

The Scaffold - Airbrushed from History?

“For younger people, who might not know, we were like a cross between Oasis and Atomic Kitten” – Roger McGough, Reading Town Hall 2007



As Clive Product put it: “The Scaffold were woven into the fabric of my childhood. Songs like Lily the Pink, Liverpool Lou, Thank U Very Much were ever present, not old or new .. just always there.

The Bonzos are often written about but The Scaffold and Grimms and beyond ..”

Well it’s true, for a while The Scaffold were woven into the fabric of our lives, Number 1 hit singles and all. Yet, look ‘em up in the Encyclopedia of Rock and there’s nothing; while Welsh rockers Sassafras get an entry and Sea Train warrant a mention there’s no space for our likeable Liverpool chums.

Even Pete Frame in his notorious Rock Family Trees manages not manage to include so much as a twig for The Scaffold.

OK, let’s try over in the Comedy section of the bookshelves and, no, they’re not there either. ‘A Celebration of A Unique Generation of Comedy, 1960 – 1980’ says the blurb and, sure enough, there’s TW3, Beyond the Fringe, Python, I’m Sorry I’ll Read That Again and so on but not so much as a mention of McGear, McGough and Gorman.

Yet, check the recording session credits for a full supporting musical cast almost beyond comparison including such noteworthies as Zoot Money, Andy Roberts, Oli Halsall, Lol Crème, Denny Laine, Paul McCartney, Jack Bruce, Graham Nash, Tim Rice, Elton John, Herbie Flowers, Nicky Hopkins, Brian Auger, and “that salubrious eccentric pop legend” Mr. Keith Moon.

Now, with that kind of backing band surely there had to be ‘something’ going on?

Firstly, the bare facts:

Thank U Very Much hit the UK charts in November 67 and peaked at Number 4, next years follow up (pop pickers) Do You Remember only got to 34 while their 3rd chart hit, Lily the Pink, as I think we all know, sat at Number 1 for the whole of Christmas 1968, leaving the toppermost spot amongst the very poppermost for only 1 week before returning to the top; ironically the song it jockeyed with for that coveted position was a Beatles cover – ObLaDiObLaDa by The Marmalade.

It was, then, nearly a year before The Scaffold had another hit, in November 1969, with Gin Gan Goolie and then another 4 ½ years before Liverpool Lou made the Top 10.

So, that's their singles chart career but there's so much more, like, for instance, The Scaffold also provided the theme tune for BBC TV's ever popular Liver Birds 'sitcom' causing John Gorman and Pauline Collins to recite each week that immortal 'Liverpool poetry':

Are You Dancin'?
Who's Askin'?
I'm Askin'
Well, I'm Dancin'

As Clive says, even at the time, The Scaffold weren't old or new, they were just 'there' but somehow, still, we knew they weren't 'just' a pop group, even while we were of but tender years ourselves we knew there was a joke to be 'in' on.

Sure, Thank U Very Much wasn't exactly in synch with the movement of popular 1967 music but we, somehow, knew it wasn't even trying to be, and loved it even more for it. There must have been a knowing glint in their eye, a nod to say it was alright to have a laugh? And of course The Scaffold weren't 'just a pop group' they were well and truly established as a 'fringe theatre group'; ever present and 'well connected' or should that be 'well .. connected.'

Popular opinion has it that the outfit (I'm having trouble calling them a band) were fortunate to have been at the crossroads of 2 very busy roads – Satire and Merseybeat – at a time when both were hugely in the ascendancy – i.e. right place, right time. So, where's the problem there then?

The theory does stand up to some scrutiny.

Consider the timeline of an ever changing Britain:

October 1961, The Establishment Club launches in London quickly becoming 'the home of satire' and a future stop off point for Lenny Bruce.

February 1962, the official launch of Private Eye magazine, like The Establishment, with Peter Cook very much in evidence.

November 1962, That Was The Week That Was formally launches, the TV show that launched David Frost and shone a cold, harsh light on Conservative post war Britain.

And in and amongst all this, of course, in October 1962, the release of The Beatles' first single Love Me Do.

A heady time for sure, and, as someone famously said, we'd 'never had it so good'.

1962 was, then, a suitable time for an engineer working for GPO (forerunner of BT), Birkenhead born John Gorman by name, to organise the Merseyside Arts Festival; just one of the 'Events' he would arrange together with Teacher and part-time poet Roger McGough.

Fellow poet Adrian Henri also had a hand in these happenings, famously marrying poets with the likes of the guitar driven R&B of The Roadrunners not just on the same bill but on the same stage.

As future Adrian Henri collaborator Mike Evans later described it, there was an "increasingly populist bohemia emerging in Liverpool".

Living legend AL Willard Peterson recalls:

"In 1964 as a 'Bluesman' living in the 'Village' the epicentre of Art, Music and Theatre, Hope Hall especially, The Bistro became the central meeting and eating place for the like minded away from the usual watering holes of Ye Cracke, O'Connor's and the Philharmonic pub.

A place to discuss, digest and plan the more avant-garde and anti establishment projects in all subjects from love and death to peace and war and a groovy place to pick up members of the opposite sex referred to as 'chicks' in the vocabulary of the time when everythin' was 'great, groovy and cool!' It was during this time that I met Adrian Henri the Beat Poet and Artist and started working on combining the spoken word with the rhythmic beat of Rhythm & Blues."



Adrian Henri

**The Beat Poet with The 'Almost' Blues in action on stage at
The Hope Hall Theatre, Hope Street, Liverpool in 1965.**

More, much more, of AL Willard Peterson, and all of it very worthy of your attention, can be found at www.groovinrecords.co.uk

A graduate of Hull University, Roger 'Butterfingers' McGough had been a closet poet since his introduction to Yeats during Father Ryan's Physics lesson and had used his time away from the family home to 'nurse' that interest and would later cite among his influences at the time Dylan Thomas, Kerouac, and Cummings,

After graduation, and having returned to Liverpool, to teach, initially at St Kevin's Comprehensive School, Kirby, to later lecture at Mabel Fletcher College in Liverpool and the Liverpool College of Art, he would begin to come into the City Centre firstly to explore this 'poetry as performance movement' and then to perform his poetry at Hope Hall "400 yards from the Arts School and backing on to the University Campus

I used to read about the Beats, and listening to Howl, I had the record of that and Christopher Logue who recorded poems by Neruda to Jazz and I know Laurie Lee was doing it in London, Michael Horovitz and people like that.

Many years later I was lucky to see the Mersey Poets 'introduce' Neruda at the South Bank in London and even then they were clearly all in awe of the man.

There were also regular poetry and jazz evenings in a coffee bar called 'Streets' where he met Henri and Patten; "*a Beatnik atmosphere and I went along and started doing readings there.*" And at Hope Hall he would also meet former bible salesman Mike McCartney.



A Graduate of Hull University

Unable to enter Liverpool College of Art and pursue his passion for photography when the college moved the goalposts and upped the entry qualifications the young McCartney even had to forgo his 2nd option as he couldn't get a suitable grant and so he went to work in Jackson's the Tailors before taking an apprenticeship at Andre Bernard, ladies hairdresser, whose other well known 'graduates' include comedian Jimmy Tarbuck and Lewis Collins, TV actor.

McCartney, whose older brother was in a rock n roll group who, themselves, enjoyed a bit of a local following and had played a bit in Hamburg, was also teaching himself photography and printing his own prints in a home made darkroom having first been bitten by the photography bug at the age of 10 using his fathers Box Brownie. His first published photographs were used in the local music paper Mersey beat and published under the pseudonym of Francis Michael, Francis being his 'given' name and Michael his 'second' name as in James Paul McCartney.

Some of the early Roadrunners publicity shots had been taken by Mike McCartney in Storeton Quarry on The Wirral and in Port Sunlight.

The man who famously managed his brother's band, Brian Epstein, coined the nickname Flash Harry for the young McCartney on account of his flash gun always going off as he took photographs of the band as they played.

Of course the elder McCartneys group, The Beatles, did quite well and so, to distance himself a little, and not to be seen to be riding big brothers coat tails Mike McCartney assumed the stage persona of Mike Blank in early Scaffold days before re-emerging as Mike McGear, Gear being common parlance in Liverpool at the time for 'cool'.

Along with Adrian Henri, Gorman, McGough and McGear formed "a theatrical humor group" touring the "theatres and universities up and down the country" under the name of 'The Liverpool One Fat Lady All Electric Show'.

Fortunately, it seems to have become quickly evident that not too many people would remember the collectives name, so it was changed to The Scaffold allegedly with a nod to the Miles Davis album 'Lift to The Scaffold' (L'ascenseur pour l'echefaud) although large pinches of salt are required throughout until proven otherwise unnecessary.

Around the same time as the name change Adrian Henri left the revue only to find favour of a slightly more credible kind with The Liverpool Scene, a project that had grown out of a poetry anthology including work from the likes of Henri, McGough and Brian Patten, but more of that later.

'The Scaffold' came together, to just make an alignment, we didn't actually seek each other out as a group, a threesome; we became The Scaffold' – Roger McGough.

The easier to remember name, helped in no small part by a growing reputation, landed The Scaffold a residency at The, fashionable, Establishment Club in London's Greek Street, the club having been founded by Peter Cook who had already laid the foundations of his own career with his participation in Beyond the Fringe.

Cooks rising notoriety was, at the time, in no way impeding the growing popularity of the Cambridge Footlights and Oxford Revues which, among them, had already gone on to launch careers for such as Cleese, Oddie, Brooke-Taylor, Chapman, Palin and Jones.

As we've already established these were heady times indeed and, in the summer of 1964, The Scaffold took their revue, 'Birds, Marriages and Deaths' to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

A young guitarist, Andy Roberts, had also been invited to the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh as part of the 1964 Fringe Festival, having written music for a friends production and found himself sharing a dressing room with one Viv Stanshall who was "doing mime playing the tuba and generally camping it up".

"Following us in for the third week of the festival was this funny theatre team from Liverpool called The Scaffold. I went to see their show and thought it was wonderful and that's how I met McGough, McGear and Gorman. With them were all these other people like Pete Brown, Spike Hawkins, Brian Patten and Adrian Henri, all these poets – they were doing a poetry show at The Traverse in the afternoons".

Andy Roberts would go on to work as a backing musician with The Scaffold and played on their records up to and including Lily the Pink: "I was there the day Roger said 'I've got this old rugger song we used to do' We thrashed it out in John Gorman's flat."

The success of Lily the Pink would lead to The Scaffold working most nights and the student life Roberts was pursuing at the time didn't sit so well with such a schedule so, sadly, he would leave The Scaffold, although, it must be said, doing so at the peak of their chart career.



A Former GPO Engineer

Back in 1964 though the growing hysteria of Beatlemania was leading to a desperation among the media for 'the next big thing', whilst feeling sure it would have a Liverpudlian accent, and with the influx of TV crews into Liverpool one such crew found their way to Hope Hall where, from among the gathered group of poets, comics and satirist they invited five to audition and eventually Messrs McGough, McCartney and Gorman were 'invited to front a short lived late-night chat show Gazette, aired through the fledgling commercial TV station ABC.

McGough: Local television would put us on the air reading poems in clubs or in the cemetery of the Anglican Cathedral with a group of art students all sitting round, it looked very glamorous and great, and probably caught people's attention.

Sadly this early TV career didn't last too long but their 'live' reputation continued to grow and The Scaffold became regulars at the Edinburgh Festival, the material in their revues, described variously as 'softly satirical and bawdy, contrasting with their tongue in cheek songs.'

A recording contract soon beckoned and The Scaffold's first single, released through Parlophone Records in May 1966, linked "two old 'standards' which used to feature happily in many a Scaffold 2 hour theatrical performance." '2 Days Monday and 2 Blind Jellyfish', writing credits for each song being equally distributed among all 3 'band' members although Roger McGough would later emerge as the lyricist to McGear's melodies.

The follow up, Goodbat Nightman, came out in December 1966 but chart success had to wait another year and the release of 'Thank U Very Much' a song that "used to end our 2 hour shows", and which had, apparently, been written by Mike McGear in a fit of spontaneity when he called Brother Paul to thank him for the Christmas present Nikon camera he'd been given for Christmas 1966.

As well as giving The Scaffold their first Top 10 hit Thank U Very Much also, famously, became acknowledged as Prime Minister Harold Wilson's favorite record; nice but Big Untidy says that's not enough to overshadow the PM's long running feud with Roy Wood and The Move.

As well as being signed to the same record label as the Beatles, Parlophone Records, and directly related to Paul McCartney ["I first met my brother at a very early age"] The Scaffold were also managed by Brian Epstein's NEMS empire, and, what's more were occasionally produced by 'gentleman' George Martin "NOT for his Beatle productions but because of his Peter Sellers GOON connections."

As Sir George would put it "I have fond memories of Scaffold as their recordings came not only in the middle of The Beatles but also just after my long association with those extreme forms of British humor such as Peter Sellers and the Goons, 'Beyond the Fringe' with Peter Cook, Dudley Moore etc ... right through to the Establishment, and Scaffold came pretty high on that list.' Those comments are from Scaffold album sleeve notes so you'd think there'd be more enlightenment within Sir George's biography All You Need Is Ears wouldn't you? No, the band that has been airbrushed out of history aren't in there either, nor even in the Paul McCartney biography 'Many Years From Now' although that's where we do learn that Mike passed his 11 plus and went to the same grammar school as his bro' and Paul wrote the lyrics to Lovely Rita whilst walking near Mike's house in Wallasey; oh, and Mike was his big brother's Best Man (a favour later returned).

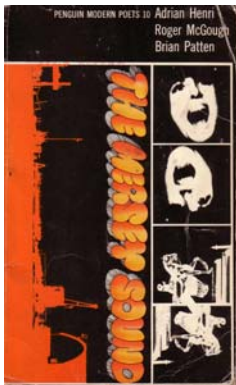


A Photographer

The Liverpool Scene poetry anthology had led to a growing awareness and interest in its contributors with performances being advertised as the collective 'Liverpool Scene Poets', from books title, although as Andy Roberts puts it "It was just individuals coming together doing shows" most regularly drawn from O'Connor's Tavern in Liverpool.

In March 1967 the books 3 main protagonists were invited to participate in BBC TVs 'Look at the Week'. Taking the essence of O'Connor's, Hope Hall and The Everyman Theatre 'happenings' with them they traveled to London with Andy Roberts and The Almost Blues where they were also invited to take part in a 'Liverpool Love Night' organised by Joe Boyd at the UFO Club.

Eventually the group became known as simply The Liverpool Scene.



Later that year McGough, Patten and Henri contributed to another poetry anthology, published by Penguin, The Mersey Sound, and, additionally, Henri and McGough (Patten didn't make it) worked with Andy Roberts to release "an album of poetry" called 'The Incredible New Liverpool Scene'.

With the success of Thank U Very Much Roger McGough's main musical outlet, though, remained The Scaffold, while Adrian Henri recruited the likes of Mike Hart (formerly of The Roadrunners) to The Liverpool Scene and caught the ear of John Peel, (future 'producer' of one of their albums) and went on to fame, notoriety and the Isle of Wight Festival, releasing 3 more albums and a greatest hits compilation, as well as

touring the US and opening for Led Zeppelin. Like the Bonzos story though, maybe that's for another day?

1967 also saw an ever closer bond emerge between The Scaffold and The Beatles with Roger McGough making an, albeit uncredited, writing contribution to the Yellow Submarine cartoon feature film although, of course, it was The Bonzos who got to appear in front of the Beatle cameras when they performed 'Death Cab for Cutie' as their contribution to the 'Magical Mystery Tour'. The Bonzos even jammed with The Beatles at a launch party for the film where Stanshall and Lennon "screamed our heads off" to the likes of Lawdy Miss Clawdy and Long Tall Sally and Mr & Mrs (later Sir and Lady) George Martin arriving dressed as Prince Philip and the Queen.

Legend has it, though, that The Scaffold were, themselves, in line for the Mystery Tour gig until Mike McGear stood to one side and suggested The Bonzos would be better suited. Paul McCartney, of course, was also otherwise known as Apollo C Vermouth the producer of 'I'm the Urban Spaceman' and Viv Stanshall was known to share a drink or three with John Winston Lennon, but we're straying, and as previously mentioned, The Bonzos are well covered elsewhere.

Despite turning down the chance to make their cinematic debut 1968 did see Scaffold back on our TV screens and taking part in another 'satirical' program for the BBC called The Eleventh Hour. Notable not only for the fact that Main Kink Raymond Douglas Davies, no less, provided a tune each week the program also had as its director a certain Stephen Frears who later went on to be commemorated in song and a verse in that years Christmas Number 1. But first the year saw the release of 2 other Scaffold singles that sadly failed to chart, 'Do You Remember?' (a personal favourite for what its worth) featuring a John Gorman soft shoe shuffle, and '1 2 3' allegedly Scaffolds "answer to A Day in the Life".

There was also an album recorded live at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall, a concert attended by Paul McCartney and Jane Asher as well as a few others.

With accompaniment ("fella on the piano" – John Gorman) from Mike Vickers and guitar and sitar played by Dave 'Davey' Mason the album was produced by Norrie Paramor "ably assisted by Mr Time Rice" and mixed poetry with a short story a couple of sketches "a contemporary pop song performed by all three in the modern idiot" and "a complex song with difficult harmonies written, sung played and beautifully performed by Michael McGear (as he doesn't do much else in the show) assisted by John and Roger", that track being the previous years chart hit Thank U Very Much

In October 1968 The Scaffold released their 3rd single of the year, 'Lily the Pink' with 'Buttons of Your Mind' (featuring Andy Roberts "on excellent guitar") as a double A side, except no-one played Buttons and the 'old rugger song', co-produced by Tim Rice no less, duly became a Number 1 hit single.

Formerly the unofficial regimental song of the Royal Tank Corps toward the end of WW2 Lily the Pink mutated out of 'folk' songs such as The Ballad of Lydia Pinkham

and Lily the Pink each paying due deference to Lydia Estes Pinkham (1819 – 1883) of Lynn, Massachusetts and who did, indeed, develop Lydia E Pinkhams Vegetable Compound which was marketed directly to women and offered relief from the symptoms of menopause. The fact that this compound had an alcohol content of 20% also gave it a certain notoriety beyond its originally intended market especially during Prohibition in the US.

By the way, Michael and Paul McCartney really did have an Auntie Milly and her husband was, indeed, Uncle Albert, but that's a very nother story.

Oh and the aforementioned TV Director?

“Stephen Frears had sticky out ears
And they made him awful shy
So they gave him medicinal compound
Now he's learning how to fly”

Mr Frears went on to direct High Fidelity, Dangerous Liaisons amongst others including most latterly Dame Helen Mirren as The Queen while The Scaffold adapted the lyrics to L the P to advertise Watneys Pale Ale by way of a TV advert filmed at Maidenheads famed but no longer extant Skindles Hotel and Bar where they were directed by another soon to be famous film director, Ridley Scott.

1968 also saw a side project emerge from The Scaffold with the release of the McGough and McGear album which included session contributions from Noel Redding “I think I did some ooh and aahs”, Paul McCartney, Graham Nash, Dave Mason, Andy Roberts, Jane Asher, John Mayall and Jimi Hendrix.

Roger McGough: “Jimi was interesting, he must've been aware of his own talents and things but he was in awe of other people”.

Noel Redding: “perhaps Jimi played guitar?” That suggestion was later confirmed when Hendrix was presented with an autographed copy of the album in which dedication Mike McGear thanked him for his “beautiful bubbles” which he later clarified as referring to his wah wah guitar playing. McGoughs dedication was thanking Jimi for “the sunshine of your strings.”

At the time the sleeve notes simply thanked the musicians who ‘Appeared by kind permission of themselves’.

‘Charity Bubbles’, another personal favourite Scaffold single, failed to follow up on the success of ‘Lily the Pink’ although a re working of the Boy Scout National Anthem, ‘Gin Gan Goolie’, no I can't imagine either, did graze the charts and had the distinction of including Elton John on backing vocals.

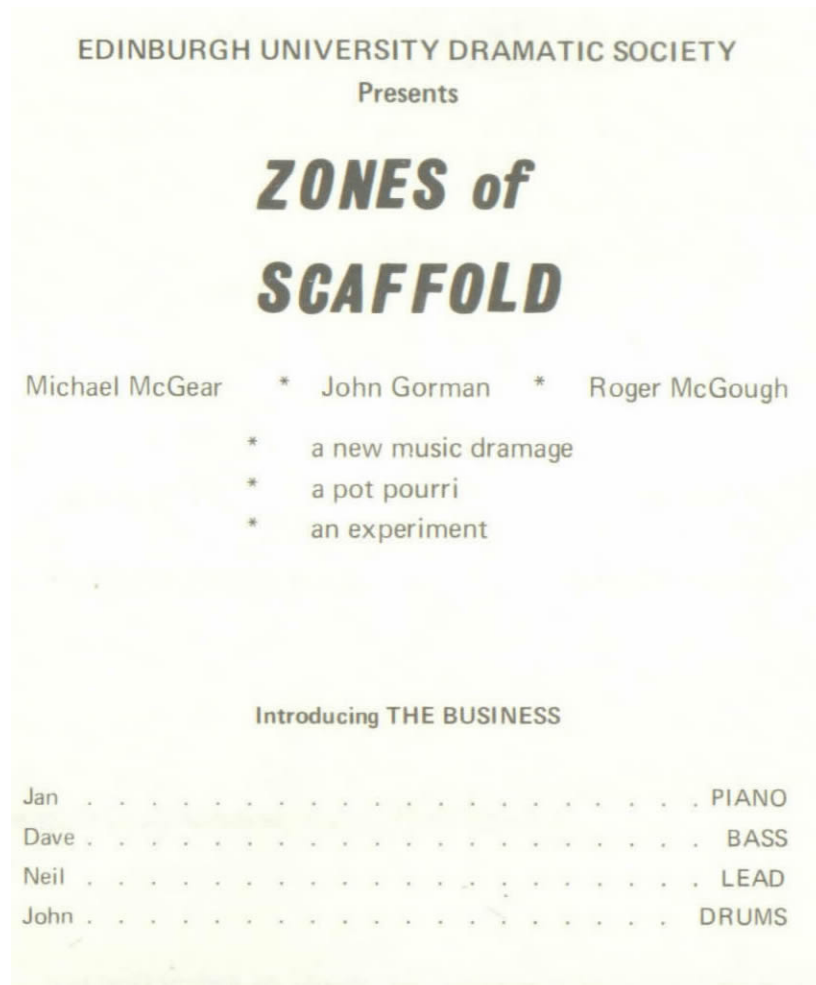
Apparently, Elton even came close to being The Scaffold's house pianist but lost out to Jan Schelhaas, later of Camel and Caravan but who had known Scaffold from days playing at O'Connors in Liverpool:

“My band ‘The Business’ were playing regularly at O' Conner's in'69, as you say it was a vibrant melting pot. I recall we played for nothing just to be amongst it. It was usual for us to play 2 or 3 songs (1st attempts at originality) then perhaps Adrian Henri, Brian Patten or indeed Roger would do a spot. Perversely Adrian Henri had been my art teacher in secondary school, a fact he liked to keep quiet about. Anyway the upshot of all this was that Roger, Mike & John approached us to join them in a review called "Zones" at the Everyman theatre .We took this show up to the Edinburgh Festival.”

Zones ran at the Everyman “late spring / early summer” presumably as a try out before a ‘friendly’ Liverpooldian audience before transferring to the Festival as guests of The Edinburgh University Dramatic Society where it was described in the program as “A New Music Damage”.

‘Zones of Scaffold’ to give it the full title offered “a collage of (Scaffolds) new material both spoken and sung” explaining that our 3 heroes had recently spent time “exploring the various zones of their universe i.e. poetry humour and music.”

The show ran from Monday 25th August to Saturday 6th September at 3.00 pm daily and unreserved tickets were a princely 10 shillings, that’s 50 pee to younguns, or about 70 cents to them what live in Euroland, oh alright just under a dollar, US.



Jan continues: "Lots of gigs followed. I recall an odd mixture of University venues & ABC theatres when the white suits would come out. We did several TVs and an EMI Convention (Gave Rolf Harris a lift in the van as he was doing a spot there as well). On one occasion on a train Roger did some lyrics to a song I'd been writing, I still have them, the title was 'Tailor Maid', they were terrible but so was the song. I did a session with them at Abbey Road. It was all 1 take stuff, I was next to Terry Cox (Pentangle) on drums; I was playing either piano or organ I can't remember which now."

Jan does though recall the tracks were 'In My Liverpool Home' which later saw light as part of the compilation The Scaffold at Abbey Road, and a track later used as aptly of a road safety campaign 'Nice and Easy Gets There'.

1970 finally saw our heroes return to TV with a programme 'Score with the Scaffold' described by those who know as a 'Family Game Show' but included in the BBC's Children TV strand and that seems to have included Patrick Moore in at least 2 episodes over its 2 seasons. The format of the program was drastically re worked between series 1 and 2 when Wendy Padbury, fresh from her role as Zoe Heriot in Dr Who no less, was brought in as a co-presenter and it was a straight forward contest between 2 groups of children.

Further TV related involvement that year saw The Scaffold contribute the title song to All The Way Up, a cinema release spin off from Johnny Speight's Till Death Us Do Part. The track was notable as the first non Scaffold composition they had recorded and also the Brian Auger keyboard "looning during and over the end fade".

With their pop career looking to be on the wane The Scaffold though did lend their all to the UK's TV advertising campaign heralding the introduction of decimal currency with a series of 5 minute 'promos' known collectively as Decimal Five although, personally, my memory won't let me recall anything of the kind.

1971 saw great upheaval in the world of The Scaffold and what had started as The Liverpool One Fat Lady All Electric Show was about to take on another identity change, this time also adding personnel with the return of guitarist Andy Roberts and a liaison with some ex-Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band members, or, as the Melody Maker of 13/2/1971 put it so succinctly in a headline:

Bonzo men and Andy Roberts join Scaffold

‘Viv Stanshall and Neil Innes from the defunct Bonzo Dog Band together with Andy Roberts from the old Liverpool Scene are to team up with the Scaffold for a series of concerts. McGear: ‘We met Viv and Neil when we were doing the PC Plod at the Open Space theatre in London. We talked over the possibility of a merger for these concerts. It would be beneficial to us all if we pooled our ideas and I think we could break some new ground. We are thinking of going to the Edinburgh Festival together if things work out. I think this unit is unmatched anywhere in the country. We worked with the Bonzos at the Liverpool Philharmonic in 1969 and it went down great. Last Sunday we played at a place called Corby and we went down very well’

The Scaffold and The Bonzos had actually played together twice in 69 and even before that in February 68 and, of course, the new project wasn’t actually going to be known as “The Scaffold plus Bonzo men and Andy Roberts” but GRIMMS as in

G orman, R oberts, I nnes, M cGough, M cGear and S tanshall.

GRIMMS CLOWNS ON THE ROAD



As did Scaffold before them Grimms would “tour theatres and universities up and down the country” for many years with many line ups and, I am privileged to say, I saw them on more than one occasion and maybe one day soon we’ll gather round the campfire and I’ll tell you all about it?

The Scaffold as an entity didn't go away entirely and in were commissioned to include "a disrespectful song" to a BBC satirical program 'Yesterdays Men'. Which was broadcast on June 17th 1971. The program that took its title from Labour Party soundbite when they described the Conservatives as 'yesterday's men'. Unfortunately Labour lost the 1970 election and was "effectively tricked into taking part in a programme that would ridicule them". David Dimbleby 'anchored' the program, although later had his name removed from the credits when the BBC capitulated and removed some of the more 'scurrilous' moments, and included interviews with Labour leading lights such as WILSON, Roy Jenkins, Barbara castle, Denis Healey and future PM, Jim Callaghan.

Joe Haines, Wilson Press Secretary at the time described it as "calculated, deliberate, continuous deceit". And relations between the BBC and Labour were to remain 'difficult' for some time. The BBC conceded that the programme "damaged the BBC overall. John Crawley, Chief Assistant to the Director-General, noted: "Most commentators and nearly all politicians concluded that we could not be trusted. It will take ages to live it down."

Having tuned the man who apparently so loved Lily the Pink against them The Scaffold were on slightly 'safer' ground were then were again commissioned by the BBC later that year to write and perform (in obligatory white suits obviously) a song for a "TV Extravaganza" celebrating the centenary of London's Royal Albert Hall. The show included contributions from Sir John Betjeman and Sir John Gielgud alongside the Scaffold who had employed a backing band that included Neil Innes, Les Harvey, Viv Stanshall and Keith Moon. The song was to be known as Do The Albert and even gained release as a single.

The following year, 1972, a short film, Plod, was released, directed by Michael Cort and based on a book by McGough with a cast of John Gorman as PC Plod and Roger McGough as 'a poet'.

Plod had been performed by The Scaffold the previous year as a stage play at the Open Space Theatre, Bloomsbury, London with a cast of .. 3

Murray Greenberg was an extra in the film and offers the following recollections of the making of Plod ... The Movie:

"One morning when I was in the 6th form at the Liverpool Institute - about 1971 - in walks someone to commandeer some of us to be extras in a film of the Scaffold stage play "Plod"

The film was made by Intertel - (the company that made the videos for Beatles and several songs around 1965) and was all done on video using huge television cameras.

We were told about the film, which would be shot in school time, and of course everyone

wanted to be in it, but only about twenty of us were chosen.

The filming with the Scaffold would last for a week and we were told to come into school wearing a white or dark blue shirt and a police uniform and helmet would be provided.

We shot the first scene in the grounds of the Liverpool Catholic cathedral and I remember a scene where we had to hold hands in a line and jump off a wall (idea inspired from brother Paul's "Magical Mystery Tour" no less!).

We were also taught a dance and had to mime to their songs. I recall there was a song called "Bless those jellied eels" and another one about the "long strong arm of the law"

In another scene we were dressed as psychedelic hippies (fashionable at the time) and were filmed in the audience at Crane Theatre (later to be called the Neptune) in Hanover Street, Liverpool watching a Scaffold concert

The final scene was more dancing about, as policemen at the Albert Dock which back in 1971 was still very derelict and overgrown, around the building later to be Granada TV HQ for Liverpool.

I never ever saw the finished film as I was ill when it was released in Liverpool.

It was only shown as support to Emerson, Lake and Palmer's "Pictures at an Exhibition" for three days at the Futurist or Scala cinema in Lime Street (both sadly closed today)

In inimitable fashion complaints about the behavior of "the police" was reported to Hardman St HQ.

Our headmaster Danny Booth had 'words' when a member of the public reported a large group of policemen behaving inappropriately along Hope Street. That was because at the end of the weeks filming we were all invited for a drink or two at the Philharmonic pub near the Liverpool Institute School"

The film short itself was produced by Jon Pennington, for Avalon Productions, who also worked on highly regarded silent movies *The Plank* and *Rhubarb* as well as the full length feature film of hit TV comedy *Till Death Us Do Part* and the Peter Sellers comedy 'The Mouse that Roared'. What's more Pennington could claim rock n roll credentials as he took the role of associate producer on *Sir Cliffs Espresso Bongo* and I'm sure Mike's brother would approve that he could also claim production credits on the Goons 1956 film *The Case of the Mukkinese Battle Horn* for which he also wrote the screenplay.

Director for Plod was Michael Cort who had slightly different cinematic credentials being better known for what BFI calls 'Sexploitation movies' such as *Zeta One* "just the sort of sexy kitsch that *Austin Powers* so accurately spoofed", *Yellow Teddybears* "where each member of a schoolgirl club decides to wear a small yellow teddy bear pin every time they lose their virginity - the drama deepens when a teacher discovers the significance of the yellow teddybears" and finally *Secrets of a Windmill Girl* "based around London's historic Windmill Theater, the only London establishment that stayed open throughout the Blitz, at the time it offered live entertainment that mixed comedy with semi-nude burlesque dancing."

Cort's back catalogue did though offer a link back to Pauline Collins and that *Liver Bird* poetry but we'll move swiftly on.

Murray continues

Though John Gorman had the biggest speaking part, Mike was definitely in it, mainly singing. The Scaffold arrived in a sporty car called a Scimitar. I remember Princess Anne had one at the time and I recall him and probably a choreographer teaching us the songs to mime to and the jumping off the wall and the dance steps. Roger was a sort of narrator in rhyme.

I don't remember too much about the concert bit at the end but he said that we were watching a 5 minute film of a Scaffold performance and were asked to look 'spaced out' in enjoyment of the music and that only a short excerpt of this actually appeared in the final cut.

Plod seems to have found cinema release alongside the ELP feature *Pictures at an Exhibition* with some sightings even reporting *The Strawbs* 'Grave New World' also on the billing. Without sounding too old and fusty these were the days when Odeon cinemas especially would have a mid week showing of films such as *Goodbye Cream* and *Pink Floyd Live at Pompeii* where the usual cinema audience would be replaced by younger persons used to rock concerts who subsequently spent hour upon hour shouting at the projectionist to "Turn It Up!!".

Fortunately, Mike McGear found time to park up the Scimitar long enough to record and release a solo album 'Woman' with tracks continuing in the Scaffold tradition of using McGear melodies to Roger McGough lyrics.

There was to be a full blown Scaffold album, 'Fresh Liver', on Island Records, in 1973 featuring the likes of the Average White Band horns alongside Zoot Money and Ollie Halsall. Island had released the Grimms albums and Money and Halsall had also been known to contribute musically to Grimms.

A second solo Mike McGear album followed in 1974 simply called McGear and using Wings as a house band with Sir Paul as producer and, at the end of the sessions, recorded at Stockport's renowned Strawberry Studios, spiritual home of 10cc, there was a timely Scaffold reunion where with the help of Mr. and Mrs. Paul McCartney joined by fellow Wings playmates Denny Laine, Jimmy McCulloch and Jerry Conway on drums, a stirring version of Dominic Behans "Liverpool Irish folk song" 'Liverpool Lou' was born.

The track was released as a single with a Paul and Linda composition, Ten Years After on Strawberry Jam, as a B side and soon put The Scaffold back in the Top 10.

Perhaps more importantly it paid of all the debts from The Scaffold Arts Centre Project and provided the impetus for the following years 'Sold Out' album released, as was the single, by Warner and his many Brothers.



Writing in the cover notes former Beatles press man Derek Taylor notes:

“Scaffold are a lovesome thing. They are a happy lot and they have had their ups and downs but for 10 years they have pleased, probably millions, certainly hundreds of thousands of very choosy people with a curious inimitable pot of scouse”

Apart from Wings on Liverpool Lou the album features a session 'band' of John 'Meggo' Megginson on piano who also shared production credits with McGear, Zoot Money, electric piano and WC Fields impersonation, Dave Richards bass, Andy Roberts, guitars, Ollie Halsall, credited as Oil Housall on electric guitar, Rob Townsend played drums and PC Plod made a guest appearance on Ramsbottom a parody of Chicago as in "made famous by Tony Bennett".

Apart from Thank U Very Much gaining a second life as a TV advert for Cadburys Roses chocolates that was pretty much that for Scaffold until a brief live appearance in March 2000 when they reformed to perform 'Thank U Very Much for Adrian Henri' at a Liverpool Philharmonic benefit for the ailing Henri who sadly died in December of that year.

The BBC film archives have nothing to offer by way of The Scaffold's many TV performances; not even a Top of the Pops and as a rather resigned Mike McCartney puts it:

"No surprise BBC have no Top of the Pops, Score with Scaffold, At the Eleventh Hour, Yesterdays Men, or 'listed film' etc .. when you think of me in Abbey Road a few years back with one of the ORIGINAL EMI engineers. I asked about Scaffold tracks being wiped when they needed tape to record NEW acts, and got the news that not just US had been wiped .. even our kid and chums had disappeared.. i.e. NOTHING surprises me."

Note "our kid and chums" is The Beatles to you and me.

After The Scaffold, John Gorman made an album for DJM called Go Man Gorman produced by Peter Jenner and using a pretty useful looking orchestra consisting of John Megginson (Piano, Bass), Andy Roberts (Acoustic & Electric Guitar), Billy Bremner (Electric Guitar), Brian Hodges (Vocals), Roger Ruskin Spear (sax)

More famously Gorman then went on to appear in many TV programmes mostly aimed at kids and mostly involving 'gunge', notoriously including Today Is Saturday Watch And Smile or TISWAS at it became known.

Gorman made his TISWAS debut in 1978 during the 4th series and stayed until 1981 contributing to 87 editions in all and also helping launch the 'Bucket of Water Song' into the UK Charts along with his co presenters Lenny Henry, Chris Tarrant and Sally James assuming the collective 'nom de pop' of The Four Bucketeers.

Incredibly, such success even gave rise to an album, produced by Neil Innes, and a UK tour.

Gorman got to reprise PC Plod for TISWAS or, as the BBC archives put it, 'his dim policeman character' and also gave the world Smello and Albert Grumble and he even, for his sins, wrote the TISWAS Christmas Annual.

TISWAS also offered the opportunity for John Gorman to introduce the impressionable UK TV audience to the Masked Poet whose presence had previously stalked the stages of Britain as part of Grimms.

When Chris Tarrant took off in 1981 to launch an adult version of TISWAS, known as OTT, Gorman went with him and appeared in all 12 episodes even collaborating with Tarrant to produce the tie in book of the TV series 'Beyond the Pail'.

John Gorman's cinema career was not quite as successful as his TV career including, as it did, a brief appearance in *Up the Chastity Belt* as well as the Pythons *Jabberwocky* where he is credited as 'Second peasant'.

Back in TV there was 'How Dare You' fronted by Gorman and TISWAS regular Clive Webb along with a varying line up of female co-presenters including, from Bucks Fizz, Cheryl Baker.

'How Dare You' was basically a children's programme centered on gunge and comic sketches although by the last series even kids had tired of gunge and the show was mainly just sketches. Then there was 'Razzamatazz' and 'Get Fresh' described as 'more pop, more gunge'.

Gorman then moved "down to Woolpit Suffolk, near the Peels", (M McC) and even warrants inclusion in the mighty tome that is *Margrave of the Marshes*, Peels (auto)biography where Mr. Ravenscroft details a trip the two of them took to Paris to see Liverpool FC beat Real Madrid to win the European Cup.

Retirement for John Gorman appeared, at one stage, to have been intended to be spent on a farm in France but he was to re appear in the role of Artistic Director for the Theatre on the Steps in Bridgenorth Staffordshire "and finally ended up in ... Birkenhead, where he is doing lots to tie in with our '08 European capital of Culture." (M McC) although he did also find time to help ITV celebrate 25 years of TISWAS with a 1 off reunion program.

Mike McCartney pursued his career as a photographer and later found his early photos used as a primary source of information by The National Trust when they bought the McCartney family home in Forthlin Road.

He has also regularly photographed Sir Paul's various musical projects especially Live 8 for which he produced a limited edition book of prints. Mike McCartney has also staged acclaimed photography exhibitions in Japan, Canada, USA and UK and even had 2 photos included in the Q magazine Greatest Rock Photos of All Time.

It was Mike McGear who took the cover shot for 'Chaos and Creation in the Backyard' a Macca album of 2005.

In between all this, it says here, he has been made an Honorary Fellow of Liverpool Cathedral and, 'by appointment of the Bishop of Birkenhead', The Cultural Ambassador for Wirral', in which capacity he is very much involved with Liverpool's

forthcoming role as European capital of Culture, and has also been the author of a children's Book, Sonny Joe and the Ringdom Rhymes (Collins Books).

Of his Scaffold times Mike [McGear] McCartney can, perhaps understandably, get a little reflective:

“It's sad that the writing, satirical humour, poetry, more 'serious' side of Scaffs was never put down on tape...it would undoubtedly have saved the Human Race.

I've been telling my (6!) kids over the MANY years that it was so unfortunate that TW3 (the start of it all), the superb Pythons, and those bludy 'Goodies' had telly series(es) for History to refer to, but the only reference the Scaffold have are the odd(sometimes very odd!) song for History to judge re: the LAST thing we were good at were..SONGS (apart from me obviously..I was a genius)

More latterly Mike has founded the campaign A4B, Anonymity for Both, as a result of his personal experiences and more can be found at his web site www.mikemccartney.co.uk

Roger McGough has continued to make his mark as a poet of note and regularly presents Poetry Please on BBC Radio 4. He also makes frequent TV appearances including QI, Countdown and Later with Jools Holland to name the more credible.

Rogers acting career almost rivals that of John Gorman as he appeared in The Rutles playing “a Liverpool poet”, or as Eric Idle puts it in his Directors Commentary “a very fine poet .. a friend of ours” which is probably why he became Roger McGough OBE in 1997, maybe. On the other hand he did win a BAFTA for his children's TV program Kurt, Mungo, BP and Me (1984), and the Royal Television Society Award for his science program The Elements (1993).

By the way, never wishing to miss an opportunity to mention Oli Halsall it should also be noted here that the ex-Grimms guitarist (and so much more) provided the Rutle singing voice for Eric Idle in the movie and you would do well, once you've finished reading this, to get yourself over to www.oliehalsall.co.uk where you'll find plenty to amuse and enthrall. I mentioned Ollie to Roger McGough and he noticeably drifted away in memory with a distinct smile and told me how he still visits Ollie's gravestone when he's in Deia, Mallorca

As well as being a ‘very fine poet’ for both children and adults alike though, Roger McGough has also recently published an autobiography ‘Said and Done’, published by Arrow / Random House, and definitely essential reading for anyone that has got this far into the article.

Most rewardingly for me it doesn't contradict anything I've just told you which is something of a relief as this was all researched before I read it so rest assured I haven't merely cribbed great chunks of that book and re written it.

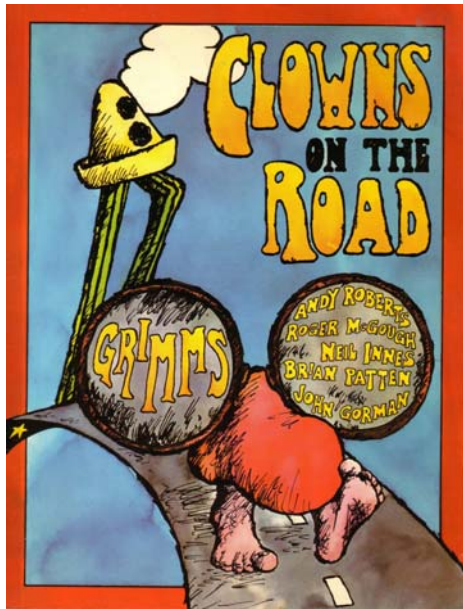
I will though use it as a source of information for 'The Scaffold Gig That Nearly Wasn't' in February 2005. A 'tsunami Benefit' the gig was held at Liverpool Philharmonic where The Scaffold, backed by The Chip Shop Boys, followed former Spice Girl Mel C on to the stage to deliver a 10 minute set consisting of Thank U Very Much, Liverpool Lou and Lily the Pink.

The reason it nearly wasn't was that Roger had written the gig in his diary for March 11th not February 11th but read the book and he'll tell the story much better than I could.

Most latterly, in March 06 Roger McGough became 'noticed' more for what he didn't do when he pulled out of a 'Gala Concert' in honor of Condoleezza Rice to be given as part of her state visit to UK. The concert was to have been a celebration of 'the City of Liverpool's Ocean crossing cultural life' but became a point of public demonstration over the Iraq war leading McGough to comment at the time "I have no appetite for crossing the scheduled picket line or being linked with a particular agenda; even less to an event which divides rather than unites public enthusiasm."

Roger McGough has written or contributed to almost 50 books in his career, the latest of which, excepting anthologies, *Everyday Eclipses* was published in 2002 and despite his relocation to the leafy suburbs of London was dedicated "To the City of Liverpool" a city he declares himself intent on spending much time during the forthcoming Capital of Culture Year. He doesn't rule out the possibility of maybe one day succeeding Andrew Motion as Poet Laureate and says if he did he'd continue to spend time in schools introducing poetry to children but reassuringly "wouldn't worry too much about the Royal side of it; I wouldn't let it get me down"

And so a theatrical humour group had a number 1 record made a lot of people smile and played a lot of theatres and universities, band members and poets came and went but through it all they were no more and no less than a bunch of Clowns on the Road.



Discography



Albums

The Scaffold

The Scaffold (live at Queen Elizabeth Hall)	Parlophone PMC 7051	1968
Lily the Pink (live at Abbey Road)	EMI PMC/PCS 7077	1969
Fresh Liver	Island ILPS 9234	1973
Sold Out	Warner Bros K 56097	1975
Singles As + Bs	See for Miles CM 114	1982

Roger McGough

THE INCREDIBLE NEW LIVERPOOL SCENE/ADRIAN HENRI & ROGER McGough	CBS 63045	1967
BRIAN PATTEN & ROGER McGough	Argo ZLP 1190	1976
Summer with Monika	Island ILPS 9551	1978

Mike McGear

Woman	Island ILPS 9191	1972
McGear	Warner Bros WB BS2825	1974

McGough and McGear	EMI CDP 7918772	1968
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John Gorman

Go Man Gorman	This Record Co DJF 20491	1977
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Singles

The Scaffold

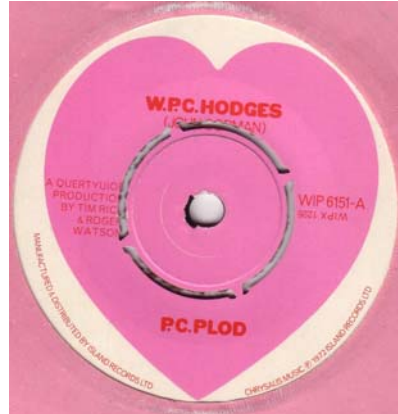
2 days Monday / 3 Blind Jellyfish	Parlophone R5443	May 1966
Goodbat Nightman / Long Black Pudding	Parlophone R5548	Dec 1966
Thank U Very Much / Ide B The First	Parlophone R5643	Nov 1967
Do You Remember? / Carry On Krow	Parlophone R5679	March 1968
1 2 3 / Today	Parlophone R5703	March 1968
Lily The Pink / Buttons of Your Mind	Parlophone R 5734	Oct 1968
Charity Bubbles / Goose	Parlophone R 5784	June 1969
Gin Gan Goolie / Liver Birds	Parlophone R 5812	Oct 1969
All The Way Up / Please Sorry	Parlophone R5847	1970
Bus Dreams / If I Could Start All Over Again	Parlophone R5866	Oct 1970
Do The Albert / Commercial Break	Parlophone R5922	Oct 1971
Liverpool Lou / Ten Years After on Strawberry Jam	Warner Bros K16400	May 1974
Mummy Won't Be Home for Christmas / Who Wind Is Blowing, The	Warner Bros K16487	July 1974
Leaving of Liverpool / Pack of Cards	Warner Bros K16521	March 1975
Wouldn't it B Funny / Mr. Noselighter	Bronze BRO33	Nov 1976
How D'You Do / Paper Underpants	Bronze BR039	April 1977

Mike McGear

Do Nothing All Day / A to Z	EMI 2484	Sept 1974
Leave It / Sweet Baby	WB K16446	Sept 1974
Sea Breezes / Giving Grease a Ride	WB K16520	1975
Dance the Doo / Norton	WB K16573	June 1975
Simply I Love You / What do we Really Know	WB K16658	Nov 1975

JOHN GORMAN

WPC Hodges/ I Remember	Island WIP 6151	1972
Whole World in His Band/ Poetry Rock	DJM DJS 10777	1977



This article the product of a disturbed mind and the result of an innocent e-mail exchange, copyright Big Untidy 2007. Comments and suggestions readily accepted.

Contact Barry@biguntidy.com

With sincere thanks to Roger McGough and Mike McCartney who have been welcoming encouraging and supportive and John Gorman who says he'll get back to us sooner than he thinks.

Thanks be also to Murray for his recollections, AL Peters who is very much alive and well and playing, performing and recording, and Jan Schellhaas who is back playing with Caravan

**ROGER
McGOUGH**
Said and Done
an evening of poems and stories!

to Barry
Sciffio
re-creator

Thanks.

'the patron saint of poetry'
Carol Ann Duffy

