

An interview with TIM ROSE
(In the Slug And Fiddle, Sheffield. 9 February 1997)

PT: Were you annoyed by that noisy crowd tonight?

TR: I can't say it. They're Nick Cave's regulars and it was a good gig. Any time that you have drinking you are going to have that. In a concert hall they have one drink before and maybe one drink at half time, and you don't get that. But any time that you are in a pub or a bar or that situation. I mean I just got back from Northern Ireland where drinking is the national institution over there, so it's tough

I think that the Irish have a better attitude to a tune than we do in England...

Some do, some don't. Some of the places I worked man, I didn't feel this reverence for the singer or the song. They were just loaded. Same thing.

In the big three you spent a lot of time in Greenwich Village. Did you play all the legendary gigs?

Yes, before Cass (Mama Cass Elliot), after Cass, for years. The Bitter End, the Bottom Line, places like that. The Night Owl, Cafe Au Gogo; all of them. They were good places to play at the time. Naturally the legend is much more interesting than the fact. They were places that allowed us to do our own thing, and paid shit; absolute piss. They paid five dollars a set, so if there were five guys in a band you made a dollar each, and you did three sets a night so hopefully you made three dollars. But you could do original material and they always took an option on you, so if you made it they could get you back at five hundred dollars a week or something.

So all the early people like Dylan all had options from these places to come back to Greenwich and get three hundred dollars a week or something.

They did give exposure, not so much the club owners because they were just taking advantage; we were doing them a favour, they were doing us a favour of work. But the quality musicians that came to New York at that time, that's what it was all about, that was the attraction. It was Steve Stills, myself, David Crosby, Richie Havens, Felix Pappalardi, Eric Weisberg, Clapton coming over as an unknown, Hendrix started down there, so it was a fucking all-star list. All these guys were working for two or three dollars a set and a hamburger or something.

Are these the kind of guys that would be sitting in your audience as well?

Yes, we would all go and listen to each other. And furthermore, at the end of a night we would have our guitars and we would go to a coffee shop and we would play and trade off and things.

When did you first hear 'Hey Joe'?

Miami, Florida. I can never remember the singer's name, it was a friend of Freddy Neil's....Vince Martin, I think. He was singing two verses of this song and I was working in the same club as him with yet another group, and I said "That's an interesting song, I mean, not much to it, but did you write that?". He said "No, that's all that I know of it, I think that it's an old Appalachian tune. I said "Do you mind if I take it and maybe do something with it?", he said "Go ahead". So I did,

and I wrote a couple of verses and that arrangement of mine grew out of a living, breathing kind of working art.

So you were not aware of the fast rock versions of it?

No. I never heard it until mine came out. Then it came out of the walls, but I'd never heard any of those versions before. I have no idea how that came about. It's really strange, there is a guy who has his name on the copyright, and if he did write it then great, but I do not think that we will ever know how two people could come up with same song, but he gets all the money. In spite of that, being connected with that song has helped my career. It is still a damn good song to sing and it still works. Although I didn't get the money, I certainly got a positive feedback from it.

Is the story about Chas Chandler hearing your version and then giving it to Hendrix true?

Yes, absolutely, and that's not just from me, you can read anything on Hendrix, and Chas and Jimi always admitted it. When I met him the first thing he said was "Thanks for Hey Joe." I saw him at the Speakeasy Club in London when I was promoting Morning Dew, and he'd already had Hey Joe, so he was introduced to me and the first thing he did was to thank me. I said "You're welcome," gritting my teeth, thinking "You're making millions and I'm not", but what the hell. But yes, he did acknowledge it, and it was acknowledged in books about him. Literally, he and Chas Chandler bought the record and listened to it. Hendrix put his own style to it, but they did the same arrangement almost, putting Hendrixisms in it.

You were signed to CBS then, but is it true that you went to Elektra first?

Yes I had. I was working with the same guys that helped to develop Hey Joe and Morning Dew. We were working as a trio, but it was not working, but at least I was doing something. We auditioned for Mercury Records in Florida and they had the attitude that rock-folk music was not going to make it. The band was called The Thorns but we never recorded. We made a demo and auditioned for Elektra who said the same thing. About three months later CBS had signed me as a solo artist to a wonderful record deal of four singles. Then The Byrds came out with Mr Tambourine Man and folk-rock was it.

My manager wrote a letter to Time Magazine saying that The Byrds did not invent folk-rock, Tim Rose did, but who the fuck cared? By that time Dylan had done his first album and Tom Wilson had gone in and done Like A Rolling Stone with him. Simon and Garfunkel had the Sound of Silence updated in the same way so that's when it began.

But again, being first is not necessarily the most lucrative position to be in, at the beginning of the race so to speak, as you well know. That's the way it happened. I've had this strange career for most of my life where we used to talk about the underground scene in the sixties and seventies, and it was very much above ground. People like Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead; if that's underground then.

I mean I was underground, I was obscure, not by choice

though, but I never fit into that San Francisco scene. To be honest with you, man, I thought it was all boring shit. But it caught a spark with people you know. Then I came over here and John Peel took a liking to me, but I wasn't a John Peel kind of guy either, I wasn't artsy enough I don't think. John likes what John likes, so that was not my groove necessarily, and I certainly wasn't top forty kind of Guys and Dolls, the Move, Mud, kind of stuff, yet I made records.

Have you any memories of recording your first album?

Oh, largely frustration.

David Rubinson ... we were so un-enamoured with the whole process that when it came to mixing the album he didn't want to do it. "I don't have the time for this - I've got other things to do." He never told me what he wasn't happy about. He did not have... when we recorded Hey Joe, we did it in one evening with one or two takes, everything was live back then and CBS had that single out within four days.

By then, the west coast had already been saturated with this other version. After that didn't happen CBS really didn't want to do an album. They didn't

feel that there was going to be an album there, so I was asked to go back in and do one more single, which happened to be Morning Dew. It followed up Hey Joe. My version of Hey Joe was number 1 in San Francisco and number 1 in a few other markets. Not many, but enough for CBS to spend another \$500 to do another single which happened to be Morning Dew.

By that time we had so much in the can that we had recorded, it was virtually an album, so all of the songs that were on the first album were not really done as an album. There were two or three others I had done for CBS. that are not on the album. They were really whatever was lying around, to put ten or twelve songs out. Morning Dew was very much taken off that album after Episode Six over here and Simon Dee, who was one of the pirate DJs from the late 60s, started playing my version and called CBS in London to say 'You have this album and you should put it out'. And they didn't even know it.

They did not even know they had the fucking album. Nothing changes, and so they missed Hey Joe. They missed putting Morning Dew out first, and they took the other song and put it on a sampler, so I had no single on the album to put out, so that's really how that all came about.

Rubinson ... they did twelve songs and they had six singles, A and B sides, and all the promotion men called and said 'You don't know what the fuck you're doing, and we're not going to do your job for you if you don't know where the single is.' So that didn't work.

Tell me a bit about Bonnie Dobson?

Again Morning Dew. I came out of the folk-country tradition and I did this version again of this one verse I had heard somewhere, I recorded it, CBS put it out, and Elektra Records called, Elektra Publishing called, and said "You know we have a song very similar to that."

"Oh how similar?"

"Well similar enough," and so they sent us a version and we sent them a version, and I'd never met Bonny Dobson. I'd certainly never heard her do it. They said, "Well yours is different enough," so they decided to give us co-writer/authorship on the song, which happens a lot when you are dealing

with traditional material.

So it was never like me and Bonny sat down and Bonny said "Gee I have this." No, it was never like that. Not like I write today. And Bonny, for many years, was very bitter about that. I don't know why. She got most of the money, by the way. I didn't do it. It wasn't my idea. This was not something that I stole from her. I know what I've made and I know what she's made and she's done very, very well off it, although nobody's ever heard her version.

Actually, we've just reconnected. We're supposed to meet for dinner. She's mellowed out a little bit. She wants to make another album. She has a little acoustic label and she called a friend of mine and said 'Do you think Tim would have anything that might be appropriate for me?' I thought that was very sweet, very sweet. So I said 'Yes, let's meet and we'll write something together. Who knows?'

'Come Away Melinda'... Where does that come from?

That's not mine. Freddie Hellerman from The Weavers, he wrote it as "Mummy, mummy come and look, oh mummy hurry do, There's someone in a pretty dress who is all done up like you." It was like a kiddie's song. I heard this song and thought 'That's a nice song, but, ooh, that

fucking jive kiddie, and there was a guy doing the lights, who was a film producer and he needed to make some money. He'd done some films - John something, that's all I can remember - he was a very nice guy. He was listening to this and he says "Tim, can I say something?" And I said "Sure, John, go ahead."

"Well, you know, I'm listening to you do that song and I had an idea that if you did it as a man, and did a minor kind of thing rather than a major, it might

be more effective." And that's exactly how it came about. So I started doing it that way and it became a whole different song. Sometimes my guardian angel tells me to shut my mouth and open my ears and that was one of those times.

I listen a lot more now than I used to. I mean, my way has been so good. I've been so successful so far. My way is obviously the best way, quite obvious really, yeah!

So a lighting guy told you how to arrange it?

A lighting guy, but who had also produced films and was very talented in his own way and happened to be doing lights because he needed some money.

He knew of what he spoke. And he also had, John, I've seen him a number of times since, he had my interest at heart. It was very valid. He wasn't saying I want a production credit. It was a sincere thought from one creative person to another one, you know?

A lot of stuff comes about that way. Sometimes a friend mentions to a songwriter "Have you thought about changing this to that?" Paul

McCartney writing his 'scrambled eggs' and George going "Mmm not quite. How about Yesterday?" and Bing! True story.

Then you did a second album with CBS, 'Through Tim Rose Coloured Glasses'?

I called the album Through Rose Coloured Glasses. CBS in their wisdom, decided to call it Through Tim Rose Coloured Glasses. Clive Davis said "Hey, we got a little action on Morning Dew and Hey Joe, so let's see if we can get Tim to do something, and I was out on the West coast.."

So Clive still had faith in you?

Clive did have faith in me, but he had no idea what to do and how to do it. I remember at a party he said to me, "Come to Atlantic because I can make you a star." Of course, when I left C.B.S and went to Atlantic, Clive was full of shit. He didn't mean that at all. Clive had this thing, you know, but at the time it was funny.

Clive had three frustrations at that time which were myself, Melanie and Aretha. None of us had hits. Couldn't move any of us, and Melanie went some place else and had a hit with Ruby Tuesday, Aretha went to Atlantic and they took her back to her roots and she did basically gospel, but Clive was trying to make her a black Barbra Streisand and it wasn't working. He did it eventually with Whitney Houston, but not with Aretha.

And of course I was the third one in that triangle that Clive was very frustrated about. Had I been involved with that two years later, say signed in 1970 rather than '68, the corporate mentality had changed. The whole idea of

super groups, the whole idea of guys interchanging and playing on each others records had hit. It became acceptable. Then I could have used John Bonham when I recorded. It would have been acceptable. It would have been the thing to do, and it put all the studio guys out of work. The young guys were really doing it and they became the studio guys. In 1968, though, that was not the case, so most of the producers in the late '60's were traditional producers that grew out of the '50's and early '60's.

From then on, the Denny Cordells and the what-have-you started to take over the music business, and music became what it is. Pink Floyd grew out of that. The Who, Jefferson Airplane grew out of that. But at C.B.S at the time business was too corporate and I wasn't the kind of person they could do anything with. I was with the wrong label, and I was stuck.

Clive Davis sat down with me after I finished my second album and said "Tim, I don't know what the fuck to do with you. I know you've got something. I've got the largest record company in the world and I don't know how to sell your records." That was nice to hear from a guy like that! He said "Why don't you put together a group like Janis did?" I mean that's what Janis did, she found Big Brother, she tried to make it on her own but it wasn't happening, so she got this group, but who the hell's Big Brother?

Was success your aim?

I think largely that depends on what one determines as success. People like Stuart who runs this club have had a successful evening tonight, by

my definition it was a successful evening in that they paid me money to come and sing in the club, and the owner took something of a chance. I mean, he could have had 50 people here, if that is successful for me on this level if I can make the kind of money tonight, I don't know how much it was but it was more than a dollar less than \$100,000. Is success the goal? Not in itself, it never can be, I can't write music with the idea that this will be a hit song or be "the thing". I only write the best I can do. I only perform the best I can. So much is out of my hands.

Who determines that a Dylan becomes a poet and a Tim Rose doesn't? I mean who makes determinations? Is Dylan's poetry more valid? I don't know. They certainly couldn't tell you but there is a certain ability that some writers and performers have to hit a chord with the public and they actually carry it off. A lot of people have hit records but no career and a few people don't have a hit record but do have a very nice career. I am somewhere in the middle.

I've never really had a hit so I've never really had that idea of a come-back tour because I've never really been a number 1 record seller here, but then Joe Cocker is from Sheffield and sold millions. I mean, I was given Cocker's crack before Cocker. I was given it by Denny Cordell, a friend of mine, but I couldn't do it because Denny wasn't on CBS So Denny said "I know this kid up in Sheffield who has got your kind of voice and I might get him to do it." That was Cocker. Oh yeah. He had done a backing track with my kind of voice in mind and he played the exact track that

Cocker did. He got Cocker down when I couldn't do it and he did a great fucking performance. And Denny Cordell, died last year, but he was working for Essex Music in London and he had produced that track, just as a track. It just didn't have a voice on it.

And why didn't you do it?

Denny worked for Essex Music, so he was not an employee of C.B.S and I couldn't do anything on C.B.S that wasn't originated by somebody else on C.B.S. So you've never heard of my next single but Cocker's single was No1. I wouldn't have sung it the same way as Cocker, but it still would have been a hell of an idea.

Tell me about the single 'I Guess It's Over' which you did in England with somebody called Mike Smith .

Mike Smith, yeah. I was here in England and CBS wanted to do a single with me. They weren't getting any help from CBS. New York. They got permission from CBS in New York to do a single with me but they were given a budget of like £500. Mike Smith had just produced Hi Ho Silver Lining for Jeff Beck (N.B. Actually Mickie Most did that!!!) so they thought 'Well, he is a hip producer', so Mike Smith with whom I must have had no more than two conversations, asked me what songs I had. Well I had no idea of what a single was, I still don't, and Mike certainly didn't present me with any songs that made sense.

So I had I Guess It's Over and on the other side a thing called Hello Sunshine which they flipped. When you hear it, why not, but the studio guys were literally looking at their

watches. The fucking guitar player said, "I can't do it again."

I said, "Well, it's not right."

"Oh well, that's your problem." I mean it was that kind of a session. Herbie Flowers and that group. You remember them? They thought they were god's fucking gift, but they weren't making me rich - wrong guys. I've got five minutes to tell them, but they don't know. They are jazz musicians, they don't understand what's going on. But those are learning things. There is all this perception that art is magic, that it happens, you know? It just happens. People like Oasis today, Traffic and all that in those days and anybody in-between - Abba and all that, it's not true. It's very much of a compromise business making records. Any artist will tell you how difficult it is to spot a smash record.

I was talking to Hugh Murphy who produced Gerry Rafferty, his song was number 2 in England but Capital Radio would not play it in London because it didn't have a hook.

You mean they couldn't hear the saxophone?

That's what Hugh said. I think what Capital meant was 'It doesn't have that lyric that people can sing along with. The song sold millions throughout the world but Capital would not play it not because it was bad but that it didn't have a hook. Now that's a successful record where you've got BBC 1 playing it every hour and every other station and this one station says it doesn't have a hook. Just imagine how frustrating that is: "What do you mean it sold 300 million records and

you won't play it?". But you can't force them, you can't force them.

It depends how you define a hook

Actually, sung by Harry Chapin, there's not even a bridge to it. "American Pie" I mean, it had a hook but there are different kinds of hooks, I mean "Baby I love you, I love you, I love you, Baby I love you." That's a hook but then there's a "dada" that's a hook, so all these things are crafted. It's by gosh or by gum. Paul Simon started off his career essentially as a folk artist "I'm gonna write my songs and sing them the way I want to."

"OK, Paul, then you won't sell any records." And CBS having the one-track and taking guys in, while he's over here, they took a bunch of guys in and put on organ, bass, guitar and it became Sound Of Silence, which had been put out before and died, died a death. And Paul's going "Oh, you can't do that to my song."

"Paul you are number 1. You have just sold 300,000 records." He keeps doing it. He's not stupid. It was purely an accident. If that had not happened, then there was no Simon and Garfunkel.

How did you come to work with Al Kooper?

Mistake. Al had been hired at CBS as a house producer. He had already done the Blues Project and Blood Sweat and Tears and left the group, and CBS hired him. So I was his first project. In his book, he wrote a book about the music industry, he said that when he came to his first singles meeting with my single, he knew that it wasn't going to be on the air. He walked in with this single, which he said in the

book that he was proud of, and they didn't even listen to it at the singles meeting. So CBS put it out amongst the fodder and that was it. One single with Al and that was it. There was just no way. Al couldn't play the corporate game. One staff producer got his stuff pushed another one didn't and that was it, then.

Was he a good producer to work with?

No not particularly. No he .. Al was interested in Al and he wasn't particularly interested in me. He wasn't particularly a fan of mine but I was his first act and he wanted to make a good job so he produced a record. He hired the best guys, he got an arranger, and that was that. Al and I never became close friends. He's a tough guy with no humour.

He seems very talented but a very odd character

He is very strange and largely humourless too. A lot of his stuff is pornographic.

So what happened after you left CBS?

I went to Capitol, and Capitol made the same fucking mistake as CBS had done.

I was signed by a guy who was old music school, same God damn mistake. I was produced by Shel Talmy, the same fucking thing. He brought in those assholes that had done the single. You know? The Herbie Flowers ... the studio guys. Can you imagine sitting there trying to get feeling? I do feeling stuff. You need guys like Dave Porcero. I wanted to use people like Chris Stainton on keyboards, guys who played my kind of stuff, but no. Even on Capitol we still had the same studio guys that

gave us a very white-washed production.

Where was it recorded?

Here, Ireland. (Island?) Its just ... I couldn't, you can't say to a guy "That's the wrong feel." Feel is something that is difficult to communicate. It's like, even now, when I record, there are still a lot of guys I wouldn't use. They might be the best, but they are not right.

The Capitol album came out and the thing I remember about that is that Arty Mogul ... I was sitting in his office wondering why the album hadn't done anything, and Arty says "Yeah I'm looking at sales and we shipped out 7,000 singles on Message To You, and we got 12,000 returns." I said "Arty how did you get back 5,000 records you didn't even send out?" He said "I'm trying to figure that out myself." So that was my Capitol experience.

Sounds more like a Roulette Records deal

The Big 3 was on Roulette. You wouldn't ask him, it was just 'end of story'.

Then somehow you got to Playboy Records...

That was because an English guy had run across me called Jonathan Rollins. His brother was working for Hugh Hefner's new recording label, Playboy. So Jonathan and Stuart got me on Playboy Records. I was the first artist they signed and they asked 'Who did you want to produce the album with?' Well, this was the first time somebody had asked me, so I had become enamoured with Gary Wright and I thought his work was very compatible with what I was doing. It was an interesting sound, that sort of

organ he used a lot. Through a series of friends, I got connected with Gary who was working as a backing musician, and I explained the story and he said "Yeah I'd love to produce it." Anyway we went to Olympic Studios in London and I came back to London and stayed at the Playboy Club and did this album with Gary running in and doing 3 hours with me and then me being at work for 6 and him running off to use my 3 hours to do something else for himself. He was making a nice fee and really not being into it at all.

Later, Mickey and I became friends and he told me Gary had really funk'd me over on the album and on this and that, but the album came out and it was actually my only album up to that time that actually had a hit single. We did "Hide Your Love Away" and it actually hit the charts at number 100 and then 98, 94, 89, but the record company didn't know where it was showing, so it died, died a death. Well, this was in America. By the time they finally got some sales through it was like Charlotte and places like that, and New Orleans. They were so untogether that it was dead, there was no second album.

Gary had gone on to something else. I toured with the album hoping to revive it. I got a couple of good publicity punches out of it, but nobody played it. It just died. After that I didn't have a deal and the same guy and his brother had left Playboy and they came back to England. He called me and said he was working with a young producer and I should come over and we could try again. The producer was Hugh

Murphy who had just finished Jerry Rafferty, great album, Baker Street, so Hugh and I got together with John and we did The Musician album which was given to Atlantic when Dave Dee Dozy, fucking.. well, whatever, he was running Atlantic. I tell you my record career has been totally meandering. I can understand why people think I haven't done stuff.

Is all this an unhappy memory for you?

It's frustrating. And on the other end of the coin is that, at that stage of the music business your choice was that you either did it the record company way or you didn't do it. You could have your artistic integrity but they were not going to pay for it. They say, "If you are going to make a record, you are going to make it our way or you are not going to make it." But the music business up until that time was like that. It's still like that in Nashville, still not much individuality. It's cookie-coloured kind of stuff. Don't rock the boat down there man, or they throw you out of the boat.

You're all right if you wear the right hat...

That's right. You fit into that mould, it will be interesting to see if this thing Nick (Cave) and I are trying to do currently has any legs to it, because Nick makes very collective records. As you know, he's not known as a Top 40 kind of guy. He doesn't make hit singles. He doesn't even write hit singles and yet he has a very nice career and his albums do well. He has pretty much to his own self been true, but his career has been on an independent label, where his albums haven't cost much and he has slowly but

surely built up to ten albums and built up a very large following doing his thing when he has been allowed to do it. He's good at it and there are a lot of guys who, since the late '60's early '70's, have done that very well, because there has become a branch of the music business that allowed you to do that, and will say "we're not CBS Records, so we don't have to sell 50 million pieces, you know. We're quite happy with 5,000 to get you started, and well build to 15 and 20." But now, like, a small independent sells 20,000 pieces. In pounds that's a lot of money, but it's not a lot of money for Elektra or Warner Brothers. I mean they sell that in a day on one artist, so the economy and scales have changed somewhat.

Have you got much new material?

Oh, I've got enough new material to do two albums. Even as a singer/songwriter though, if somebody comes up to me with a better song, like I have ten songs and you come up to me with one that's better than those ten songs, I'll do your song, because I like to sing. I'm essentially a singer too, so Nick and I won't be doing solely Tim Rose material. He said in an interview recently that he has a picture of what I should sound like. He told me once "Tim this is the album I would make with you if I could sing like you," so that was very telling about him, and it could be interesting for us.

I'm intrigued by this collaboration

I am too.

I respect his integrity as an artist but I don't much like his voice

People have heard about this and said "Oh you and Nick are going to do an album together." Yes, but its not a duet. We're not singing together. Singing together was never even discussed.

Do you feel you've been dogged by dickhead producers?

Well, I am partly responsible too. I wasn't totally passive. So I have a part in that also, but I did and they were main producers Shel Talmy produced The Who and The Kinks, and he was supposed to know David Rubinson went on to produce a lot of hit stuff? The guy who did Through Tim Rose Coloured Glasses, Jack Tracy, had done a number of hit things. Gary Wright had produced a number of hits and went on to have hits afterwards. Hugh had just come from doing Baker Street.

I did an album later, The Gambler, which was finished in the late seventies but didn't come out until the nineties, and that was produced by Pierre Tubbs who had just come from Right Back Where I Started From with Maxine Nightingale and supposedly had his finger on what was happening. These were all name producers, and you've got to have name producers - that's bullshit.

I think now it's that you've got to have the right producer rather than a name producer

Correct. Rick Rubin is right for certain people but you wouldn't give him Oasis. It's a different thing you know. The business now has expanded such a lot and there are right people who might not be hit single producers. Babyface back in America who produces smash after smash after smash but certainly not right for me, but yet Rick Rubin may be

able to take me and do some very nice things. So it's the question of ... always in the music business there's the music and the business. Your readers are reading Mojo magazine which is a business. You can buy ads in Mojo. That's how it stays alive, and they talk about music, they talk about the music end of it, not realising probably that it is about the business. People who appear in your magazine want to sell records, or have sold records. Whatever.

There's no gig without customers. There's no working or doing your own thing unless somebody will give you a venue for it, and they can't give you a venue if nobody shows up or they can't pay the bills. So it's very much a business. Before you have the music you've got to have the business. The room here - I mean he could do very well selling beer and putting in Joe Jones so I need him and he needs me.

It's the same with record companies. I need a record company. In order to get in there you need to have a record, and the record needs the radio station and the radio stations need the records. Everybody needs the artists, so you have to have the realisation that it's an intertwined, symbiotic business. You can make hit singles and try to craft hits from Boyzone or the Spice Girls. That's one way to do it. Or you can craft yourself to be who you are and look for a niche. It may not be Radio 1, it might not be Capital but there has to be a niche. It's like Nick Cave has done this very successfully without having a hit single. I mean, ten albums and no hit single? That's almost unheard of.

Not on that label...

It's not unheard of on that label. It would be completely impossible to have done on Elektra or Warner Brothers, so the business end of it is that you have to realise this. I didn't realise this. I always hoped that talent will out. Be yourself and the world will beat a path to your door. Well, yes and no. It depends whether the business feels that there is any money in the self you are being. Dylan made it as a singer-songwriter because other people recorded his songs and made money with them, therefore Bobby became this great legend. Not because of his records, but there was money in his songs, so whether he is the anti-establishment or whatever we want to call him, Dylan is there because of his money. Paul Simon is there because Neil Diamond got Frank Sinatra later on down the road.

The gratitude that these guys show, the guys that are really successful, and the women, the groups that stay around the longest, like the Rolling Stones, they understand this. They understand that the press is important, radio stations are important, the promoters are important and that if everybody makes money off them, then they also make money. So the smart groups really try to see that everyone is happy. They know there's money to be made.

The other groups think they are the cat's arse and they are the ones that don't last as long, so it's not an artistic sell-out to realise it's a business. It's just a reality. I mean, if you are a painter, you've got to get down to the old gallery, get your paintings sold. You've got to get them sold somewhere.

Same with music, same with films - the business. But there's enough around in the business today to accept a very large broad canvas, you know? There's room for Nick Cave, Oasis, Spice Girls..

Maybe even Tim Rose?

Yeah, Tim Rose, yeah, there is. Not on every label and not with every producer and not at

I've heard great versions of the Coca-Cola theme by acts like the Supremes...

Sure. I did a bunch of Pepsi stuff. I paid for my college education with Wrangler. You just go and write a cheque every semester on Wrangler. "Here comes Wrangler, he's one tough customer," Bing! Nobody knew who I was but the cheques came in every



every radio station, but there's room.

You did some commercials, for Pepsi.

No, it was for money.

Do you still sing any of them?

If you asked me to I would. Damn right. The money's good and I'm a singer too. The producer - you walk in and you sing. You don't have to write it. I don't have to produce it. I'm not responsible for it, and the money's very good, nothing wrong with it. I mean, if you're not earning money doing your thing you've got to earn money doing something else, sell cars or whatever.

Monday. Great. Oh I'd do that still. It's the kind of financial support you need to be able to say. "Oh, I'll sit here and write this cos I have this over there."

So I don't have to do the bad deals where I've no control, you know? I've got this man. I can wait until something good comes along. That's the ideal situation, because I still have the cheques. I would certainly, if someone over here asked me, I'd be there in a minute, no worry. Voice-overs, you'd better believe it. It's all a discipline. It's all part of what I do. It's a hell of a lot more part of what I do than working as a stockbroker.

Which you did for a while...

Yeah. I wrote scripts last year for the circus back in America. Ringling Brothers Circus. I also wrote some scripts, they did some T.V specials, and I was one of the scriptwriters for them. I loved it!

Can you turn your hand to anything, if you enjoy it?

Well, the producer called me and said "You are a writer, will you write something?"

"Well, I really write lyrics for songs."

"But why not try this?"

"Oh, OK." So I handed them in and he said he liked it.

"There's the money. Do it again." So I got a credit, Written By Tim Rose. Toy Story On Ice, that was one of them.

So now you are based in London

Yeah. I moved in for a while. Some people I had been meeting, and IBS, it was suggested that I stay and I said. "Well, I can. I'm flexible so, yeah, I'll stay for 6 or 8 months and see what happens, I can always go back when I get back into voice overs."

"I'm not quite sure what I'm gonna do," growls craggy troubadour Tim Rose as he fingers that first chord on his trusty vintage Martin acoustic. "We'll kinda wing it as we go along."

Accompanying guitarist David Clarke grins wryly. Turning the venue's lack of lighting to their advantage, the pair stand in pools of illumination directly under two Chinese hat-shaped pendant lights, which cast erratic shadows on their faces.

Most of the 300-strong audience jammed into The Slug seem neither to know nor care

that the man at the end of the room inspired Jimi Hendrix to slow down Hey Joe, co-wrote the classic Mornin' Dew (since covered by the Grateful Dead, Jeff Beck and more), and sent chills down the spines of the cold war generation with his post-holocaust melodrama, Come Away Melinda.

Rose adjusts his spectacles and launches into Gambling Man, the first of many songs concerning women who have wronged him. His voice, a throaty gargle somewhere between Barry McGuire and Richie Havens, remains intact. Otherwise, he's older, jowlier and greyer. His features are etched with the lines of a life spent hovering on the edge of major success, but it's unmistakably the same face that peered from his mid-60s album covers.

Come Away Melinda crops up early and, despite unwanted feedback, it remains chillingly stark, effective enough to silence the loud-mouthed forty-somethings at the next table. Rose performs with conviction, but much of his charisma comes from disarming between-song banter which undercuts the melancholy of his material. A coughing fit at the end of Melinda allows him to tell of a fan who asked if he had anything new coming up. "I said, 'Yeah, phlegm.' and he said 'Really, where can I get it?'"

He dedicates Going Down In Hollywood, about his days of alcoholism in L.A., to Hugh Grant, then announces a forthcoming collaboration with Nick Cave before starting Morning Dew whose first line attracts a ripple of recognition. His dozen or so songs rarely accelerate beyond snail's pace though, and the serious drinkers of Sheffield need more

than this to wrench their attention away from the bottom of the glass. He tries a country standard, Eat Drink And Be Merry, before ending with an atmospheric Hey Joe which is accepted well enough to merit an encore.

"Thanks, this has been a real gas," he says in tones which suggest he's thinking of hydrogen sulphide. Like a trouper, he offers up The Beatles' You've Got To Hide Your Love Away and, finally, amid tumultuous applause, cheers and whistles, The Slug And Fiddle is his. Wisely, he doesn't reappear.

Interview by Johnny Black for Ptolemaic Terrascope, 1997.

Sadly, Tim Rose died in September, 2002.