



# **nova lepidoptera**

The Barclay James Harvest Magazine

Number 42, September 1998



**Exclusive Interviews  
with John, Les and Mel**



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## *Credits*

cover design:	Keith Domone
special thanks to:	Mel, Les, John, David Walker, Nicki Sizer
next issue:	last copy date October 10th available at the end of November
annual subscription:	UK: £8.00 Europe: £10.00 Elsewhere: £12.00

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## JOHN: NEW ALBUM DUE IN OCTOBER

**T**wenty-five years after John recorded his debut solo album, *A Major Fancy*, he is busy working on the follow-up! In fact the new album will be a joint venture between John and Woolly, but for contractual reasons will be issued under John's name, with Woolly's contributions prominent.

The working title is *Barclay James Harvest Through The Eyes Of John Lees*. Woolly's alternative suggestions of *The Hole Is Greater Than Some Of The Parts* or *May Contain Nuts* were rejected as a mite frivolous.

The album will include songs originally written by John or Woolly, although the credits will list them all as Lees/Wolstenholme songs, since they are working extensively together on each others' songs, and the arrangement is for an equal partnership as originally enjoyed by Barclay James Harvest. Some of the songs are newly written, whilst others go back to the early days of BJH but for one reason or another were never recorded.

The album is also likely to contain re-recordings of some old BJH songs, but at the time of writing no decision had been made as to how many or which songs [see our exclusive interview with John starting on page 16]. The tapes are due to be delivered to the

record company, Eagle Records (part of the Eagle Rock group of companies formed by Terry Shand, founder and until recently owner of Castle Communications), by the end of September, with a provisional release date set for October this year.

## First Impressions

We were delighted to be invited up to John's Friarmere studio to hear early versions of four songs, and can say that all the signs are that this will be a great album. Anybody expecting it to sound like *A Major Fancy* or *Mæstoso* will be very surprised - what we've heard is more reminiscent of *Time Honoured Ghosts* or *Gone To Earth*.

"Shelf" is one of the songs which dates back to the early days of BJH, and has something of Love's *Forever Changes* about it.

"Devils" evokes Woolly's years in the wilderness, and has some magnificent swelling organ in the middle, plus some great guitar work.

"Festival!" is weird and wonderful, with John's guitar sounding less polite than it has done for many a year.

Best of all is "Starbright", an epic with a hint of "After The Day" about it. Orchestral sounds, Mellotron, superb lead guitar - the spirit of the early Barclay James Harvest is alive and well, and we can't wait to hear the whole album. We'll be writing to everyone with more details and an order form as soon as possible...

## A Major Fancy Set For CD Release

John's new deal with Eagle Records includes the rights to *A Major Fancy*, which will finally make its first appearance on CD. At the time of writing no definite date had been set, but we believe that it is likely to be imminent by the time you read this.

The mid-price CD may use a version of the original artwork for the gatefold sleeve which was planned for the LP in 1973, and lost when the release was cancelled (see below).



It's unclear at the moment as to whether the CD will list the tracks with their original titles, or with the ones which were adopted when the LP was eventually issued by the Harvest label in 1977.

The CD will include three bonus tracks which were recorded by John in 1974 for a single release. "Best Of My Love" is a cover of The Eagles song, whilst "You Can't Get It" is a Lees song about The Beatles and The Rolling Stones.

The original single of these two songs is rarer than the proverbial rocking horse doings, selling for £20.00 upwards, so the CD has to be worth the price of admission for them alone.

A further incentive, if one were required, is the addition of a third track recorded at the same session but never released in any form. This is also a cover version, this time of a song called "Please Be With Me", written by Charles Scott Boyer but best known from the version recorded by Eric Clapton on his 1974 solo album *461 Ocean Boulevard*.

*A Major Fancy* will, of course, be available by mail-order from our mail-order arm, Swallowtail (see below).

## Once Again Quad

The Brimstone label has agreed an exclusive marketing and distribution deal with rpm productions, part of the rpm group which was responsible for the Mandalaband *Eye Of Wendor* CD, amongst many others. The CD of the quadraphonic mix of *Once Again* is now scheduled for release on September 25th. Please use the order form attached if you'd like to pre-order either (or both!) of the CDs on this page and get them as soon as they are released.

## New Look NL

Thanks to everyone who commented on the new A5-format NL. The reactions so far have been overwhelmingly favourable, even from those who had previously expressed reservations about moving to a smaller magazine.

Unfortunately we had a lot of problems with the last issue, not least because our previous printer went into liquidation just as NL41 went to press. I'd just like to wish Paul and his family well, and thank them for all their efforts on our behalf in the last couple of years.

Thanks are due, too, to *S & L Digital*, our new printers, who picked up the pieces for us and did a great job at very short notice to ensure that NL41 wasn't late going out. We're hoping to build on that work to improve the magazine for future issues.

## Cover Conundrum

Talking of NL41, many readers were puzzled by the cover design, which I omitted to explain. In fact it was taken from a business card from the very early days of Barclay James Harvest. The card was based on a design by John and produced by then-manager, John Crowther, for distribution to interested parties such as record company representatives or concert agents at gigs.

## Hotline Shuts Down

We had hoped to reactivate the BJH telephone news Hotline to coincide with the flurry of solo activity now taking place. Regrettably, the company concerned has just raised its charges to a point where we would have been making a considerable loss on it, so we've been forced to shut it down completely. Nevertheless, we will continue to use all possible means at our disposal to bring club members the latest developments.

## e-mail list

Better news about the Internet mailing list/discussion group, which has proved to be an excellent way of reaching BJH fans as well as providing some thought-provoking discussion. It has also given fans a direct channel of communication with the recording studio, as John has been reading the messages and even on occasion posting his own cryptic replies!

Thanks to recent improvements made by ONElist, we can now subscribe you to the list if you have e-mail facilities but don't have access to the World Wide Web. If you would like us to do this, just e-mail us at

**[domone@compuserve.com](mailto:domone@compuserve.com)**

and we'll do the rest.

## CD Availability And Pricing

We're told by Polydor GmbH that the CD of *Everyone Is Everybody Else* has recently been deleted, as well as *Caught In The Light*. Unless we can find an alternative wholesale supply, these CDs, together with Spectrum's *Sorcerers And Keepers* compilation, will no longer be available from Swallowtail.

Apparently, Polydor have a computerised stock control system which automatically deletes titles once sales drop below a certain annual figure. Unfortunately it seems likely that other BJH titles will go the same way, so we cannot guarantee the continued availability of any of the band's CDs.

We're now down to the last ten or so of the limited edition of Woolly's *Songs From The Black Box*, although the normal version should be in stock for the foreseeable future.

We are hoping to be able to offer a similar limited edition autographed package for John's *A Major Fancy* - more details soon...

We've recently been reviewing our Swallowtail mail-order prices, as the wholesale costs to us have changed in many cases. It's not all bad news, though, as some prices have gone down where others have gone up. See the order form for all the new prices.

## September Deliveries

As mentioned in the last NL, our second child is due in September, so orders and letters may take longer to be dealt with. If you don't get an immediate response, please be patient, as it means that either a CD release date has been put back, or that our own issue is holding everything up!

## ...Other Short Stories...

...Good to see both *Endless Dream* and the Mandalaband *Eye Of Wendor* CD being plugged in a joint advertising campaign between **Mojo magazine** and independent record shops...

## The NL Interviews

★ Starting over the page we have for the very first time exclusive interviews with Mel, Les and John in the same issue of the magazine.

★ The interview with Mel took place in  
★ April, whilst those with Les and John  
★ were conducted in July.

# The NL Interview...

**NL: Firstly, we wanted to ask you about the River Of Dreams album, whether you were happy with the way that it turned out?**

Mel: I think it's as good as anything we've done, in fact in some ways I think it's a lot better than some of the things we've done in the past. I've got to say that it took a little bit longer than was expected, but it was just one of those things. John had booked his holiday and stuff like that. In terms of the overall sounds and the songs, yeah, I was happy. Whether the songs turned out as expected when they were written, I couldn't tell you, but they all sound good to me. It's a nice Barclay James Harvest album - it covers all bases from rock 'n' roll to melancholy and anywhere in between.

**NL: Do you have any favourite songs from the album?**

Mel: I like "Three Weeks To Despair". I know it's not a very "up" subject, but it was the way it was done - the rhythm track was done pretty quickly, so there wasn't a lot of birth pain with it - it just seemed to be a magical thing. We all seemed to be touched by the muse at the same time, and it went down a treat. The song, as well, especially in this part of the world where we live, you can see things like that happen. You see it every day, and your heart does go out to them. It's a nice reflection on life, as well.

**NL: Were you surprised that the album didn't sell better?**

Mel: For the last three or four albums I've always felt that they should have done better. Whether there was not enough live work or the promotion

wasn't right or there was no single on it *per se*, I really don't know. All I can say about that is that in my opinion it was not because of the quality of the album.

**NL: Why do you think the album hasn't been released in England or France?**

Mel: You'd have to speak to David (Walker) about the contractual things, but we signed directly with Hamburg, so if the other territories don't take it up on license then it won't get released. You can't walk in and demand that they do it. We wouldn't put it out unless it was of a quality, anyway. We've done it before, we've had to go back to the drawing board with a couple of songs and have a look at them. We've never been a band that's put two songs on an album and the rest is padding.

**NL: How was the tour of Germany and Switzerland?**

Mel: It was great! I always enjoy touring. The only thing I will say about it is that I would have liked to have done more gigs, because once you've gone through the rehearsals and you've got a few under your belt then you're in the mode, and rather than being four or five weeks it could have been eight, nine, ten weeks. Firstly you could play to more people, obviously you're getting tighter as well and it just becomes more enjoyable. Once I'm in tour mode I could just go and go and go. Having said that, you've got to remember that I haven't got a family. For me, when I'm on tour I'm an eighteen year old again. My mind is eighteen, but whether my body would wear it I don't know!



# Mel Pritchard

## **NL: How was the feeling within the band on that tour?**

Mel: It's always good. Obviously we've known each other for a long time, we know each others' foibles, so we give each other enough space, we know when people need time alone. Gone very much are the days when you all go out for a meal every night and you all hang around together. Of course, if there was a night off we all went out and had a chinwag and talked about what was going on. I've never had any problem with morals - er, morale! Being on the road with x amount of people, there's always going to be somebody who's not in the same mood as you at any one time, but you need each other.

## **NL: Can you tell us how the decision to take a sabbatical came about?**

Mel: It was more about John and Les, I think. For me, looking kind of inside but still on the outside, I think it's a time to reassess what direction we're going to go into, rather than just keep going through the process of another album and a tour. It was getting a little bit flat. The court case took a lot out of us - looking back now, I don't think we realised how much it did take out of us. It's only when you get working again that you realise how much it's drained you. I certainly think that from John and Les's point of view that it's more of a reassessment. It's being adult about it - there's no great arguments, it was just "is this really what we want to be doing or should we take time away from each other and see what happens?"

## **NL: Some fans are concerned that this could be the end of Barclay James Harvest as we know it.**

Mel: With the conversations that went down, I didn't get that colouration of it, but, having said that, I've been through as much as John and Les have, with the court case and doing albums, finding producers, engineers and all the peripheral things that go with it, plus signing contracts and all the rest of it, and it was like "let's just take a breath here and see if we are still doing the right thing".

## **NL: What are your own immediate plans?**

Mel: Actually, nothing at the moment. I still practice, I still get on the kit, but I can't imagine me working in another band except Barclay James Harvest. Until something happens, I don't know. I will have to do something pretty quickly, but I don't want to get too involved in something, just in case. If we have another meeting and say, "Right, it's a goer again", I don't want to be locked into something that excludes me from doing it. I'm just taking my time and thinking things through. Obviously I'm optimistic about everything and hope that we will get together, rested and getting a bit more excitement in things, and see how it goes from there.

## **NL: Would you like to tour Britain again?**

Mel: Yes, and I don't know why we haven't done it for such a long time. It would be wonderful. The audiences have been good, and the thing that we mustn't forget is that this is where we started. Without the people in Britain -

# The NL Interview...

I'm not saying that they're still around now and into us now, *[NL: I think they are, actually!]* but without that input the band wouldn't have carried on through its formative years to do the things that we did. You never really forget that. Every time we talk about touring, I'm one of the first to say, "Well, what's the chance of doing some dates in England?" It's a bit like the record company not taking it up; if nobody offers us dates, then there's not an awful lot we can do, really. The last time we toured it was doing universities and I thought it was very successful. I thought we went down well, and I was really expecting the same kind of thing the next time we went out, but it just seemed to go quiet again. Why that is - the older I get in this business, the less I know, unfortunately...

**NL: We've already heard that John and Les intend to pursue solo projects. Can you see yourself getting involved in either or both of those?**

Mel: If they asked! If they needed a drummer, and they wanted someone of my style and technique, I would love to do it. They know I'm always available. If they're having trouble with drum sounds or they've got a drummer and need someone to explain a few things, then I'm more than willing. We're still good friends! Any or either of them, I'd be more than happy to help.

**NL: Talking of drum sounds, a lot of fans have said that they prefer the sound of an acoustic drum kit.**

Using the electric one was when we started doing the festivals when it was just in and out. We'd used it on the album and it was kind of all right, and if you're doing a quick turnover and you don't know what equipment you're using - in the old days we'd take our own crew and our own PA and we'd have a separate mix for everything, but the way it's going now it's very much a quick turnover. Everything's being digitised and you don't have that much time on soundchecks. We just thought it'd be a good safety net to use electronically digitised acoustic drums. I must say on stage they're a lot easier to cope with, the electronic ones, but in terms of the overall feel and the ambience, my heart is still on the acoustic side. There's nothing quite like the sound of an acoustic kit. The only thing is that you can't control the volume that much in smaller places, and my kits were getting bigger because we were doing the stadiums, and then we had to go back a little bit. I was a little bit in the haze about which way to go, and Martin (Lawrence) and I talked about it, and he was happy because he was doing the outstage sound along with the studio, and it was kind of a co-decision. If something came along where acoustics would be made available or I could take mine, then there's something about tuning the snare drum to what you want, not just using a sound that they've programmed in for you.

# Mel Pritchard

## **NL: What kit are you using currently?**

Mel: I've still got the Pearl. Don't ask me what model number it is! In the studio I usually use a mix-match of an old '57 Ludwig that I've got and the newer Pearl - Pearl snare drums. As I said, I haven't got a clue what models they are, so for the drum aficionados, I can't help you! It's one of the smaller ones, more on the jazz side than the rock side. I've got a choice of two, and of course the old Ludwig - I'll keep those forever. They date back to the '50s, early '60s, and there; just something about the warmth of the sound. Like everything else, they get better with age...

## **NL: You talked about joint decisions on the kind of kit to use and this sort of thing. How much input have you had to the sound of the finished product in recent years?**

Mel: Certainly on the last two albums with Martin. With Pip (Williams) it was not taken out of our hands, exactly, but it wasn't so much of a co-decision. On the recent ones working at John's, I can go in at any time I like, I get the sound up on the electronic or acoustic. You can have a drum sound in mind, but everything's always compromise. If you like, the compromises have been going a little bit more my way. I prefer the heavier side, but a lot of the current songs don't need that, they need the softer, more lilting kind of drum sound. It's never been a problem about my input in the sound - what always controls it is the song. If they sound good together, it's because that drum sound works well with that guitar, organ and bass or whatever. You can't be too dogmatic.

## **NL: As a non-songwriter, have there ever been times when you would have preferred to have had a bigger say in the musical direction that BJH has pursued over the years?**

Mel: No, I don't think so. That's never really been an issue. I wish I was a songwriter, because I have ideas, but they're not finished in my head, if you understand what I mean. It's as it should be - the one who writes the song has always got the final decision about which route it's gonna take, and I've got to respect that always, from the year dot.

## **NL: Any messages for the fans who will be reading this?**

Mel: Just, without sounding too crass and glib, thank you again for all the support. Without you, we wouldn't be anything. I hope to see you soon, and I'd love to see you in England!

## **NL: Great, and finally we'd like to thank you for all the brilliant music over the years and to wish you lots of luck with your future plans.**

Mel: Well, thank you. There's nothing high on the horizon, but I want to make myself available for whatever happens down the road.

## **NL: Right, hope to see you at a gig before too long.**

Mel: All right.

\* \* \* \* \*

# The NL Interview...

**NL: I wanted to ask first of all what your feelings are now about the *River Of Dreams* album.**

Les: In what respect, the music side of it, what happened to it or what didn't happen to it?

**NL: The music side first.**

Les: I'm never satisfied. I always think I could have done better. I still think it sounds quite fresh compared with the last few albums, but I think we could have taken it a stage further, and personally I think we should have done it in a different studio. I think we should have got away from the area and totally isolated ourselves from all the normal domestic things that go on around you. The best sounding albums, in my opinion, are the ones that we did away from home. *Time Honoured Ghosts* and a couple of the albums that were recorded in London seem to have something that the albums that were recorded up here don't have and I put that down to having to have two hats on. It's like being on tour - you're either on tour or you're not. At the end of the day you don't go home and start mowing the lawn!

**NL: In recent years the albums seem to have taken a very long time to make, and that's probably tied up with the same thing, is it?**

Les: Yes, I think it probably is. For example, if you were to book time in a studio that was expensive... I mean we spent an awful lot of money recording in Germany and Holland, but that was just circumstances at the time because we were living over there or whatever, and there was that

sort of money to spend on albums. Whether it was sensible that we spent that money, but we got dragged along with it, and the albums came out quite well, I think. But if you're in Manchester then it tends to drag on, because people go oh, you know, "I'll just take the afternoon off because I've got to do this with the kids". It does happen. If you're on the road you can't do that, so if you put yourself in that position where you're in the studio like being on the road and not a nine-to-five job, then you'd probably save some time.

**NL: Do you have any favourite songs from the album?**

Les: My personal one was "So Long". I wanted to spend more time on that - I would have liked to have taken it further. It went down very quickly and it would have been rather nice to experiment a bit longer, on all of the tracks really, to have spent more time on it, particularly on the vocals - I wasn't really too happy with the vocals at the time, I had a cold and one thing and another, but there comes a time when you've got to go for it and get it out of the way.

**NL: Earlier you touched on the reaction to the album - were you very disappointed by that?**

Les: Yes, I was - incredibly. I thought, because of the initial reaction from people involved in the record company, that we were onto something. The reaction from the media was quite good, but when we actually got out there there was an incredible absence of the record company from every event we played. These were big gigs, headlining over

# Les Holroyd

Art Garfunkel and people like that. There was a complete lack of interest, and I was extremely annoyed. I can't put that down to anything except the record company, which as far as I could see was in turmoil at the time, more than normal! I know that John was disappointed when we went on the road that there weren't that many people around, but there weren't that many people around for anybody unless you happened to be Bryan Adams! But, if you want to be Bryan Adams, or even Chris de Burgh, you've got to go out and work. You can't go on the road after a two or three year absence and expect it all to be laid there on a carpet for you. This is not 15 or 20 years ago, this is 1998 when the market is completely flooded with all types of music, and we're in a totally different generation to what's happening now. No-one owes us anything, that is the bottom line. The promoters don't owe us anything, the record companies don't owe us anything and the fans don't owe us anything.

## **NL: I'm not sure I'd agree that the fans don't owe you anything.**

Les: Don't take me wrong on this - I'm saying you can't expect them to come along and say, "You've given us this music for so many years, we're gonna follow you forever". Circumstances change for everyone. You can't say that we're gonna sell x amount of records this year and the back catalogue's gonna keep selling and keep selling - it's not. If you're not on the road, the back catalogue doesn't sell, it's as simple as that. You've got to be prepared to work at it, you can't sit back and say, "Oh well, we're a cult band, and that's going to pull it through for us", because it isn't. Those

days are over, really over. Record companies haven't got the money to spend, they're not interested in the future of artists any more. It's just a product, and if it doesn't sell they just move on to the next.

## **NL: Bearing in mind what you said about working, is this a good time for the band to take a sabbatical?**

Les: It was decided that for whatever reason, it wasn't happening, so it was time to take a break. It wasn't my personal decision, I can tell you that. You can't go on working when there's so much that's negative - you can only do it for so long before you think, "I'm banging my head against a wall here, and it's not getting me anywhere. I'm writing good songs, I'm doing them well, I'm performing well", and I personally thought I was performing very well, better than I'd done for a long time. It's just annoying when at the end of the day, people don't think it's happening. The only thing I can say is it was a majority decision, but it wasn't mine. I would work live, it doesn't matter if it's five people or 5000 or 50,000, but we're not given the opportunity, more than anything from the record company we were with.

## **NL: Do you personally believe that BJH will record or tour again?**

Les: We are actually planning something, which I can't tell you about, unfortunately, because the band haven't talked about it. It was just something that was mentioned, involving recording and maybe some gigs, but at this point in time I don't think Polydor in Germany are interested. I could be wrong, but

# The NL Interview...

there's no use in pushing it.

**NL: Did you enjoy last year's tour?**

Les: *I did, yeah.*

**NL: You seemed to be enjoying the solo spots, and they were certainly going down really well with the fans.**

Les: Right. Well, that again is something that could be worked on in the future, but we'd have to see what the feedback would be, whether the fans would go for it. It would have to be under the umbrella of BJH.

**NL: You wouldn't envisage touring solo, then?**

Les: Me personally? The only time I would envisage that would be if I wrote something for example that was absolutely stunning for guitar and vocals, like a one-man thing, and then you could make a record and maybe do some gigs. There is no way I'd go "right, that's it, I'm off on my own". As far as I'm concerned Barclay James Harvest is the three members and whatever happens next time that is with Barclay James Harvest.

**NL: What are your own immediate plans?**

Les: I'm actually working on something at the moment, which again I can't tell you about! It's nothing to do with the band, and at this point in time it's not totally fixed yet what's going to happen. It is an exciting prospect - quite big, very big! That's all I can tell you.

**NL: Is it a musical project, does it involve writing songs?**

Les: No, it's not. It involves the entertainment business... No one knows about it, but for obvious reasons I can't tell you about it because if people find out about it, it's not going to happen.

**NL: Have you been writing at all since the last BJH album?**

Les: Yes, I write all the time. I've got about twenty ideas in total, and maybe three or four songs with lyrics and arrangements that have reached the point where I'm not going to throw them away. I'm not one for hoarding ideas for songs and bringing them back ten years afterwards. If they don't work, in my opinion, then they're not going to work.

**NL: What will happen to those songs now?**

Les: I will just keep writing at the keyboard, and perhaps if I did come up with something interesting, I'd have to go to Lindsay or David with what I would like to do. Hopefully it's going to continue. I have been in contact with Mel, we have been talking about what we're going to do. John obviously is off doing his own thing at the moment, but I've no doubt at all in my mind that if someone from England or Germany, France or Switzerland or whatever came up with an offer for Barclay James Harvest to do something, I've no doubt at all that we'd get together.

# Les Holroyd

**NL: At the moment John is working again with Woolly, and the fans are asking the question "is there any chance that the original four members of BJH would ever get back together?"**

Les: No.

**NL: Well, that's pretty unequivocal. Why do you say that?**

Les: Why? Because that's gone, that's past. As far as I'm concerned Barclay James Harvest is the band that exists now. The band that existed for the majority of the time was from 1978 onwards. That's 20 years, and you can't just say, "Well it's not working, therefore we'll get the four together." You can't recreate something for the sake of the few people that want it. I can't see any benefits to the four members getting back together again. I certainly can't see it.

**NL: Would you like to tour Britain again?**

Les: If the time was right, yeah. I'm never going to go out again and bang my head against a brick wall. We're not 25 any more! A lot of things have happened lately which have changed my feelings about the future, personal things which you can't account for. From now on I just want to do what I want to do and I will not be pressurised or forced into any situation which I don't think is right, either for me personally or the band.

**NL: Looking back over the band's career, what have been the best moments so far?**

Les: I think it was the early days when we were touring and not thinking about it, like that South African tour and the tour of Yugoslavia, but we were a lot younger then. You could do your own thing and not have to worry about the consequences! The Berlin concert - personally I don't think it was one of our better gigs, but it was an event. You couldn't recreate that.

**NL: What would you like BJH to be remembered for?**

Les: Just the music, I think, more than anything. The live performances; people always told me that the band was best when it was performing live.

**NL: Any message for the fans who will be reading this?**

Les: Just to reiterate that at this point in time, although there is a break, we are actually talking about various future projects. I personally think we should go out on the road - the band as it is now. I don't envisage any major changes in the band.

**NL Thanks very much for your time, and the best of luck with your projects.**

Les: I'll let you know nearer the time if I can. If it does happen it will open up new avenues which are not that far from where I am now.

**NL: Thank you.**

Les: Thank you very much.

\* \* \* \* \*

# The NL Interview...

## **NL: Tell us about your current project.**

John: We're making a record for Eagle Rock. It's a solo project, and fifty percent of the music at the moment is new material written by Woolly and myself. Woolly and I are playing on all the songs on the album, including some remakes of classic BJH tracks. We can only record catalogue that's out of time. There's a re-recording limitation, so I think it's anything that was from the St. Annes Music period back.

## **NL: Is there a benefit to re-recording old things?**

John: Just the two of us doing new material would not have been as interesting to the record company as me doing an album that was new material and a re-look at older stuff. We won't record it in the way that it was recorded in the first place - we'll take a totally different look at it. It won't be a straightforward rendition of "Hymn" or "Child Of The Universe" or whatever the songs are that we do.

## **NL: Do you have any songs in mind at the moment?**

I don't think a decision will be made until the record company have heard the new tracks that we're doing.

## **NL: What proportion of the album do you expect to be new?**

John: I don't know. At this particular moment in time it's fifty-fifty, but that might change dependant on what they feel about the new stuff. It might be sixty-forty, it might be eighty-twenty,

old stuff to new! But then it might be the other way.

## **NL: How's the new material going?**

John: Very well. I would say we're about half way. It's very much like the original Barclay James Harvest sound, from before Woolly left. If you can imagine an album that came after *Gone To Earth*, with all the Barclays together, it's like that.

## **NL: Do you feel that that sound was better than the post-Woolly sound?**

John: Yeah, because it had a very definite character to it - not just the sound, but what was played as well. Woolly put a certain something into songs that was lacking when he left. Maybe not dramatically at first, but things moved away from the original Barclays sound.

## **NL: Do you see this as a one-off project or an ongoing thing?**

John: The stuff that's going on the album is only the tip of an iceberg of material. We have found it really easy to go back to square one, where Woolly was and where I was when we were doing *Gone To Earth*. We don't have a problem writing songs. We've got a wealth of material that won't go on this album - we've got too much material to go on. The possibility is that there will be a second album deal tied in with the contract for the first one. Whether they'll exercise the option or not would depend on whether the sales warrant it. The deal will give us leeway to record more material, to keep going for a short



# John Lees

while. To go on with it if there was no call would be very difficult.

## **NL: What other musicians are involved?**

John: There's just two local guys: somebody that I've known a long time, called Craig [*bass*], and a mate of his who's the drummer, Kevin.

## **NL: Did you consider involving Mel in the project?**

John: Yeah. We asked him to come on board. We had a meeting with him, myself and Woolly, explained that we wanted it to go back to a partnership. We went to see Melve to say that was how it was going to work, that if he was on board, we would just split everything three ways like the original partnership. We asked him, but nothing has happened yet. I understand that Les has got the same opportunity to do exactly what we're doing, and I hope that he does that.

## **NL: I understand that the deal also involves *A Major Fancy*.**

John: Yeah. The tapes are going down this weekend with Woolly. I would have liked to have done the [*remastering*] process myself, actually, but we haven't got the kit up here at the moment. *A Major Fancy* will come out, it'll be mid-price and it'll hopefully have the original sleeve on it. There will also, I think, be some Polydor tracks as well.

## **NL: Just out of curiosity, will it have the original track titles that were listed in the schedules in 1973, or the ones that were listed on the actual release in 1973?**

John: The "Untitled"s? I don't remember - you'll have to check and make sure it goes out right!

## **NL: Are there any plans for live work?**

John: That'll really be generated by what interest is shown in the record. It will depend on Lindsay and David's perception. We're certainly willing to do live work. At a personal level, I really want to play in England. It's just a matter of getting someone to take you on.

## **NL: Is it too late to organise anything for this year?**

John: I don't know. The album's scheduled, I think, for October. At the kind of level we're talking about touring, it shouldn't take long.

## **NL: What kind of level would you envisage?**

John: Small is good! Small theatres are really nice to do, rep. theatres, universities, things like that.

## **NL: What are your feelings now about *River Of Dreams*?**

Two songs were recorded like we're recording now, "River Of Dreams" and "Yesterday's Heroes", and they've definitely got a different feel from all

# The NL Interview...

the other tracks. As soon as we got the deal with Polydor and we came into the studio it went right back to square one, people working on their own. All those songs were wasted, because they never turned out like they were supposed to turn out.

## **NL: Do you think that BJH will ever play together again?**

John: There is a way, as a four-piece, but not in any other form as far as I'm concerned. I can't see it, unless somebody comes along with a couple of million quid! I just think that it's come to the end of the road, it doesn't function as a unit. I wouldn't close the door on it - if something came in I'd consider it, but we should really pull away from it for a while.

## **NL: Did you enjoy doing last year's tour in Germany and Switzerland?**

John: No, it didn't feel right. There was constant competition within the band, and eventually it tears itself apart. I'm as guilty as anybody else, but if you're trying to promote something and you don't believe in it, then you won't give it 100%.

## **NL: Is it going to be different this time with Woolly?**

John: It's gonna be as it was. Until he left, he was very involved, and it was significantly different. I don't know whether people understand how the original Barclay James Harvest worked, but it was a partnership between four people. When Woolly left it became a limited company. When Barclay James Harvest first started off, it didn't matter who wrote the

song, it was split four ways. In the early days it was credited to "Barclay James Harvest", then it went to credits to whoever had written it, but monetarily it was still split four ways. Somewhere along the way that changed. People weren't satisfied with that, they wanted to get their own royalties and not share them. When we went back to this project, I really felt that if things were shared, it got rid of this element of competition, which is really destructive. When we're writing, it's a meltdown of ideas and it's very difficult to say that one person wrote this. You can tell from the style who's had the most input, but there are things going on that are every bit as important to the finished song as the actual writing of the song itself - you can't see the line!

## **NL: After nearly twenty years, is it easy to get that chemistry back between Woolly and yourself?**

John: I didn't know whether it would be, and that's why we had a couple of days together to see how things went initially. We weren't any different to when we were at school together or when we were in the early bands. It became obvious that it was something that hadn't changed. I have my way of looking, he has his way of looking, and when the two come together, I think you get a pretty magic sound - other people might not think so! Woolly was the soul of Barclay James Harvest, and when he left the soul went out. Of any of us, he was the one that wasn't doing it for fabulous wealth and riches, he wasn't the one that was looking for the pot of gold and the superstardom, and he was the least competitive of all of us.

# John Lees

## **NL: What are your musical hopes for the future now?**

John: That people listen to what we're doing in the right context. We're not trying to re-live past glories, we're not trying to be rock stars, superstars, anything like that, we're just songwriters writing songs. We're middle-aged guys, we're not trying to appeal to Radio One or *Top Of The Pops* or anything like that. People should listen to it as mature music. If they do that, then we'll be OK.

## **“Woolly was the soul of Barclay James Harvest”**

## **NL: What kind of music are you listening to yourself these days?**

John: Brass bands!

## **NL: So can we expect a brass band album?!**

John: No, but you might get a brass band on one of the tracks! I have really strange tastes; Classic FM, brass band music, I like Pulp, I like Oasis, I like Paul Carrack. The last CD I bought was *This Is Hardcore* by Pulp. I think it's great - it's like what we do! I think he is a very clever man, I like him very much, especially what he did to Michael Jackson!!

## **NL: For what would you like Barclay James Harvest to be remembered?**

John: *Gone to Earth*. I thought it was a good album, it was perhaps the last of the good times.

## **NL: What have been the best times? Anything that particularly stands out?**

John: Recording with Eliot Mazer in San Francisco. It was fabulous - we had an absolute ball recording *Time Honoured Ghosts*. A fantastic place, someone paying you to make a record in San Francisco, it was great.

## **NL: Are there any concerts that stand out in your memory?**

John: Well, obviously Berlin, whether for all the right reasons or not - it was a terrifying experience. I think both of the Berlin concerts, but of all the things that stick in my mind, I think when we went back to Germany [*in 1977*] to do the tour that got cancelled. The first gig was at the Philipshalle in Düsseldorf, and it was just phenomenal. That tour was really great, and I suppose the pinnacle was the open-air concerts, Loreley and all those [*in 1979*]

## **NL: Finally, any message for the fans reading this?**

John: I just hope that they carry on enjoying the music and getting something out of it, because that's what it's all about, really.

\* \* \* \* \*

# The NL Interviews

## A Statement from David Walker

***After conducting the interviews with Mel, Les and John, we spoke to David Walker, BJH's co-manager for over twenty years, and he has given us the following statement:-***

Having read the interviews in NL, it is easy to detect that John and Les have a serious difference of opinion as to where Barclay James Harvest are at, or indeed which way they should go.

Neither is right or wrong, as they are both very passionate in their views. Having worked with them for many years, it became blatantly obvious to Lindsay and I that a break was essential. It is my wish that by having a break and involving themselves in solo projects, they will either enjoy solo success or come to appreciate again what it was that they gave to each other as opposed to what they didn't.

Each of them has been given the opportunity to record a solo album entitled *Barclay James Harvest Through The Eyes Of John Lees* or *Barclay James Harvest Through The Eyes Of Les Holroyd*.

John has already produced a few tracks which the record company have enthused over, and contracted him to complete an album.

Les has written some material and as soon as he is ready to make a presentation to the record company, I will arrange this.

So far as Mel is concerned, I know that John has invited him to participate, and I'm sure that if the situation arises, Les will have no hesitation in doing the same. Naturally, the final decision rests with Mel.

I'm sure that you will all appreciate that, as well as being their manager, I have been a staunch fan of Barclay James Harvest for many years, and I'm excited about this opportunity afforded to both John and Les. There is no getting away from the fact that both individually and collectively they have contributed their all to Barclay James Harvest, and it will be very interesting to see, given a free hand, in what direction they choose to go.

*David Walker*



# Marketplace

## SET SALE:

### Singles

Thank You/Medicine Man	HAR 5058	Fair	£7.00
Mockingbird/Galadriel	HAR 5094	Good	£7.00
Mockingbird/Galadriel	HAR 5094	Good, demo/Autog'd by Les Holroyd	£15.00
Breathless/When The City Sleeps	HAR 5095	Good, demo/Autog'd by Les	£15.00
Titles/Song For You	2058 660	Very Good	£4.00
Rock'n'roll Star/Medicine Man PC	2229 198	Good	£5.00
Hymn/Our Kid's Kid PC	2058 904	Good	£4.00
Loving Is Easy/Polk Street Rag PC	2059 073	Good, German Import	£5.00
Loving Is Easy/Polk Street Rag	2059 073	Good, Blue Vinyl	£7.00
Love On The Line/Alright Down Get Boogie PC	POSP 97	Good	£3.00
Life Is For Living/Shades Of B Hill	POSP 195	Very Good	£3.00
Life Is For Living/Sperratus PC	POSP 195	Very Good, German	£4.00
Just A Day Away/Looking From...	POPPX 585	VG, Butterfly Shaped Picture Disc	£12.00
Just A Day Away/Rock'n'roll Lady PC	POSP 585	Very Good	£3.00
Waiting For Right Time/edit/Blow Me Down PC	POSPX 640	Very Good, 12" £10.00	
Waiting For Right Time/Blow Me Down PC POSP 640	Very Good	£3.00	
Victims Of Circumstance/Instrumental	POSP 674	Excellent, Clown Shape Picture Disc	£12.00
Victims Of Circumstance/Instr. PC	POSP 674	Very Good	£3.00
I've Got A Feeling (full)/edit/Rebel Woman	POSPX 705-DJ	Good, 12" Promo	£12.00
I've Got A Feeling/Rebel Woman PC	POSP 705	Very Good	£3.00
He Said Love/On The Wings Of Love PC	POSP 834	Very Good	£3.00
Cheap The Bullet/Shadows On The Sky PC	PO 67	Very Good	£3.00
Too Much On Your Plate	Swallow 2	Very Good, Floppy	£2.00
Time Honoured Tracks EP, PC	2141 449	VG, 12" Australian/Autog'd Les	£15.00

### Albums

Barclay James Harvest	SHVL 770	VG, Autographed by Les Holroyd	£13.00
Once Again	SHVL 788	Good, Auto Les Holroyd	£13.00
...And Other Short Stories	SHVL 794	Good, Auto Les Holroyd	£13.00
Baby James Harvest	SHSP 4023	Good, Auto Les Holroyd	£13.00
Early Morning Onwards	SRS 5126	Good, White Cover	£10.00
Early Morning Onwards	048CRY 50796	G, Auto Les, German	£15.00
Early Morning Onwards	SRS 5126	Fair	£7.00
Early Morning Onwards	SRS 5126	G, Auto Les, Black Cover	£15.00
Everyone Is Everybody Else	2383 286	Good, Auto Les Holroyd	£12.00
BJH Live	2683 052	Good, Auto Les Holroyd	£12.00
Time Honoured Ghosts	2382 361	VG, Auto Les Holroyd	£12.00
Octoberon	MCM 35037	VG, Auto Les, USA	£12.00
Best Of		G, Auto Les, Italian	£13.00
Gone To Earth	2442 148	VG, Auto Les Holroyd	£12.00
Live Tapes	PODV 2001	Very Good, Auto Les Holroyd	£12.00
XII	POL 350	VG, Auto Les Holroyd/French	£12.00
Best Of Vol. 2		Good, Auto Les Holroyd	£13.00
Eyes Of The Universe	POLD 5029	Good, Auto Les Holroyd	£12.00
Turn Of The Tide	2442 189	VG, Auto Les Holroyd/French	£12.00
Berlin - A Concert For The People	POL 818	VG, Auto Les Holroyd/German	£15.00
A Concert For The People (Berlin)	POLD 5052	Good, Auto Les Holroyd	£12.00
A Concert For The People (Berlin)	POLD 5052	EX, Promo Box Set Incl. 1-Sided 12"	£20.00
Ring Of Chances	POLH 3	Very Good, Auto Les Holroyd	£12.00
Victims Of Circumstance	POLD 5135	Very Good,	£7.00
Face To Face	POLD 5209	Very Good	£7.00
Glasnost	POLD 5219	Excellent, Auto Les Holroyd/German	£6.00
The Collection	1C028-07 533	VG, Auto Les Holroyd/German	£10.00
Mockingbird - The Early Years	1C 064-07 236	VG, Auto Les Holroyd/German	£12.00
John Lees - A Major Fancy	SHSM 2018	Very Good	£13.00
Woolly Wolstenholme - Mæstoso	2347 165	Excellent	£10.00

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# Marketplace

**LARGE BJH COLLECTION FOR SALE:** for lists please contact:-

PHILIPPE CLAËRHOUT, 3 ter Rue du  
Gal. de Gaulle, 91700 Fleury Merogis,  
FRANCE

**FOR SALE:** Welcome To The Show  
vinyl LP in good condition, DM 12,-  
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**WANTED:** contact with any BJH fans in my area (Olpe), for correspondence and to meet up. Please write to:-

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**I AM** 16 years old, living near Hannover and looking for people of about my age who would like to write to me. My address is:

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## 101 Things You Never Knew About Barclay James Harvest...

★ # 9 - Thanks to Sue Curtis for spotting  
★ in an old annual for the television series  
★ *The Professionals* that actor Martin  
★ Shaw listed BJH amongst his musical  
★ preferences, alongside Pink Floyd, Bach  
★ and Vivaldi.

## Coming Soon...

In the next issue of NL, another exclusive - the first interview with Woolly Wolstenholme for ten years, plus full details of the new album from John and Woolly.

NL43 will be available at the end of November, and the last copy date for contributions and advertisements is October 10th.



