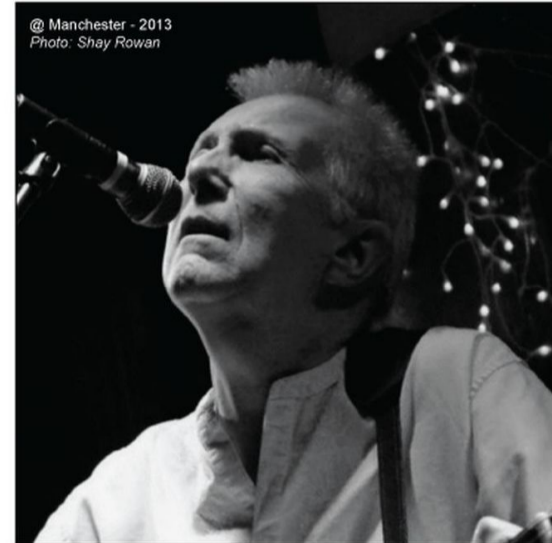
(first published in *Caught In The Act* magazine – January 2015)



Beau - early 1970s



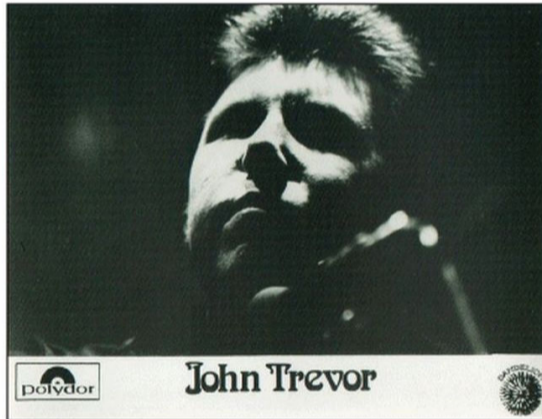
TREVOR MIDGLEY aka BEAU
- In Beau Regard -
...by Brian R. Banks



@ Manchester - 2013
 Photo: Shay Rowan

In 1967 a rather rare event occurred in London regarding youth culture. The establishment in the form of the BBC hired probably its most famous DJ, John Peel (née Ravenscroft), from so-called pirate radio, to air music outside the mainstream charts. The following year with his chum Clive Selwood, head of Elektra in Europe, the trend-setters started the record label Dandelion, named after Peel's hamster, to provide 'underground' musicians with a platform and some editorial control. Elektra

agreed to distribute Dandelion in America, but either didn't or changed the contents (eg. Kevin Coyne's *Siren*), to the undying gratitude of vinyl collectors everywhere.

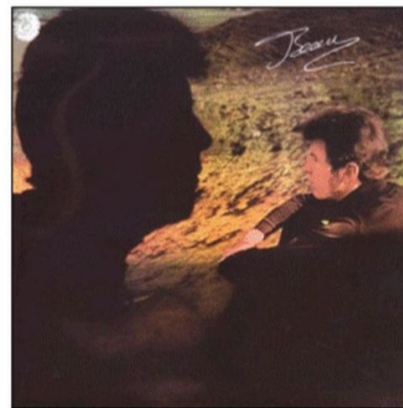


Elektra recommended to the fledgling Dandelion their first signing in November 1968, Christopher John Trevor Midgley better known as Beau, and eight months later issued '1917 Revolution' b/w 'Sleeping Town' (S4403). A Dutch picture sleeve appeared the next year. It reached #1 in Lebanon and is said to have inspired America's global hit 'A Horse With No Name.' Beau's recording wasn't released stateside – it was said the title wouldn't be accepted in that Cold War era – but the group could have heard it in England as their military families had been stationed there that year. Missed chances were to be the fate of the label's roster until the current renaissance of interest, along with discussion of their influence, brought those legendary acts to notice again with a more concentrated focus.

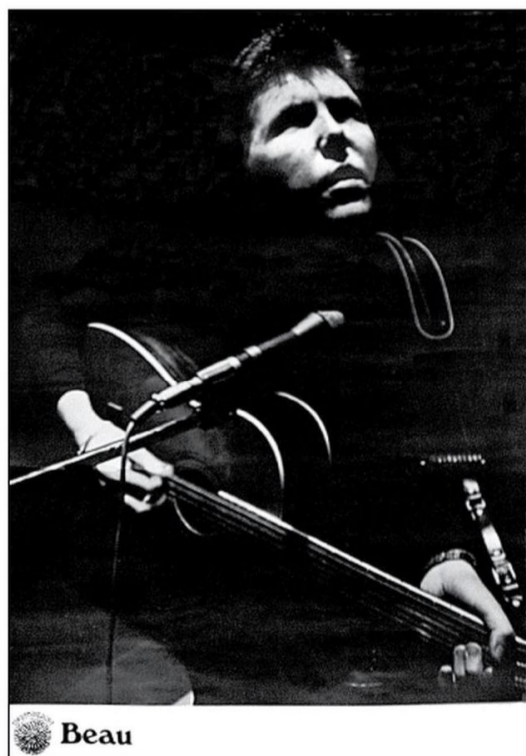
Born in Leeds in 1946, Beau acquired his moniker from a French teacher at the local grammar school in those days when surnames were preferred, to differentiate from another Midgley rather perversely nicknamed Herb. There a quartet formed as The Raiders in 1960 for R&B and covers, and achieved some notice. In January '64

they recorded four first-takes for a BBC session which still exists. The 19 year-old guitarist left in '65 after he heard Lead Belly (1889-1949) on an archive recording the previous year, which – along with Tom Paxton, Phil Ochs, and classic country blues not the Chicago electric variety – decided him on a solo career. The 12-string virtuoso Lead Belly provided his own beat by foot-stomping (John Lee Hooker taped bottle-tops under his shoes for that) and this self-made rhythm recurs in Beau's work, both treating themes from their local worlds in over 500 songs.

Beau prefers the hefty Harmony Sovereign 12-string – his first guitar was stolen on the day of his Dandelion audition – using a customised C-tuning with a mix of wound and plain gauge strings (details on his website!) He describes his approach as idea, lyric, melody and arrangement in that order: the central purpose and recording mix is to deliver the words. The full-bodied sound catalysed a more developed writing that combines all the creative elements for scenes and vignettes, described as spanning "weird psychedelia to plaintive troubadour folk" – the nearest cousin (removed) might be Tom Rapp's *Pearls Before Swine* – for what is always a bard's thought-provoking marriage of words with music.

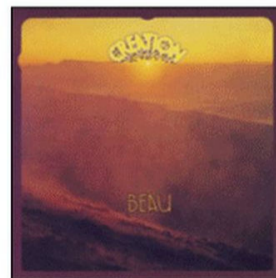


Beau - Beau
 Dandelion DAN 63751 – LP – 1969



Beau

The singer-songwriter played on the opening night of BBC Radio Leeds in 1968, favourably interviewed by one Mark Knopfler for the *Yorkshire Evening Post*. His LP debut, the label's second, was eponymous (1969, DAN 63751) and recorded in two sessions at CBS in London's New Bond Street. The first session produced 14 songs including the single, and the second saw an unsuccessful attempt to record a shorter radio-friendly version of it. The all-acoustic platter opens and closes with 'Welcome,' while the single '1917 Revolution' is the longest track (a Cherry Red video 'Lenin' on his recent download LP *Fly The Bluebird* has a parallel Bulgakov-like theme). The second track, 'Imagination,' was entered by his music publisher for the Eurovision Song Contest but obviously too good to be used there (like Villiers de L'Isle Adam's bon mot that candidates for democratic elections should be honoured for *not* being elected). Sparse production brings out the singer's distinctive warm vocal for the themes of creativity ('The Painted Vase,' 'Imagination'), futility of war ('Soldier In The Willow,' 'A Nation's Pride' which was penned between sessions), Northern angst about industrial commerce ('Pillar Of Economy'), the nature of Englishness and seasons with 'Sun Dancer' a sprightly unforgettable song open to several interpretations.



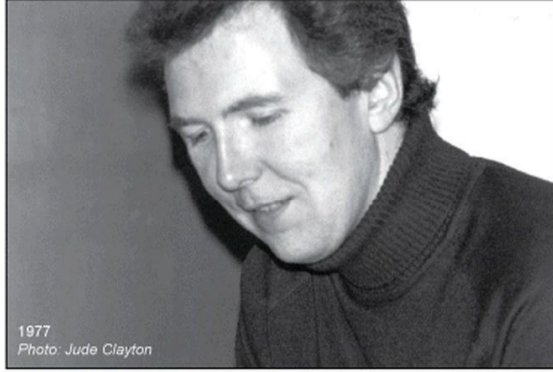
Beau - Creation
 Dandelion DAN 8006 – LP – 1971



Beau - Creation
 *rejected Dandelion LP sleeve

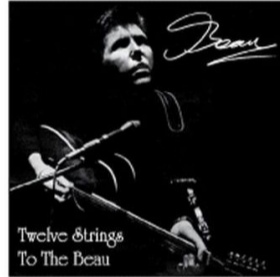
The follow-up two years later, *Creation* (DAN 8006), utilised three days at the Hollick & Taylor studio in Birmingham, home of the *Thunderbirds* TV soundtrack. Label-mates Tractor duo Steve Clayton and Jim Milne were added (along with their producer John Brierley) as electric backing on seven tracks, most clearly on the title and blistering closer 'Silence Returns.' At the time reviewers called this cut 'one of the most startling moments in rock' (*IT*), "The most unexpected guitar break I've ever heard" (*Time*

Out), while H.E. Mathiesen's Dandelion history notes that the calm "suddenly quite literally explodes into the wildest, rawest and best lysergic attack of an acid-guitar solo that Milne ever let loose!" The experimental duo – at a time when Beau was interested in Stockhausen and Faust – adds an unusual but completely appropriate 'extra string'; he also played clavoline ('April Meteor') and Farfisa organ ('Creation'). Again, and typically, the songs once-heard are unforgettable, as if we'd always known but couldn't place them. "They aren't easily pigeon-holed.... but are timeless," wrote Record Fiend's blogger, "which might be expected from one preferring Lead Belly to Beatlemania in the sixties!"

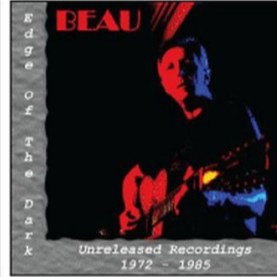


Both albums are universally agreed to be among the (several) high-points of the Dandelion catalogue of 26 LPs and one compilation (*There Is Some Fun Going Forward*) before the label expired after roughly the same life-span as its namesake hamster. Perhaps if they hadn't declined Roxy Music it would have been a different story. On the compilation Beau appears as John Trevor for the hypnotically lush 'Sky Dance' (again with Tractor), and the first single's b-side is a bonus on its first CD issue in 1995 (See For Miles SEE CD427) the same year they issued his albums as a twofor. The defunct label's own Dandelion sampler (SFMD96) the following year features Beau's 'Time,' an outtake from the debut session. *Life Too, Has Surface Noise. The Complete Dandelion Singles Collection 1969-72* (2006, Cherry Red CRCD BOX1) is also a good source, though untrue that it has all (Bridget St. John's debut is absent;

foreign policy, he currently tours with the Anti-Capitalist Roadshow. Eyam (rhymes with dream) was a Derbyshire village which in the 17th century suffered 90% mortality from plague in spite of their heroic (and modern) decision to self-quarantine by sealing borders; their graves are still on the town's hillside. Throughout his career Beau unearths such poignant moments in history from his reading. 'St. Elizabeth of Hungary' among others appear on the superb 18-track *Edge Of The Dark: Unreleased Recordings 1972-1985* (2009, Angel Air SJPCD 293) which also features five and the title track from the last Dandelion sessions of 1972 for what would have been his third LP, provisionally titled *High Mass* by John Trevor not Beau, under Peel's advice. 'Reflections' was penned when he was 22 about WW1, the same theme as 'The Cumberland Brigade.' 'Red Light In Arcady' is one of his own all-time favourites, and 'The Smoke Of Eden' has another soaring Milne solo. The motifs are as central as for his early mentors: the personal is eschewed in favour of sympathy for the down-trodden, disinherited by commerce, party politics and war while at the mercy of a non-free press, an English preference for the underdog encapsulated.



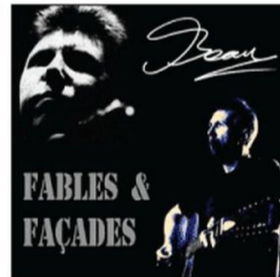
Beau – *Twelve Strings To The Beau*
The Sound of Salvation – LP – 2013



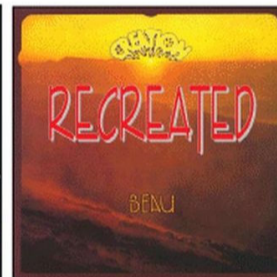
Beau – *Edge Of The Dark*
Angel Air SJPCD 293 – CD – 2009

Interest continues apace during the current vinyl revival on Fruits de Mer, including compilations, and Ritual Echo brought out the vinyl version of Cherry Red's 15-track download *The Way It Was* (2011, RerLP003) with further historical topics ('The Rabbi At The Gates Of Prague,' 'The Titanic Tragedy'). In 2008 Airmail Archive in Japan issued the Dandelion catalogue on three box-sets and individual CDs: Beau has 23 tracks (AIRAC1458) and *Creation* (AIRAC1459) appends *Sky Dance*. Cherry Red has issued several tracks on compilations including *Favourite Records From John Peel's*

Record Collection and downloads almost every year since 2008. In this batch was *Creation Recreated* (BeauCR1), remixed and expanded with radio work and a mega-psych stomp with Tractor of 'Sky Dance (Take One),' then in 2012 *Fables And Façades* of 18 songs from 1978-2000. This opens with 'Seeker After Truth' and closes with the latest, from *Warhol-The Musical* co-written with Steve Clayton, in between some of the widest themes in his repertoire. Anti-censorship, the feeling of being hunted, a rocking second cousin to Woody Guthrie's 'This Land is Your Land,' the tragic history of Haiti, Utopia, the Berlin Wall (he was on both sides of it in 1985), the Suez Canal incident, insomnia, and the spooky true story 'The Night Before Trafalgar' about an event that the admiralty suppressed by censorship.



Beau – *Fables And Façades*
Cherry Red – CD – 2012



Beau – *Creation Recreated*
Cherry Red – CD – 2012

To commemorate John Peel, who passed on ten years ago last October, Local Underground Records released Beau's six-track mini-album live in Bristol's Star Studio: *Recorded @ Rockers-The Dandelion Radio Sessions* (RAR004). Proceeds are in aid of Dandelion Radio, which has continually aired since 2006 and deserves music lovers' support for sharing past and current music as well as gigs and information. In January 2015 Guerssen Records of Spain reissue *Creation* on vinyl, with bonus tracks and Beau's sleeve-notes telling the full story for the first time behind the original album.

A unique atmosphere permeates all his songs from the sixties to now, a haunting quality which draws the listener in for full attention. He believes the secret of good folk music is one word: authenticity, but the genre wide enough to include what "comes from the people" (trad folk) to Bartok. Peel saw him as "a remarkable writer and performer

Medicine Head's is the LP takes not legendary kitchen tape) for what is nevertheless a superb edition.



Beau, who rarely gigged then or now, built a home studio and continued his prolific writing (over 100 songs were mastered in 1978-82 alone). He resurfaced in the nineties after retiring from his job in a Building Society in 1996, first writing a near-definitive book on Bob Dylan's bootleg albums, *Dylan: Contraband* (1998), and hosting a BBC Radio Sheffield music programme. His music is more widely known this century due partly to the various available formats. Cherry Red re-released his debut in 2007 (CDM RED333), for example, appended with five songs scheduled for 1975's unreleased *Twelve Strings To The Beau*, which finally saw the light of day on vinyl via Sound of Salvation (2013, Sound 001).

It includes what is perhaps his most famous song, 'The Roses Of Eyam,' covered by Roy Bailey live and first appearing on his acclaimed *Hard Times* (1982, Fuse CF382) then on *Past Masters* (1998, Fuse CFCD403). Bailey is clearly a fellow-traveller: admirably returning his MBE for services to folk music in protest at the government's



of songs well worth listening to under any circumstances," while Jacques Vassal's *Electric Children* (1976) calls Beau "probably the most neglected British songwriter of all." I caught up with Mr Midgley for some of my nagging questions!



For your two Dandelion albums you seem to have had editorial control of what would be on them and their arrangement. When John Peel suggested your

change of name, did you feel that situation might change?

All of us at Dandelion had editorial control over our albums; in retrospect maybe a little too much, but that's with the benefit of hindsight. It was a major part of the label's philosophy, and I'll always be grateful to John and Clive for that. Had I been signed to Elektra, I'm sure I wouldn't have had the same freedom from Jac Holzman! But no, I think John just had an eye to the changing times – same with The Way We Live/Tractor. I don't think it would have made any difference control-wise.

You've mentioned in an interview the possibility of full-band material at some stage, perhaps with some acid-folk. Do you see any difference between your output under the two names?

I don't see any difference – it really would have been a name – rather than a style change. Irrespective of the name, there'd have been the maturing process and hopefully the greater depth in the writing.

The full-band question's an interesting one. As a solo performer, there's nowhere to hide and the whole of a project rests on your shoulders. However, I've really moved away from the idea of working with a band. There are two main reasons; the first being I'm probably too much of a control freak! Secondly, and more seriously, my songs are about the words. Hopefully the whole presentation – song, voice, guitar, production – makes up a tapestry, but in the end it's the words that matter; and, for me, they come across best in the simple voice/guitar set-up.

A few years ago, Airmail Archive in Japan brought out my two Dandelion albums in rather nice replica slip-sleeve packaging. Unbeknown to me, they included lyric sheets transcribed from the recordings. On the *Beau* album, they were I'd guess 95% accurate. On the *Creation* band tunes, 50% would be generous! Which is why I'm really happy that Guerssen's upcoming vinyl re-release of *Creation* will have the full lyrics included.

Was it your choice to involve The Way We Live / Tractor duo?

It was my choice, but not my idea. Clive Selwood came up with it. The Way We Live from Rochdale had just signed to Dandelion and Clive wondered whether my working with the guys might produce an interesting dynamic; which it did! But the choice to go with it was entirely mine. I could have said "No" – we're talking editorial control again! But I'm glad I didn't.

You have rarely played live but went on the famous Dandelion Euro tour. Do you have memories of that experience?

I did the Holland end. I have a lot of memories – mostly surreal! Riding through the streets of Amsterdam to the Paradiso with my posters pinned to the trees; holed up in the Schiller Hotel listening to John's stories about his time in the States; macrobiotic

Is it true, if I may ask, that you have stayed married since 1969? Do you still live in Hertfordshire or have a south – north preference?

Yes, just passed the 45 years! We're in Norfolk now; the first time we've ever lived in the eastern hemisphere! And seeing as how by latitude we're actually north of Birmingham, I can honestly say I love both north and south. The weather and proximity to London is better in the south, but it's hard to beat northern scenery. We holiday up in Yorkshire quite a bit.

Was *Twelve Strings To The Beau* ever released?

It came out as an entity for the first time when The Sound of Salvation released it on vinyl in 2013. Some of the songs had appeared as bonus tracks on various CDs and downloads, but The Sound of Salvation's beautiful presentation was its actual debut.

It's interesting that you featured in a full-page article in *Billboard* Russia in 2007. How did that come about and what do you think of it – perhaps there is a connection to your songs '1917 Revolution' and 'Lenin'?

Back in 2007, just before the launch of *Billboard* there, a Copy Editor at Moscow-based C-Media by the name of Alexandra Buts got in touch. It seems the Editor-in-Chief at C-Media, Valery Pasternak, had been into my music since the early seventies. I was never released in Russia back then, but Valery owned illegally imported copies of my stuff and was something of a fan. He asked Alexandra if she could find me with a view to a feature in the "Lost Masterpieces" column of the first edition, which she did. I have to say, the reaction and response from Russia was great, and I still get comment and coverage today (like this, of 'Lenin' earlier this year). So thanks, Valery! I don't think there was a direct connection to '1917 Revolution', and of course the *Billboard* launch pre-dated my 'Lenin' (and 'Where Is Your Gun, My Son?' from 'The Way It Was') by several years.

It's interesting that that article has a different cover of *Creation*, a purple underwater scene. Is it the one by Nick Cudworth of *Siren* scrapped in the seventies because a bit gloomy?

It is. And again, I'm pleased to say the full story behind that sleeve is being included with the notes to the new Guerssen *Creation* release.

What new music has caught your interest?

Embarrassingly little! In fact, I tend more towards older music. Wi-fi radio's a great resource. I can highly recommend Blue Ears (Paramaribo, Suriname – a wonderful blues station), WUMB (Boston, MA – trad folk), Radio Dismuke and The UK 1940s Radio Station (both old jazz/big band), Radio Free Phoenix (Phoenix AZ – varied contemporary rock), 181 fm Classical Guitar (like it says on the tin); and of course Dandelion Radio (UK, and my main gateway into new music). There are many more.... No matter the age, if it's music you haven't heard before, it's new!

Cassette, vinyl, CD or download?

Personally, I tend to listen more to downloads, streaming and wi-fi radio these days. But the quality of the new vinyl pressings – and the packaging that goes with them – is really impressive. I've been delighted with the physical beauty of my recent vinyl releases, and I'm not surprised the format's having such a resurgence in popularity.

Your work has always shown interest in politics, the liberal variety of Tom Paxton and Phil Ochs outside party agendas. What do you think of the recent referendum in Scotland? There seems to be evidence of rigging – voters tell me that the polling booths contained pencils!

I've always been fascinated by politics, but any canvasser asking if they can count on my vote will always get the answer "No!" I'm a politician's worst nightmare, in that I'm totally unreliable! I always vote, but I do so on the basis of what seems to me to be in the country's best interests at the time. Which means over time I've probably voted for most of the parties out there. But I do try to steer clear of dogma and one-trick ponies.

On the Scottish referendum, I'm sure it was straight. There were a dozen or so cases in Glasgow of 'personation' (punters voting more than once), but these were discounted and passed over to the police. Overall, I think the economic argument for "Better Together" was overwhelming, but like many I underestimated how strongly the emotional arguments would play. That said, in emails and phone calls with Scottish friends in the weeks before the vote, I was saying I reckoned the result wouldn't be as close as was being predicted. I was guessing 55%-45% in favour of No. And I was dead right! (Well, it was actually 55.3%-44.7% so I was a smidge out, but people seemed impressed....)

Is there any new work on the horizon for your listeners, solo or with a band?

Very much so! Earlier this year I brought out *Fly The Bluebird* on Cherry Red. Over the next two or three years, I'm planning on releasing a brand new album each year, with the next one coming out (I hope) in April. In fact, I've just finished the most intensive writing session I've ever done – fourteen songs in fourteen days! Can't say when these will see light of day, but the muse certainly hasn't disappeared. I'm pretty sure these will be solo projects. Following what I've already said about how song content rates in my list of priorities, I guess you'll understand why!

Great news, thank you for sharing your music, insights and time with us.

Pleasure – thanks for asking!

Brian R. Banks
www.brianbanks.eu

www.trevormidgley.com is a fascinating site about the singer-songwriter and all things Dandelion

food; the pungent atmosphere....

Were there any differences of opinion, for example regarding billing?

None at all – in fact I can't even remember the order in which we appeared. John Fiddler [Medicine Head] might remember – he sent me a Facebook message not long back saying he remembered the Paradiso gig very well. But the whole thing was very co-operative....

Do you have any favourites from that catalogue?

I always thought the best Dandelion album was Kevin Coyne's "Case History." Still do. Medicine Head's *New Bottles*... was also a really solid, unusual set. But the trouble is, when you know people it's hard to be totally objective; Tractor, whose work I loved; Bridget St John who one time slept on our floor; even "the appalling Stack Waddy" who never knew how to turn the volume down, even in the studio; etc. etc.

In the seventies you got into Faust and Stockhausen. Where did that lead you personally or musically? Are they still an abiding interest?

On the rock side, I immersed myself in krautrock; Faust, Nektar, Kraftwerk, Tangerine Dream (and Edgar Froese) etc. From the classical avant-garde, there was Stockhausen, Morton Subotnick, György Ligeti, Lukas Foss and others. It was the free imagery that particularly appealed. When working with Tractor, we did one Stockhausen-ish track called 'Northern Lights' with me on piano. Jim and Steve had good free-form thinking. I quite like the track. However, for a bunch of reasons this is one that will stay in the can.

But undeniably, I've used the free imaging first discovered during my avant-garde excursions in some of my lyrics. And if I was ever on Desert Island Discs, one of my eight records to see me through would be Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Stimmung*....

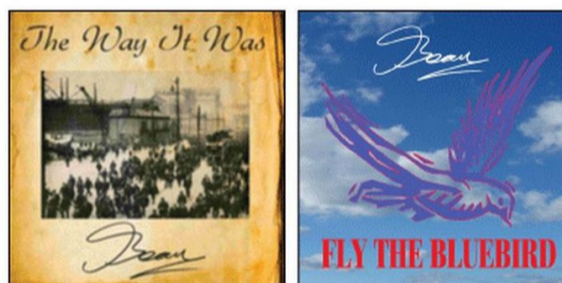
You have worked in radio quite a lot in your career, both in Yorkshire and now abroad. Can you tell us about this?

First off, I've always thought I have a great face for radio! I was fortunate to be able to cut my teeth in radio in Leeds when the BBC's local stations were being launched back in 1968.

It was something of an innovation, but I was allowed to script and introduce my own shows. Apart from one bum edit where a rather unacceptable swear word made it through to transmission, the Radio Leeds shows were a really enjoyable experience. The sad thing is, I had several of them on tape until 1975 when they were accidentally wiped with a bulk eraser at Tractor's Heywood studio during the *Twelve Strings To The Beau* sessions. I'm rather sorry none have survived. Of course now, everything survives. My recent SONYA Radio shows – where I was more host than performer – are now all up on Mixcloud.



@ Manchester - 2013
Photo: Shay Rowan



Beau – *The Way It Was*

Beau – *Fly The Bluebird*

BEAU - discography

Albums:

Beau – Dandelion DAN 63751 – LP – 1969
Cherry Red CDMRED333 – CD – 2007
Air Mail Archive (Japan) AIRAC1458 – CD – 2008
Creation – Dandelion DAN 8006 – LP – 1971
Air Mail Archive (Japan) AIRAC-1459 – expanded CD* – 2008
*bonus track from *There Is Some Fun Going Forward* – Dandelion 2485 021 LP – 1972
Guerssen Records (Spain) – expanded LP – 2015
Creation/Beau – See For Miles SEE CD427 – CD – 1995
Edge Of The Dark – Angel Air SJPCD 293 – CD – 2009
The Way It Was – Cherry Red RerLP003 – DL-only – 2011
Ritual Echo RerLP003 – LP – 2012
Creation Recreated – Cherry Red BeauCR1 – DL-only – 2011
Fables & Façades – Cherry Red BEAUFF1 – DL-only – 2012
Twelve Strings To The Beau – The Sound of Salvation SOUND 001 – ltd ed LP – 2013
Fly The Bluebird – Cherry Red – DL-only – 2014
Recorded @ Rucker's – The Dandelion Radio Session – Local Underground RAR004 DL-only – 2014