

The "Good Guy" from Badfinger:

Joey Molland

By R.M. Engelman

In 1968 the young Liverpool band *The Iveys*, had an unthinkable thing happen. Manager Bill Collins invited *Beatles'* assistant Mal Evans and *Apple Records* A&R man Peter Asher (*Peter & Gordon*) to hear the band at a gig at *the Marquee Club*. Evans kept pushing until *the Beatles* individually agreed to sign the band. The band was signed and released the single "Maybe Tomorrow". In 1969 their name was changed to *Badfinger* (via John Lennon's one finger piano ditty, "Bad Finger Boogie"), Paul McCartney offered up the song "Come And Get It", and Joey Molland, a member of various local bands as guitarist/singer from Liverpool passed the audition.

Despite Badfinger's considerable early success, throughout the years, they suffered financial and personal tragedies, with Joey being the only surviving member carrying on their legacy, much of which is detailed in Joey's book Badfinger and Beyond.

I caught up with Joey at the *Rubber City Beatlefest* in Akron, Ohio with the 60's-70's tribute group *The ReBeats* as his backing band. Now, approaching his 68th birthday, Joey (the last surviving member of the band), is celebrating life by signing, taking photos, and joking with fans, singing and playing, and clowning onstage in between songs. He's constantly on the road performing, and is happy and grateful to meet each and every fan. *Badfinger* was recently brought back to popularity when their song "Baby Blue" was used in the last episode of the hit TV show Breaking Bad.

Joey Molland: I hadn't realized it, but I hadn't played much all winter (rubbing his hands together). I've developed arthritis or something, and now I let the other guys take most of the lead parts.

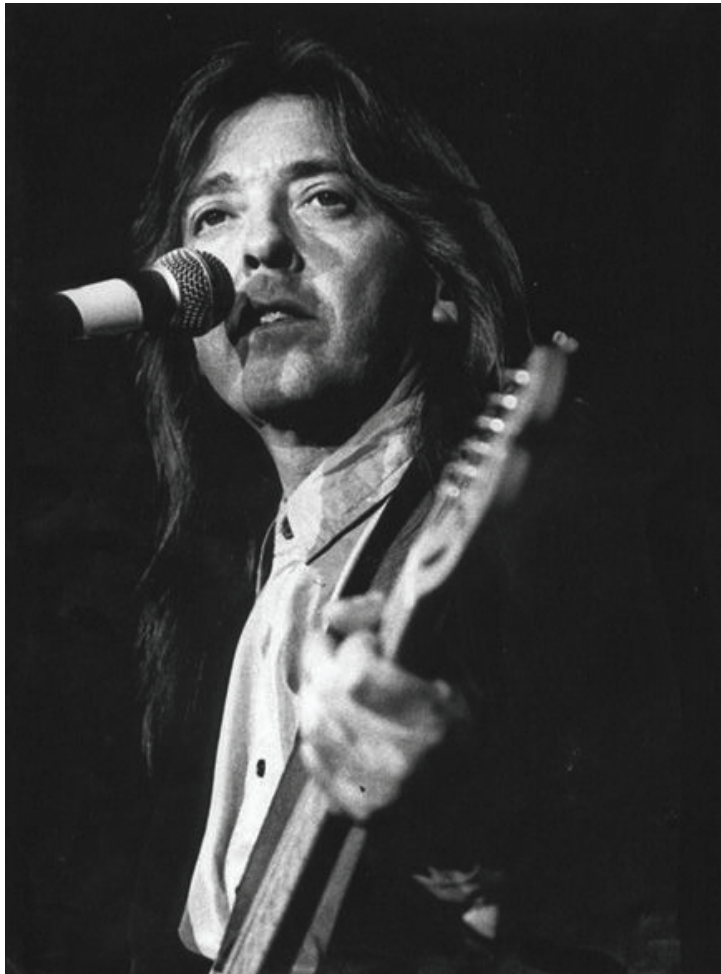
RM: I know. Jimmy Fox (*James Gang*) and I were discussing this same thing one day about playing drums occasionally, then continuously.

JM: (Laughs) You realize you're getting old when everybody's sitting around talking about health and life insurance, instead of talking about this guy's new record and stuff! I can play like single note runs, you know, jazzy kind of stuff.

RM: B.B. King has been doing that for 50-60 years.

JM: Yeah, well, he's B.B. King isn't he, I mean he's got a little bit going for him that fella.

RM: It's hard to believe that at such a young age, you ended up joining the Iveys and then working with



continued on next page

the Beatles at Apple.

JM: Yeah, it was a tremendous time for me. I'd played around Liverpool for a few years, just playing rock and roll music. I'd played with different bands, *The Mersey Beats*, *Cryin' Shames*. These were popular bands. *The Mersey Beats* broke up, and I got a job playing in a backing band for *The Mersey's*. They did the "Sorrow" record, and had a long run there. I got to meet *the Who* then, and we did about 50-60 gigs with those guys. They were a great, unbelievable band. I went back to Liverpool and got another job with Gary Walker from *the Walker Brothers* and wrote some songs, some hits for those guys, and went back to Liverpool again when that band broke up. I never made any real money from all of this, just food money kind of thing. I was onstage, and got a call to audition for the Iveys, and I went and got the job like a damn fool (laughs)! "Come And Get It" came out, and that was the start of all of this for me. It was great, I got to play on George's albums. I got to do the All Things Must Pass record, did the *Bangladesh* concert with him, and even got a *Grammy* for the Concert for Bangladesh. I played with John Lennon on the Imagine album, on "Jealous Guy", and "I Don't Want To Be A Soldier". When I first got to meet those guys, imagine for a guy my age, being with *the Beatles* and doing all of these incredible things, and then I managed to make a career out of it you know, one way or another! I learned to sing a bit somewhere along the way, which helped me get my songwriting talents together and write songs and stuff, and here I am.

RM: The *Badfinger* song that became a hit for Harry Nilsson, "Without You", was actually two songs put together, Pete Ham's song "If it's Love" and the chorus from Tom Evans' song "I Can't Live". Burton Cummings told me a similar story, that he and Randy Bachman were sitting at the piano at one of their grandmother's houses, and Randy started playing what became "No Sugar Tonight". Burt played a song he wrote called "New Mother Nature".

JM: Wow, is that right?

RM: Yeah. Both songs were in the same key, and they decided to put the two songs together into one. You have another interesting story behind "Without You".

JM: Yeah. We just sort of put that song together in the studio and we forgot all about it. I think we were doing, I think, the album Straight Up in London, and Harry Nilsson came walking into the studio, I think this was like 1973 or something like that. He said, "Are you guys *Badfinger*?" We said yeah, we are. He said, "My name's Harry Nilsson, and we've been mixing this song down the hall here, and I wonder if you'd come have a listen to it. Our ears are all fried from listening, and we want to know if you guys would come down the hall and tell us what you think of this mix". And we like a bunch of idiots, swallowed all of this, and followed him down the hall. We went into the room and he introduced us to Richard Perry (producer), and told him this is the *Badfinger* band, and said "Play them that mix we've been working on". And of course it was "Without You". We didn't have any idea that he was doing it or anything like that. It blew us a way! Our manager sort of freaked out and said, "See, I told you! I told you, you should have done a big version of that!" He always wanted to do the orchestra thing, and Pete (Ham) would always argue with him saying that we're not that kind of band, that we're a rock and roll band, and that's what WE do. He would never go along with it.

RM: With Buddy Holly, it was the opposite. It was him arguing with the record label that he wanted to add strings!

JM: (Laughs) Yeah, did he. He was fantastic!

RM: Do you always play an SG now?

JM: Yeah, pretty much. The first *Gibson* I bought was a 345. When I was a kid in Liver-

pool I was working on the docks, and saving up my money. I knew that Chuck Berry played a 335 or a 345, so I went and got one of those. My dad signed for it so that I could make payments. It got stolen out of the van about a year later. My one older brother went out the next day, I had five brothers, and came home with an SG Special. He gave it to me and said, you can play that!

RM: Just about all of the top players played an SG at one time or another.

JM: I know. I played a Firebird V originally in *Badfinger*. I've still got it at my house, a 1963. It's the only one my wife Cathy wouldn't let me sell! I had to sell all of the rest. You know, when you make it, and make a bit of money, you spend it, and guitars were cheap then. I did like everybody else, I went and bought Les Paul's and Firebirds etc. I sold them later just to survive. After I left *Badfinger*, after all of the hit records, and albums, and all of the gigs, I only had \$700! I think Jimmy Page has a Custom that I had. It's just one of those things, isn't it? I love my *Gibson's* man, just love them! I like the cleanness of them, and the comfort of them and everything else.

RM: If I remember correctly, *the Raspberries* opened for you at I think it was the old *Agora* in Cleveland?

JM: I don't remember the gig, but years later when I was living in L.A. I got to be friends with Wally and all of the guys. I got to get up and play with them at *the Roxy* in L.A. When Eric started his solo career, he had a manager that used to be partners with our manager, and they were doing a record in L.A. Eric got in touch with me somehow, and I got to play on his record.

RM: Cool!

RM: What was it that struck you about *the Beatles* that people wouldn't know?

JM: The thing that struck me about all of them, is how normal they were. They weren't like rock stars or anything, they didn't have entourage's. I saw them actually carrying their own gear. George would carry his own amp and guitar in, and drive himself everywhere. They didn't talk about *the Beatles* much. George was great. We worked the most with George, so I knew him more than the other guys. He was really just sweet. He'd bring his guitar, his Strat, when he was producing us and he would just join the band playing. He'd plug his guitar in and we'd play the songs, and he would play along with us! He's show us all of these little licks to play. We were doing some rhythm guitars, like this cross-rhythm for this song I'd written "I'd Die Babe". George had actually saved it. He'd written a couple of lines for me so I could get the lyric done. He really liked it, so we're doing the acoustic rhythm guitar track, just like on the other side of the beat (taps it out) and it wove all through the melody. So we're playing it and he made a mistake, and I kind of looked at him and laughed at him. Oh no, he didn't like that. I smiled and thought, "That's funny George, but that's the truth!" He saved that song for me though. He played guitar on it for us. He loved to play.



continued on page 37

RM: He also came up with the idea, and even played slide guitar on "Day After Day".

JM: Yeah. he came in while we were doing it. We were working out the parts, and George came in and said "Hey, can I play a bit of slide on this? Do you mind if I play some slide?" I said, well yeah, go ahead. He insisted on us playing both parts together in unison, then it splits to harmony and then goes back to unison. He insisted on doing it live, two slide guitars in unison. Do you know what that's like trying to get them in tune?

RM: Yeah. I've done something similar, recording one track over another though. Not only does it depend on the tuning, it depends on the timing, the strings, and pressure you put on the frets!

JM: (Laughs) Yeah, I know (laughs)! And (laughs) where does the slide stop? Well an hour went by, then the second hour, and there would always be one note that went "Ehh" flat or something (laughs)! So, yeah, he was really good and enthusiastic about it. Cleveland's a hell of a city for *rock and roll*.

RM: Yeah. A lot of bands got their breaks here over the years.

JM: Aren't Carl Radle and Jim Keltner from here? They played with *Gary Lewis & The Playboys*, and went on to play with *Derek & The Dominos*. It doesn't seem to make much sense now does it? I mean, come on (laughs)!

RM: I know. The progression doesn't sound logical! I don't know if they ever lived here, but they were originally from Oklahoma. Gary lived in the area for awhile. I'm not sure if he still does.

JM: Joe Vitale is from here isn't he? He played with Joe Walsh, *the James Gang*, *the Eagles* and all that stuff.

RM: Yeah, I think the Canton area.

JM: He's a great guy Joe. Great songwriter, great singer, just a great talent. Joe and I play with a band together in L.A. called *the Raz Band* with a guy Mike Rescigno who goes by the name *Raz*. We've both been doing sessions with this guy for 20 years.

RM: Where you headed next?

JM: I'm heading off to Iowa. We're playing a casino there, then I'm going to Syracuse to play at *Fredonia University* and we're doing a song there that we did tonight "Sweet Tuesday Morning". Natalie Merchant and the new girl from *10,000 Maniacs* (as *Ladies First*) recorded the song for a charity *WhyHunger*, a worldwide hunger charity and I'm going up there to do some promo. I went up there already and did some acoustic and sang



some harmony for them. It's coming out as a charity disc. I'm going to go up and do that, then on to San Diego. I'll be going to New Orleans, New Jersey, Chicago etc. I'll be playing on a couple of tours. One with Edgar Winter and Mark Farner. Mark's great. He still shakes like a bird, and plays the crap out of the guitar! It sounds mad doesn't it? Just gigging all the time, going all over the place.

RM: Well, let's hope you can keep doing what you're doing for a long time! P.S. If you get a chance to catch him, do it. He'd be happy to see you!



Closer Look continued from pg 9

Since the knob is on the top end of the pedal, the power adaptor jack is in an unconventional position at the bottom of the unit. I have to say I prefer the power jack to be at the top. Never was too fond of those that put them on the side either. Having it at the bottom of the pedal wasn't a problem when I put it on my board, as my power wires had enough length to easily route them to the bottom jack.

The unit I got had a knob on it that had no number designations on it. That meant that if it got accidentally moved it would be hard to notice and then reset it to the proper position. To keep that possibility at bay, I put a spare *Fender Strat* style knob on mine. That meant that as I looked down at the pedal I could see if it was set to the correct number. When I told Dave what I had done and why, he said he had not thought of that and understood what I was getting at, and would likely put a similar knob on them in the future.

While I was talking to Dave about the knob, he mentioned to me that since he gave me the unit I reviewed, he has improved the circuit board inside the unit and that he thinks the new ones are better.

If you are looking to add a reverb pedal to your arsenal of effects, and you want simple ease of operation while still getting great reverb tones, you should seriously consider *The Tube Amp Factory Primo Reverb*. Oh forgot to mention, you are getting a hand built reverb pedal for just \$89.00.

The Tube Amp Factory
www.tubeampfactory.com
155 Johnson Dr.
Delaware, OH 43015
740-369-3580