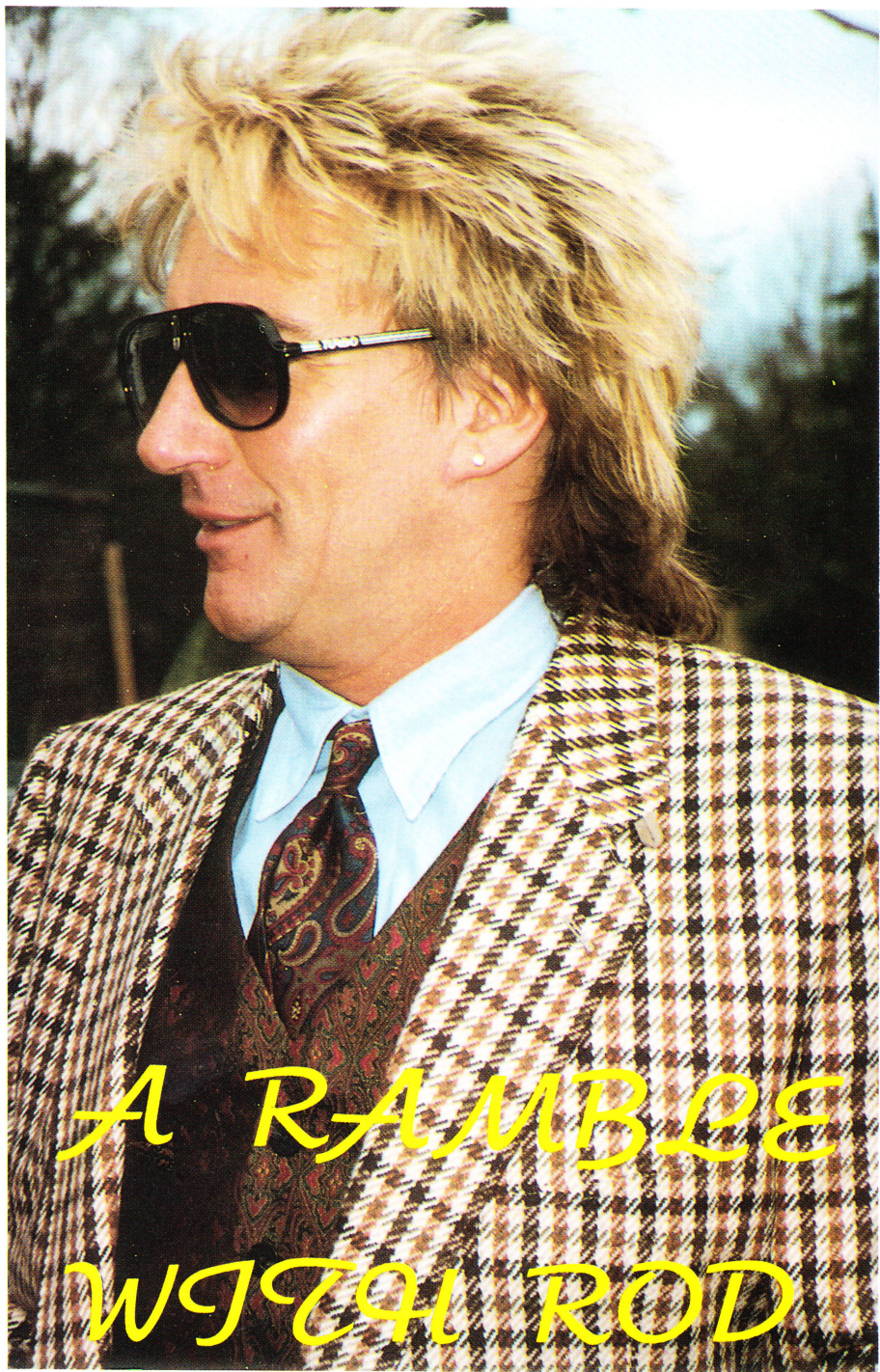


**SMILER**



*A RAMBLE  
WITH ROD*



"I do hope you're not going to ramble on again old chap. You did go on a bit last time you know," quipped Rod as he bought a round of drinks. He was referring to the first time we met for an interview, back in 1987. I was so nervous, I consumed far too much alcohol and the result was an embarrassing case of verbal diarrhoea on my part. Rod couldn't get a word in at times! Since then, I've cut down on the booze (whilst interviewing) and now let my subjects speak almost uninterrupted!

Rod was in a good mood. He'd taken a few days off from recording his new album in Los Angeles to appear at the San Remo Pop Festival in Italy. From there, he'd flown to Germany for a television appearance and then to Britain for the weekend where discussions took place regarding the long awaited European tour. All this within 48 hours! He was now preparing to return to Los Angeles, but still found time for a chat with **SMILER**. With his confidence boosted by the UK success of the single 'Downtown Train' and album 'Best Of' he was keen to tell of his plans for the future. However, we start the interview with the best of your questions.

**SMILER:** In the early seventies when you appeared on TV shows such as Top Of The Pops and The Russell Harty Show, the vocals were always live. These days you mime, what is the reason for the change?

**ROD STEWART:** I don't get asked to sing live anymore, the people involved don't want the technical problems of setting up a live mike. I just do what I'm asked. I could sing live, but it's easier to do to a backing track because I haven't got to worry about my voice being in tune.

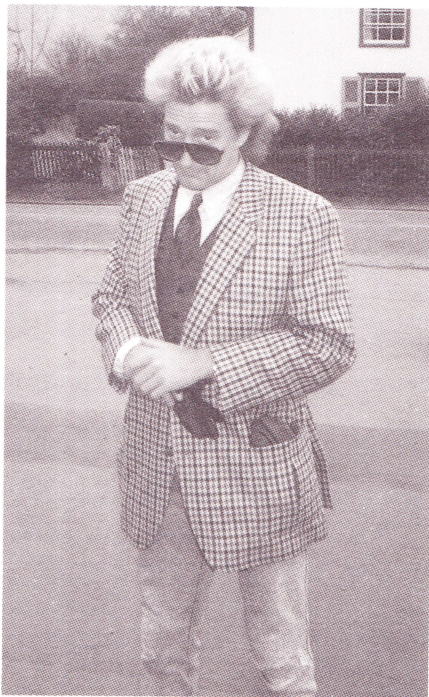
**SMILER:** Out of all your albums, what is your favourite?

It's so hard to say, it's like saying 'Who's your favourite footballer'? The last one was pretty good, not because it had four hit singles on it, but I think the songwriting was better than on the two or three previous albums.

**SMILER:** When you go to night clubs like Tramp and Stringfellow, are you interested in the music that is played?

No, I really don't listen to it. I usually go to Tramp to see some mates or just to eat. I don't go near the dance floor. It's too loud (laughs)! They don't play Sam Cooke or Otis Redding or that type of music. It's all dance music. Most of it isn't good music and it goes right by me.

**SMILER:** Do you find you are attracting a younger audience, people who are not aware of 'Maggie May' and the really early stuff?



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It was like that on the last European tour, especially in Germany. When we played 'Maggie May' there was no response. Then we'd play 'Love Touch' and it would bring the house down. In the States it's different, really amazing, whoever they go to see they will look back in history and find out about your old records. That seems to be the big difference between the States and the rest of the world, Rock 'n' Roll is more inborn into the Americans.

**SMILER:** 'Crazy About Her' wasn't released in the UK, any particular reason?

I think the record company thought it didn't have much of a chance. I don't understand them sometimes. Looking at the top ten in **SMILER** (Issue 22) it's amazing, some of those records didn't even make the top 100 and I could have told them they wouldn't. I didn't even know 'People Get Ready' was a single here.

**SMILER:** Were the remixes of 'Crazy About Her' your idea?

Yes, I think remixing is very important, you can really bring out some different aspects of a record when you remix it and get some fresh ears in. It was just one vocal I did for all five mixes.

**SMILER:** Are you still friends with Elton John?

Well, we're not enemies, we just don't see each other much. We've drifted apart. He's touring in Australia at the moment.

**SMILER:** Do you play any other instruments apart from the guitar?

I used to play the five string banjo, although I haven't done so for a long time.

**SMILER:** There are bands around at the moment, the Quireboys and Dogs D'Amour in particular, who are copying your style. Do you approve?

If they are and if they do, they are quite entitled to.

**SMILER:** They seem to be bringing 'good time' rock back to teenagers again.

They're not! The Quireboys album went in at number two on the chart and disappeared. The single didn't do much either. In America there are thousands of bands that copy the Faces and the Stones.

**SMILER:** Not quite as blatantly as the Quireboys.

Yes they are pretty close. Jim Cregan produced their album and Robin (Le Mesurier) and Kevin (Savigar) played on it. That's why it sounds a bit like some of my records. I know there's one that's similar to 'Hot Legs', but we all nick a little bit from here and there. Good luck to them.

**SMILER:** Have you heard the Wet Wet Wet version of 'Maggie May'?

No. I keep meaning to, you haven't got a copy of it have you? They're a good band, I admire them. I haven't heard that particular track though, it came and went very quickly.

**SMILER:** Do you ever go out in disguise so you can be completely anonymous?



We were going to try it the other day and take the kids to the beach, but it's not worth it. I get a moustache, a pair of glasses and grease my hair back. It works, but being recognised doesn't worry me very much.

**SMILER:** What is your idea of a good night out?

I like to mix with the guys I play football with. I really enjoy their company. We have four nights out a week: we train twice a week and play twice a week. We're playing a charity match on Friday and we've sold nearly 10,000 tickets already!

**SMILER:** Will there ever be another Faces reunion?

No, there's no chance of that. I'm going forward, not back!

**SMILER:** Are there any Faces tracks, not on 'Storyteller', that you would have liked included?

No not really. I think four tracks was a pretty good representation.

**SMILER:** Is the book you've written with Ron Wood ('A Variety Of Annoyances') ever going to come out?

Yeah, some day. I saw Ron's book of paintings and I thanked him for doing the worst portrait he could have done of me!

**SMILER:** If there was one person on today's music scene you could choose to record with, who would it be?

Bonnie Raitt.

**SMILER:** Are there any plans for a home video in the UK?

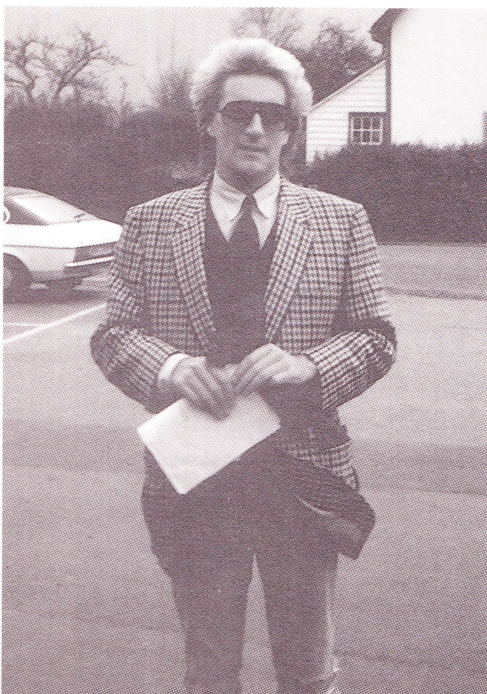
A live show will probably come out next year. I would imagine it will be a European concert. A contract that Billy Gaff got me into has just expired, so things should be easier.

**SMILER:** Were any of the recent USA concerts filmed?

No, the only things we did film were some of the South American concerts which were shown on television the night after.

**SMILER:** What kind of music do Sean and Kimberley listen to?

They like that band out of 'Make My Day' (?) and they know all the rap songs. They also like my stuff as well. I had to take a record





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away from Kimberley, it was called 'I'm So Horny!'

**SMILER:** Do you think you'll ever go into films?

No, not unless it's by accident. I really wanted to do the film 'Victory.'

**SMILER:** Have you been taking dancing lessons?

No, I've just learnt a liittle bit more. I was thinking about it for the last tour. I might get into it, but we don't play that much dance music. I can shake a leg though, don't you worry!

**SMILER:** Recently critics have changed their attitude towards you, how do you feel about them?

I don't care whether they like me or not. They could all change tommorrow. I'm far beyond criticism now.

**SMILER:** Who does the cooking at home?

Kelly cooks twice a week, we have two nights where we both stay in with the kids. I don't cook, I use loads of pans and saucepans just to cook a boiled egg, so I leave it to Kelly.

**SMILER:** Is it true that you've had to stop playing football due to rheumatism?

Did you hear about that? I haven't got rheumatism, it was a story that appeared in a German newspaper. If I had, I wouldn't mind admitting it. I got so much stick from my team mates: 'Alright Rod, just play for fifteen minutes and we'll take you off!' It's just not true.

**SMILER:** Round about 1966 you recorded 'Meet Me At Mary's Place' and 'Good Times'. Do they still exist?

Yes, they still exist. We considered both of them for possible inclusion on 'Storyteller'. One we overlooked was the duet with P P Arnold 'Come Home Baby', I'm not even sure if we finished that one. I can't stand listening to the first four or five tracks on 'Storyteller'.

**SMILER:** Did you consider using 'Holy Cow' or 'Return To Sender' from the Atlantic Crossing sessions?

Yes we listened to both of them, but 'Return To Sender' runs out of vocal about half way through. I think I wandered off and went down the pub while the band kept on playing! I don't think it was ever finished.

**SMILER:** Someone once said you should record an album with the MG's.

One of them is dead now so it wouldn't mean very much. I'm happy with the band I've got. I've had to slow the lads down. We're writing so many songs, I'll get it finished and they'll have me out on tour! We're going to India in December, Bombay and Karachi.

**SMILER:** Have you got an audience out there?

Oh yes, it's surprising. When we were in South America I was expecting to play to 10,000 people and 70,000 - 80,000 turned up. I was talking about East Germany with the tour promoters yesterday. No one has managed to play there yet. Pink Floyd are trying to and Springsteen played next to the wall. I'd love to play there, I like to tour anywhere that's new. The timing will be great when I tour Britain. I know you think I'm mad, leaving it so long, everybody thinks I'm mad! But they are actually beginning to agree with me now. I'm old enough to do what I want and I know this is the right move. It's very busy here this year. When the Stones tour, they are like a vacuum, they take all the press and all the money. Plus there's Bowie, Tina Turner, Billy Joel and Prince. You can't compete with that lot, you're all cutting each others throats for publicity and ticket sales, so why bother. It's best to wait another year.

**SMILER:** Do you know how many concerts you will be playing in the UK or any of the venues?

There will be three or four football grounds along with indoor gigs. Stamford Bridge (Chelsea's football ground) is a definite. It's in a great location with plenty of boozers around! We'll be doing Old Trafford, Hampden Park and all the others in between. When I looked at the tour we were going to do this year, we had ten nights booked at Wembley Arena, three nights booked at Glasgow, five at the NEC in Birmingham and some at Milton Keynes Bowl. It was all booked for August, September and October.

**SMILER:** Will you be playing any out of the way places?

I wouldn't imagine so, it costs so much money. You can't keep people happy all the time. We won't be playing places like the Hammersmith Odeon and I'm never going back to the Brighton Centre. It's got the wall right across the back and the sound bounces back which means you can't hear what you're playing. There is a place I want to play down in Cornwall. I'm really looking forward to Chelsea, it will be great, especially if it's a nice night. Tickets will be on sale in November.

**SMILER:** Have you got any plans to return to Olympia?

They've really got the domination on that place now.





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We used to use it right after the Horse of the Year Show, the timing was perfect. That's what used to make it good, we had all those boxes people could sit in. It was nice because it helped with the acoustics but they're not always there. I will look into Olympia though.

**SMILER:** Will you have a supporting act at the stadium gigs?

Yes. We were talking about Wembley Stadium yesterday, the piss poor support acts. None of us liked each other, I can't remember the bands names, they all got insulted. There were punch ups backstage!

**SMILER:** Why don't you get some of your mates to support you? Gary Glitter or Steve Harley.

Gary Glitter would do it. He was tremendous in 1983. I saw him at the awards and we talked about Ibrox. It was the funniest part of his life. The only other date he was supposed to do was Paris, but he stayed with us for an extra week because he was enjoying himself so much. He only had one set of clothes!

**SMILER:** How long will the tour be?

It will be about four months, then I'll take a two month break and go back to the States to tour again. I'm a big lad in the States now you know!

**SMILER:** Do you think it was a good idea to tour the States again last year?

Definately, it re-established me and while I'm in demand I'm going to do it again. I really enjoy it. The sets and the stages don't have to come down every night in the States. You just go one-two-three: one gig after another.

**SMILER:** Will you play all the soul material you did in the States in Europe?

Oh yeah, we'll do 'Sweet Soul Music', the Otis Redding stuff and 'Reason To Believe.' That's why I think it's going to be a great tour, I'm also going to come out playing guitar totally confident. This band is absolutely tremendous. So much better than the old one. I was listening to some shows we taped on the 1986 tour and they were terrible. I've started to look after my voice more, I don't drink as much before I go on stage. You know that if you drink too much hard liquor it cuts your voice, it starts going. So all I do now is a couple of white wines and I get pissed afterwards!

**SMILER:** When is the album due out?



It should come out for Christmas or thereabouts, we're half way through it already.

**SMILER:** Are you pleased with the very healthy airplay 'Downtown Train' has received in Britain?

Yes, they haven't forgotten me you know. Although they don't owe me anything. I was watching a band on TV last night, the House Of Love, and I thought they were really good. It's such a shame that bands like that don't get any airplay. I'd rather some of the singles that have been released without my consent were not released so it would give bands like that more airplay. At one time 'Downtown Train' was only selling about one-hundred copies a day, then I did the 'Aspel' television show and it took off. I was proved wrong there, I've learnt my lesson. If 'Downtown Train' hadn't been on the album it would have probably gone all the way!



**SMILER:** So are we going to see more of you on British television in future?

Yes, I was wrong, I will do them now. I enjoyed doing the awards show, it was good fun. Aspel asked me a stupid question, I can't remember what it was, I thought 'I haven't flown 7,000 miles to answer that.' I'd rather they got personal, a bit controversial, which makes good television. O.K., so the odd geezer might walk out.

**SMILER:** Have you ever fancied doing the Dame Edna Show?

Oh God, you don't want me to compete with her do you? I tell you what I'd do if he got me in a tight corner. I'd get hold of his bollocks!

**ROD STEWART WAS INTERVIEWED ON MARCH 4th 1990  
BY JOHN GRAY. PHOTOS BY TRAYC STEVENSON, JOHN  
GRAY & ALISON KNIGHT.**

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