

CAMARADERIE



THE OFFICIAL IAN McNABB MAGAZINE 3

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Hello again,

sorry for the long delay in producing this issue. The new millennium has certainly been very quiet so far on the McNabb front. Since Issue 2 (December 1999) Ian has played only a handful of live shows. The first of these were both at Liverpool's Life Cafe in December. Tracks from both shows were compiled to produce the only McNabb release this year - the "Live at Life" CD (a review is included in this issue).

Having played the opening night at Liverpool's Lomax in 1993, it was fitting that Ian was asked to play the venue's closing night in February. For this occasion, he played with a full band for the first time in over 3 years (the last time also being at the Lomax in December 1996).

August saw Ian playing at Birmingham's Ronnie Scott's for the 9th time in just over 2 years. A fine performance was uniquely rounded off with a near a cappella version of Love Is A Wonderful Colour. Ian's final gig of the year was on November 2nd at the Life Café again and a review is included in this issue.

In July Ian appeared on Janice Long's show on Radio 2 at 12.30 in the morning (a full transcript is included in this issue). He gave an interesting interview and played 3 acoustic songs including the new song "Living Proof". Janice has been plugging tracks from Ian's next album "Ian McNabb" which is due for release this month. The 14 track collection sees Ian returning to his traditional rock-oriented style.

In January Ian played a handful of shows as keyboard player with the recently reformed Waterboys. See later in this issue for further details.

I have a few copies left of Mokka's first single which features Ian. This is available from the above address and costs £4 inc p+p. Also available from me are all 8 issues of McNabb Rag written by Paul Warry for £2 each. I also have copies of issues 1 and 2 of Camaraderie at £3 each. I am also taking subscriptions of £6 for Issues 4 and 5.

Thanks to Anthony Strutt for his review. Don't forget to check the website at www.ianmcnabb.com for all the latest developments. Keep your contributions coming.

Richard Moorsom
April 2001

P.S. Interesting to see David Gray doing so well after supporting Ian back in 1994.

AND THE KEYBOARD PLAYER IS....THE WATERBOYS, LONDON SCALA 30/01/01

Having been a long time fan of Mike Scott and The Waterboys, I was pleased to hear again the 'big music' sound on the new album "A Rock In The Weary Land". The album was released in October last year along with a thirteen date tour of the UK to promote the album's release.

Along with my good friend Rob we got tickets for the first night at the Astoria in London and witnessed a great gig. The next day the country ground to a halt due to major floods. The tour continued over into Europe including an appearance on German television in December. It was announced that there would be some additional U.K. dates at the end of January; these included a gig at The Scala in London (good venue), so after enjoying the Astoria gig we needed little encouragement to go again !

A couple of weeks before the shows it was announced on the Mike Scott website that Ian would be joining the band for the six shows playing keyboards. This came as a welcome bonus as I had not managed to see the "Still Burning" tour which had featured Ian on bass.

At 9.00 the band took to the stage and got straight into "Let It Happen" from the new LP and treated us to 2 hours of great music, including a mixture of old and new Waterboys material. Ian was featured throughout the show playing keyboards and adding backing vocals. From the moment he stepped on stage seemed to get immersed totally into the task at hand, clearly enjoying the chance to be on stage doing something that he does not get a chance to do very often at his own gigs !

Midway through the set Mike introduced the band, when it came to Ian's introduction he said "On keyboards we're very lucky to have this guy, he's just finished recording his own album and he's gonna be touring it, but he managed to find a little window of time to come and play with us - from Liverpool Mr. Ian McNabb". There must have been several of the 'faithful few' in the audience as Ian was greeted with a tumultuous roar of approval (I even heard some obligatory shouts of 'Boots', 'Tin Can', 'Hollow Horse' etc).

The set continued including a blistering 'Don't Bang The Drum' and 'Savage Earth Heart' after which they left the stage. They soon returned and the next song was an a capella duet featuring Ian to great effect called 'It's All Gone" (from the "A Rock In The Weary Land") lp. This was followed by an amazing version of "This Is The Sea" at which point the band went into overdrive for the next song 'Be My Enemy' with Ian sporting shades and leaping around the stage pumping the keys a la Jerry Lee Lewis like a man possessed! Finally Mike announced he would leave us with a new song - you've guessed it - "the Whole Of The Moon" !

So ended a great gig, it was nice to see Ian clearly enjoying being on stage and just playing music. Judging by how fired up he was, the upcoming band tour in April should be very special. - DON'T MISS. Bryan Johnson

10 BIGGEST GAPS IN LIVE PLAYS

<u>SONG</u>	<u>YEARS</u>	<u>MONTHS</u>
REAPING THE RICHEST HARVEST	14	2
SUBSTITUTE	13	1
INTO THE MYSTIC	11	8
STOOD BEFORE SAINT PETER	10	6
ROADHOUSE BLUES	10	5
FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH	9	7
PRETTY VACANT	9	4
LOVER'S DAY	9	3
GET BACK	9	2
OUT OF SEASON	9	1
TWO LITTLE BOYS	9	0

Quiz answers from Issue 2

Songs mentioned in other songs :-

Truth and Beauty – Presence Of The One

Nirvana - Birds Fly

Out Of Season – Chop The Tree and Rollin' on

Evangeline – Seven Horses

Interview extract with Paul Simpson

In the late 80's Ian recorded with former Icicle Works drummer Chris Sharrock on an album by the White Swans. The band also included Paul Simpson and Ian Broudie who later became Care. We caught up with Paul Simpson recently to ask him about the project.

After that you did an album with Ian McNabb and Chris Sharrock as the Wild Swans ?

Well it was me and Broudie and Chris Sharrock who is a friend of Paisley's, Ian McNabb, I asked him down to help play on one song. I didn't know him that well. The Icicle Works used to hang out, I didn't know this, in their school uniforms at the back of the Wild Swans rehearsals and I used to say to Jerry (Jerry Kelly) "are these friends of yours?" and he used to say "No, I thought they were friends of yours". Because they were better musicians than us they would pluck all our chord changes. They were a joke in Liverpool, the Icicle Works, but they were really good. They were better songwriters. They just love shit - they always loved crap - they weren't cool because we were cool but we couldn't play, you know.

You got a scoop there because on that album it was the only time McNabb has played with Sharrock since the Icicle Works split

Yeah, that's right, so there was a bit of tension there. I think Ian McNabb felt weirder about it than Chris because me and Chris had smoked a lot of dope during that album and Broudie was really anti drugs and we had to do it in secret and McNabb ended up playing on about 4-5 tracks. He's an amazingly talented guy but I'm not happy with that album.

The Rights To Imagination And Madness

This interview from 1994 is described by Ian as the best he has ever given.

How did your upbringing shape your musical development ?

Well, being an only child has something to do with it, I reckon. There was no music in the house, my Dad and Mom were never musically inclined other than the usual singing at Christmas and all that. Consequently, I spent a lot of time on my own listening to music. That's one of the things that my Mother still can't understand, where that influence came from in the first place, because it wasn't a musical household.

So what triggered your interest in music then ?

Well, I used to think pop music was daft, even though all my mates were into it. (Sings, whilst tapping out the beat on the table) "Where's your Momma gone" I just didn't get it, it seemed daft. I was into all this science fiction, The Third Reich, war and all that stuff, I was really fascinated by all that stuff. Then I heard Marc Bolan on Top Of The Pops and that was it really, I was really into T-Rex. From then on I suppose it was much the same as everyone else really. I got a cheap guitar, started practising and so on, then I started working my way backwards through the entire Beatles catalogue.

When did you start to write your own material ?

That's a strange thing about my development – as soon as I could play the guitar to a reasonable extent, I never thought about writing. The environment at the time was very much Northern England working men's clubs, so I just thought of work. My mother forced me to go and apply for work with this cabaret band when I was 14, you know, all the pop hits, working men's clubs, pies and peas, that sort of thing. They needed a lead guitar player, and although I didn't think I was up to it I got the job. We'd play labour clubs three days a week, doing only covers, so I never really thought about writing. I did go for lessons, 'cos me Dad said if I was going to play I should do it properly. That was useful in many ways, but later when I got to meet other people like Ian McCulloch and Pete Wylie, they were listening to The Velvet Underground, Bowie, The Doors and they'd pick up their guitars and write their own stuff. The punk thing just passed me by really, I would listen to those bands but I wasn't really into them because they couldn't play. I'd listen to The Sex Pistols in the week and then at the weekend I'd go out and earn great money playing Billy Joel songs. I could play anything by the time I was 15 or 16, but I never thought to write. I even went to musical college in Liverpool, but at that stage I never had any inclination to create my own material.

Do you think that theoretical excellence can leave people arid of creativity ?

I agree absolutely. I could read music, play very well, and I was earning big money. The people in their bedrooms were totally skint listening to Television, writing their own stuff, so I thought I had it all right. By this stage we were bringing home £350 a week playing the pie and peas circuit, and I was still at school. We were doing so well, but then I started seeing the Bunnymen and I realised I was wrong, I was a slow learner. I knew then that the only way I could

get into this more creative stuff was to knock the cabaret music on the head. That was a real difficult time, because me old fella died and suddenly I was the breadwinner. On top of that the music that was around Liverpool at this time was very weird, with no chart hits, so when I said I wanted to stop earning £350 a week, and play my own songs which sounded very strange to most people, everyone thought I was mad. My mother thought it was the road to ruin. She said I could be out there earning loads without leaving home and all our problems would be solved. Even when she asked me about gigs I had to say it was hard and when I did a show it would be a loss financially. Very, very, very tough times but I was determined and I stuck at it. I'd written a couple of songs that were completely derivative. If you've ever written a song you'll know that your first efforts are like stuff that you're listening to or what you think you should be writing. I was also into all the electro stuff, early Soft Cell and early Human League. I was into all this science fiction as well, which is where I got the name for the band The Icicle Works, from a science fiction story I'd read. The guys I was playing with in the band were into other things like The Byrds and a lot of west coast sixties music. So it took me a long time to find all that. On top of this you had to consider what was cool in Liverpool at the time, you had to have an angle. It couldn't just be a good song, it had to be weird as well. The first good song I did was "Birds Fly (Whisper To A Scream)" which was me trying to write something that was catchy but had that quiriness and strangeness that was demanded at the time. I copped the drum beat off an It's Immaterial track, the guitars were trying to be a bit Bunnymen or Byrds, but the lyrics were utter nonsense, rubbish, but at the time nobody was making any sense. That record doesn't mean anything but I really like it and it did get us a record deal. I think a lot of records of that era don't mean a great deal to be honest. That's how I started, but I'm much more conventional now.

How did that change to a more conventional method develop ?

Well, it was as the band progressed really and I heard more people. The Icicle Works' rise to success was meteoric and then very quickly over, so we started off again in the clubs. We weren't ever considered a major band but we'd average 1500 people a gig, which is pretty good, especially compared to bands more recently. We had a lot of success with that whimsical neo-psychedelic, false mystery, weird stuff, especially in America. Then someone from Warner Chappell, our record company, at the time, played me the REM album "Murmur", which made me think it was cool to be conventional, because that album was basically country rock.

But that first album was also very obscure lyrically, very unconventional.

Yes, it was, but that opened the door to more material. I moved on then to Neil Young and Dylan and started to write songs like "Hollow Horse", with more conventional beats. I just learnt loads and gradually began to break out of that previous style. It took me a long time. I'm not saying it's wrong to have obscure lyrics, because there are many great writers who work like that, but I find that people relate to things more easily if it's straight down the line.

How personal are your lyrics ?

Well, I used to think that nobody would be interested in what happens to me. But the point is that people can relate their story to yours, and that's where the hook is. By writing about your life, because we are all human beings and can have

relatively similar experiences, they can say "It's me song that is". I couldn't believe it when people first started saying that to me about my songs. That's why Bob Dylan is for me the singularly greatest songwriter of the twentieth century, because people just identify so much with his lyrics. When you come across a lyric that hits home in that fashion, it make you feel better that there's somebody else who is going through what you are, and that is the fundamental reason why people understand music.

So bearing in mind that need for a personal lyrical approach, how does that fit in with more political statements you've made, such as "Up Here In The North Of England" ?

Well, even the political ones are sort of half-assed. Because of some of the horrible things that go on, I sometimes feel the need to have a bit of a whinge, but generally I'm more motivated to write about things that happen to me. I can go out and sing these lyrics which are rather like reading out of your diary, and then you can really push it across to people.

Is that hard to announce your feelings to a thousand strangers?

It's because they are a thousand strangers that it is easy.

Have you ever stopped writing a song because it was too personal ?

Well, I consider myself a writer before anything else, and strongly believe that you have to let it flow. You have to mention people and incidents if it feels right. But yes, on a couple of occasions I have censored myself, but *only* a couple of times, where the details of the song have been exactly the same as in real life except for a few name changes – you have to be a little careful when things get that close. I can only say that it's a feel thing and you have to go with it.

Isn't that unfair on those people in your songs who might not have the chance to answer you back ?

I think it is yes, but it shouldn't mean I should hold back – that is the power of the medium. I have this platform and that's just the way it is, that's one of the advantages of me having to suffer as an artist !! (laughs loud and long) (Pauses) I know it sounds pretentious but I believe I have been given this talent for writing songs that hopefully mean something to some people and I'm going to use that. You don't think you're better than everybody else, because everyone has a talent, and mine seemingly is writing songs, and I don't think I have to justify myself on that anymore after ten years of doing it. You can write books better than me, the guy in the factory is better than me at his job and so on. Writers are just people who are better at expressing themselves on paper. Each person has an individual talent. For instance, one of the greatest heroes of the popular music idiom, Brian Wilson, can't express himself through conversation, or through lyrics, but he is a complete musical genius, he hears the most beautiful melodies that no-one else can even touch.

Do you still believe in the principle that a good song is one you can play on an acoustic guitar and it will still sound great ?

(Pauses, scratches chin). I still pretty much stand by that actually, yes. I've made

great records that aren't great songs, and conversely I've written great songs that don't work on record. It's when you get a great song that becomes a great record that you've got the big one. That is the problem that dance music has for me, because there are many great dance records but not so many great dance songs, there's too much reliance on the beat. So yes, I still think you should be able to play a great song on a single unaccompanied instrument.

Does your writing provide therapy ?

God yeah, completely. I've written things and when I look at them I think it says much more than I ever could in conversation. Because you have to be more concise, you have to edit the subject down, it can be much more accurate, instead of just waffling on for hours to somebody. There really is nothing greater than when you look at a piece of paper with some words and chords on there and you think "Yeah, this is great!". It's just the best hit there is, there's nothing to beat it except getting up in front of an audience. It's a great feeling of pride when you've written something good.

How much of Ian McNabb would somebody know if they had all your records but had never read any interviews or anything other than your lyrics ?

Pretty much I think. I started to write about myself when The Icicle Works broke up. When you're in a band and you are the sole writer you are expected to write songs that everybody in the band can get behind, so they tend to be more generic. When The Icicle Works broke up I did another record under that same moniker which dealt with relationships breaking up, called "Permanent Damage". I dressed it up as a boy-meets-girl thing but it is obvious that it is about the group breaking up. The fact that the album is called "Permanent Damage" gives it away. It is a cliché but the process is like your diary. My last album "Truth And Beauty" was me moving on from the therapeutic primal scream of "Permanent Damage" and sitting back and saying to myself "Life is great!". It was a little celebration really and my new album is a continuation of that. So if you listen to all that it will be very clear where I'm at. A lot of stuff in the past was very whingy because I was very whingy at the time. "Permanent Damage" was so depressing because it was me going to the record company and trying to write for a radio slot, yet battling against all the demons that were inside me at the time. So what you get is an album that tries to be "up" but is actually very dark. It sounds "up" in parts and there's some good guitar work on there, but it's me struggling really. Side 1 was my attempt to write six pop music songs but by Side 2 it just went off the edge.

What is the darkest song you've penned ?

Probably "Firepower" or "What She Did To My Mind". Very dark, I mean those songs are about shooting people.

Is writing a license for you to live out strange fantasies of extreme emotions ?

Absolutely, that's one of the great things about it. I am allowed to express those thoughts in my work, but I would never do that in real life. Everybody has felt like killing somebody now and again but they don't go out and do it, but as a writer, I can in a way. With "What She Did To My Mind" we'd get people at the gigs punching the air and really getting into it when I'd be singing the line "I put her f--ing brains against the wall". That's scary. "Firepower" was the same, we're essentially celebrating the power of guns, and you start thinking "Hang on, that's

not why I wrote this song” so I stopped playing both of them. That also happened with a song called “Gunboys” which was an early Icicle Works number, and was written around the time of the Falklands conflict. I wrote that song by adopting the persona of this extreme right wing character, in order to ridicule that exact type of person, in the same way that Randy Newman sometimes does. You make fun of ridiculous people by pretending to be them. The song sounded very angloistic and we got in trouble for it when we did a radio session, people completely misinterpreted the whole point. Since then I’ve been much more direct.

How much more rewarding is your solo career than working with Icicle Works ?

Infinitely. My first record as a solo artist has sold far more than any Icicle Works records for years. Even the name, The Icicle Works, was a real early ‘80’s Liverpool thing. So I just lost the name and with that many hardcore Icicle Works fans, but now it’s just me. There’s still a lot of people around me obviously but I have ultimate control. My record company trust me and I’m very lucky in that.

Would you care if nobody heard your next record ?

Yes. As a songwriter I feel it is my duty to let people hear my work. I could make albums for tuppence ha’penny, sell thousands of copies and get great reviews and be really weird, but I don’t really want to be like that. I want to be successful, and I can’t see the point in putting so much effort into writing and recording a project that nobody will hear. I think I should sell as many records as REM because I believe that I am as adept at writing songs as they are, and so for that matter are a hell of a lot of bands who don’t sell as many records as the bigger bands.

How did the association with members of Crazy Horse come about and was that enjoyable, working with so many world class musicians ?

Incredible. I’ve never played with such people. It was like Jim’ll Fix It – who do you want to play with ? So I said Crazy Horse and Ziggi Modeleste, the greatest funk drummer ever, who user to be in the Meters. I said I’d always wanted to work with Crazy Horse, and my record company put that together. This was the only time they’d ever worked with anyone else other than Neil Young, but I think no-one had ever asked them. I think they would have done other stuff if only people had asked because they were very approachable. I’m convinced they don’t realise just how incredibly influential they are. They were thrilled that someone had even asked. I just couldn’t believe it.

Are you an optimist ?

I’ve learnt to be. There are so many people who are locked into that “Birth, School, Work, Death” type of life. What’s the point in getting up every day if you’re not optimistic ? it’s quite clear that the world we live in is completely f---ed, so you have to hope that something good is going to happen.

Do the parameters of your medium frustrate you ?

It can do. It disciplines you. Pete Townshend can talk for hours and hours about the promises that were made to the youth of the 1960’s about the dream paradise around the corner, which when it got to 1970 was obviously never going to happen. So he wrote “Won’t Get Fooled Again” and that says everything in three

verses and a middle eight, it completely illustrates the whole discussion much more accurately than him waffling on for hours. There was a song on my last record called "Presence Of The One" which was knocking on for 12 minutes and in that case it was because I had so much to say, so by the same token you don't have to be limited by those parameters if you don't want to.

What part have drugs and drink played in your creativity ?

God, where do you start on that one ? I've done drugs at every stage of the writing process and sometimes it helps and sometimes it hinders. I don't think that it is very good for the creative process, but I do tend to smoke a lot of dope when I'm mixing, I feel it washes out your ears and things sound that much clearer. Being under various influences early on can blur things – later on when I'm looking through a magnifying glass at my finished song it helps me.

How rewarding were the acoustic sets you've played ?

Great. I was very nervous and at the first show at Birmingham I was completely cut, I'd had way too much to drink I'm afraid. I was very proud overall though, having done it and pulled it off. I'm not sure that there are many writers of my generation who could do that, with a couple of exceptions obviously. It's very demanding having the songs that can hold people and stand up in the context of a very barren set up. You need charisma to hold an audience that long. A lot of people think you can go on stage in a pair of sunglasses and look at your fingers all night and you'll succeed. That whole Lou Reed and The Velvet Underground mentality never worked for me, you know, "all bow down and be thrilled because we've bothered to even turn up". It depends on who's doing it but usually it's crap. You have to involve the audience, and look them in the eye, which I am confident enough to do. To be honest though, for a while there I had it because I couldn't afford to take a band out on the road, a solo tour was the only option if I wanted to tour that record.

How does being a songwriter affect your private life ?

A difficult one that. I firmly believe that you have to experience all sorts of things to be an accomplished writer, you mustn't limit your realm of experience. That's why I've never allowed myself to settle into a serious relationship, because that would limit my options. There will always be compromises involved in any relationship which would block certain experiences I could otherwise have. I am completely free to do whatever I want to do, but that has been very, very difficult because you do get involved with people and then you have to pull back from that. It can destabilise your private life completely at times, but for me the rewards definitely outweigh the problems. I sometimes wonder what it must be like to have a wife and kids, so I'm not experiencing that, but the things I am still free to do is 80% of the rest. I am selfish, and I enjoy being selfish, but my approach does not hurt anybody. I also tend to be "Just Add Alcohol" so things can get a bit difficult at times. I do think about myself more than most people would, so I am more introspective in that sense, but I'm also an extrovert as well as being so shy. Songwriting is the single most important thing in my life and that is the bottom line.

Are there any songs you'd like to take back from your earlier days ?

No, because I am a firm believer that the work is a time piece of how you feel at

that point in time. I do disagree with things I've said and done in the past, but you can't take it back, withdraw the album and arrest everyone who has a copy. If that's what it was at the time you should hold it up to the sky and say "Piece of shit" but leave it there nonetheless. We used to have a system in The Icicle Works where we'd get on the bus the night after a gig, feeling pretty groggy and we'd put the tape on of the gig the night before, which was absolutely the last thing you wanted to hear. Usually it was so terrible you'd be painfully embarrassed, but you'd never make that mistake again. Only by confronting your mistakes will you improve. That's why Frank Zappa never improved after a certain point, because he didn't listen to his earlier work and learn from it.

Many people were confused by the dramatic changes of direction in Icicle Works material, sometimes several on the same record. What was your motivation for that ?

Well, I've always been a fan of so many types of music I never wanted to be tied to any one style. People said if we'd stuck to one style we'd have been massive but we never even considered that approach. The snag with that is that people find it hard to listen to such a mixture, it can sound like a various artists album, so I realise the limitations of that now. However, when "Permanent Damage" came out I was quite narked when it got a little two star slagging in one crap magazine which said "This track sounded like the Beatles, this track was like Neil Young, this track was like so-and-so, what's the point, so f—k off," I turned the page and there was this review of Karl Wallinger's latest album which said it was a great variety of sound and styles, rather than sticking to one particular style. It never lastingly pisses you off though, because a bad review lasts a week, whereas a great record lasts a lifetime and longer, and that's how you will ultimately be judged, by your work, not by somebody else's opinions of your work.

How did The Icicle Works come to split ?

Phew. Well, a load of things. We were always on the threshold of a major break and I really don't know what would have happened had we stayed together. Just before the last album with the original line-up, I'd decided that I wanted out for various reasons. Women are very damaging to bands, or rather love is, because everything goes out of the window when somebody falls in love. I didn't like decisions being made by partners of the people I was working with. The last tour we did was at some serious venues, and the manager said you can't drop it now, there's too much at stake. So we did this tour and it was just horrible. Nobody was talking to each other and I was as guilty as anyone. There was a bad vibe, very sour for everyone. When it became obvious that it was all breaking up, I then became very pig-headed about it and said "No, I'm not going to let it finish, all I've done for the last ten years is think about this group, day in day out, I won't let it finish". I think that was principally because I was wary of what lay beyond that. All your friends are mutual friends of the band and people started taking sides. The worst thing that's ever happened to me was The Icicle Works splitting up, it was so traumatic, although clearly it was meant to be and now I'm much better off for it. I carried on with the same name although there were even mixed feelings about that – the band had a good following but the line-up had always been fixed. We did a tour and an album with the new line-up, and it was all received okay, but there was no magic in it, so that was the end.

You've said the Icicle Works "Best Of" album is the best record by that band. Why

was that ?

Well, I put some thought into that record, because when I was initially approached by Beggars Banquet I said "no", but then I saw the way they were going to do it and I wouldn't have liked it. So I put some time into it and I do think it is our best record. What was funny about that record was that when it was reviewed it was raved about. When we were active as The Icicle Works we were hardly ever mentioned, and if we were we'd probably be criticised. So suddenly these same papers were saying "genius" and "most misunderstood artist of the decade" and so on. Five star reviews left right and centre. I was like "Eh? You never f---king said that when I released the bloody album in the first place. What's all this about ?" I was confused by that response but very pleased obviously. I got a deal soon after for my solo work, so it was very enjoyable. I don't think The Icicle Works ever made a classic LP, so "The Best Of" is an ideal representation of what I did in the 1980's. We were never successful really, I mean in real commercial terms we weren't even as successful as The Alarm for God's sake!! And I considered we were better than them, although that's just my opinion folks !! (laughs).

How would you explain The Icicle Works to a complete newcomer ?

The drummer wanted to be Keith Moon, the bassist didn't know who he wanted to be, I wanted to be everybody else and that's what it sounded like.

By aiming for standards such as Dylan or Young, do you set yourself up to be forever frustrated ?

Well, they are benchmarks yes, but I prefer to aspire to those people rather than my contemporaries. I write some songs and I think they are great, even maybe touching on the edge of the brilliance that those people control, but then I will just go off that song. That is very depressing yes, but what happens then is that I think at least I'm having a go. By trying for such high standards and falling short, maybe eventually you'll hit the mark. That is what motivates me.

How much does self-doubt play a role in your life ?

I am completely and constantly doubting myself and everything I do, either musically or personally. One day I think for ten minutes that I'm something worth being, but the very next day I can't even go outside because I feel so under-confident. Most people are like that, certainly creative people. To actually call yourself a songwriter is like standing on a box above people and asking to be kicked in the balls, to invite criticism of the harshest nature. Every time I go on stage I wonder how people will react, if at all. I kind of like that, though, although occasionally I wish I could be more grown up about certain things which worry me. But then I'm a Scorpio.

Is pop music a way of inciting debates ?

I see it as a bit of everything really. It can be something you listen to on your own in a quiet room, very introspective and moody, or it can be Betty Boo. I like some Take That because these things work on different levels. That's largely why I've never made it big, because I can't decide what I want to be. People have a hard time understanding that I just want to make music.

Has the greater success of your Liverpool contemporaries bothered you ?

No, good luck to them, and those people are all very talented. I think the Bunnymen should have been far bigger than they were, I think they are far better than U2 for example. Julian Cope is also an incredible talent. No, I used to be rankled a bit by that, but that's in your early days when you tend to be snotty. I'm quite happy with it now.

What are the constants in so varied a catalogue ?

Just the criteria that I said to you earlier, good songs that you can latch on to, that mean something. Having said that it's cool if they don't mean anything because for example "I Wanna Hold Your Hand" is just as relevant to me as "Strawberry Fields Forever", Kylie Minogue is just as relevant as "Light My Fire". Good songs should be there to make you feel good, or bad, or dance or stand still, but ultimately to react.

What in your terms is success ?

Success for me is selling enough records to enable me to release another album, although ultimately success is happiness.

Suggested Icicle Works Tracks:

1. Birds Fly (Whisper To A Scream) completely changed everything for the band and in that way is very significant.
2. Up Here In The North Of England We were doing this TV show in America and The Bangles were playing this Kimberley Rue song called "Going Down To Liverpool To Do Nothing For The Rest Of My Life" and that pissed me off 'cos they'd never even been there. I thought I'd write a song about Liverpool because I couldn't think of anyone who'd done it since Ferry Cross The Mersey". Some of the song's words rankle me but it's a pretty good indication of the city and it's important to have a song like that.
3. Hollow Horse – had that positivity in the chorus of "We'll be as we are, when all the fools who doubt us fade away". Much of The Icicle Works material sounds quite juvenile to me now, but these three songs are still quite important.

Suggested Ian McNabb Tracks:

- 1 "Child Inside A Father" is me putting myself in the situation where nothing changes. The fact that you are getting older doesn't mean that your potential decreases – I think it is absolutely diabolical that so much is judged around youthfulness and this song addresses that.
- 2 "May You Always" asks people to be themselves, instead of always trying to be somebody, or something, else.
- 3 "Presence Of The One" was not the religious piece people thought it was. It was more spiritual than that. You come into this world on your tod and you go out on your tod, and that song is about being on your own and knowing yourself. If more people knew themselves better, were comfortable with their own soul or spirit and were content with that, there would be a lot less trouble.

Singer aims to hit the charts again . . . with a little help from his fans

Ian's former polan

It's a Tuesday night in Liverpool. It's probably raining, and black cabs are busy splashing puddles all over you as you traipse the city streets looking for a gig to go to.

The Cavern? Not unless you're very, very lucky and managed to get your hands on those elusive Paul McCartney tickets.

So what else is there . . . well, Ian McNabb at the Life Cafe, for a start.

Ian might not have the stature (or the cash) of Sir Paul, but he does have some cracking good tunes, a love of song-writing, and . . . well, you can probably get a ticket to see him, so that's got to be a plus point.

Tuesday is the second of the former Icicle Works frontman's solo gigs at the Voodoosroom; his first is on Monday night. His last show was during In The City, and he decided to do a repeat because "loads of my mates couldn't get in to that one."

You can expect to hear a selection of songs from his previous albums, all done acoustically, and some new work as well.

"It's not easy for someone like me in this country," he says, "you're either Smash Hits or Mojo. I'm too old for Smash Hits, but then again I'm not Van Morrison. The whole climate seems to be against anyone over 25, and songwriting seems to be drying out."

"I was watching TV the other day and some girl was on singing Rockin' Robin - I mean, that was number one when I was 12!"

McNabb's last album was a low-key acoustic affair - but now he's working on "some power pop singles."

"If you call yourself a songwriter," he says, "you should be able to write a song, and get it into the charts. I'm still naive enough to believe that. Cliff did it - but then again, he had Jesus on his side . . ."

The plan - roughly speaking - is to come up with a fantastic single, then make all his fans (he has a database of thousands built up over the years) to go and buy it, which should get it into the charts. Then, of course, world domination. Maybe.

One thing we won't see, though, is a new Icicle Works tour. "You can't give in to the nostalgia thing," says Ian. "If we did it, then loads of people would come first time, then on the second tour, half as many, then even less until it dwindled to nothing."

"Then I would be back to square one - trying to build a solo career, which is exactly what I have now." See Ian in action at the Voodoosroom, Life Cafe, Monday and Tuesday.

SOUNDS
live
 WITH
Debbie Johnson

● Guitar man . . . Ian McNabb set for his acoustic gigs



“I got chiiiiills – they’re multiplyeeeeeng / an I’m looozin con-trowl...”

Ian McNabb doing the song from GREASE in a Bob Dylan nasal whine is a riot and should be on his next solo album – or at least be included in live performances. It should ! It ain’t “Birds Fly” or “Evangeline”, bit it’s wacky, outrageous and hilarious. Sadly, the former frontman of THE ICICLE WORKS restricts renditions of this Jim Jacobs / Warren Casey ditty to when he’s had a few ales at after-hours house parties. McNabb, you see, is still considered a **serious musician**. For someone who still has a name in the music industry 20 years after starting out, and who can still shift a few thousand units when he has a new album, it couldn’t be any other way. In Liverpool he is still a major celeb. When festival boss Tony Wilson wanted someone to serenade VIPs at the swanky Crown Plaza Hotel (ITC HQ on Sunday night of the event), it was McNabb who got the call from the ex-Factory Records chief, then on the Tuesday he walked regally onto the bill for the IN THE CITY closing party at the Voodoo Room, Bold Street. He was relishing the prospect of playing his beloved home city and bringing the curtain down on the ITC event, when I nailed him for this Feedback interview :

“Any gathering of people from outside the city here is a good thing – provided they are not Man United fans ! Liverpool isn’t the centre of the pop world anymore – that happened once in the mid-sixties and for about half an hour in the eighties. No one place can ever be the centre of anything ever again, thanks to the advances of technology. I don’t think there is a “Liverpool Scene”, to be honest. Most of the musicians and artists who used to frequent the city don’t bother now, because it seems to have turned into an all-year-round Lanzarote-style bar scene.” McNabb describes the music scene in general as being “as bad as it ever has been. The industry is in decline due to “the suits” managing to completely eliminate anybody working at a record company who shows any individuality. I think this will change in time, the independents must rise again.”

As much as he might want to, it’s hard for Ian to lay the ghost of The Icicle Works, and he prefers to talk about his present rather than his past. That may be the case, but when I remind him that John Peel (a big fan of the band in it’s early days) once described TIW as the loudest band he had ever heard, he was clearly chuffed. These days, McNabb is a lone musical troubadour, highly respected in the UK and USA, where he cemented his credibility in the early ‘90s by going on tour fronting his hero Neil Young’s former backing band Crazy Horse.

A succession of solo albums have sold well, including this year’s “A Party Political Broadcast On Behalf Of The Emotional Party”. “I write as much now as I ever did,” he says. “Probably more, because I know not to force it now. I’ve been writing during the summer, and I’m starting on a new album for release next autumn. The last one was an intimate, acoustic affair but this one will be back to normal. The next shows I do to promote it will be with a full band.” However, he says there will be no slogging across America to promote it. “It’s a great place to be successful but it takes so much time to tour there. I’m in mid-to-late thirties, I just don’t want to spend a year on a tour bus. I did all that when I was 20 and enjoyed it, but now I have other things I want to do. I still get Christmas cards from Crazy Horse, and providing none of them die I wouldn’t rule out the possibility of us doing something together in the future. I’d love to play Liverpool with them.” I ask him if he got to meet Neil Young: “Yeah,” he says. “Twice. I also met his father in Dublin a couple of years ago!” Beat that!

Thanks to Dave Candler for this article, a version of which he had published in the Liverpool Echo recently.

It should be mentioned that Ian McNabb was seen enjoying the OUT77 "Oh Warhol, Oh Shit!" gig played at the Beluga Bar as part of ITC. So much so that around 1am he asked them to go on again, and got up to jam with Dave, Pete and Matt – with IF Where Ocean drummer Mark Riley filling in for John. Am told that versions of "Gloria", "Daytripper", "The Passenger" and "Jean Genie" were more than recognisable.

Ian McNabb - Live At Life (Fairfield Trading Co)

71 minutes, 44 seconds of Ian McNabb live in concert, from the Life Cafe in Liverpool last December. Kicking off the with classic "Hollow Horse" the first of the seven Icicle Works tracks presented here in stripped down form. Live at Life represents not just a live album but a guy in control of his voice and his instrument, every note played is like listening to a master of his craft. The songs here represent everyday folk like us who aren't as young as we used to be, how the times are definitely a changing. He tells the tales in plain terms without confusing the subject matter for everyone to understand. As a solo acoustic gig, the album shows the more mature acoustic side to Ian's music, there are still times when Ian shows off his influences on a few tracks. Being an acoustic album it doesn't lose any of the songs star quality, they still hit home straight like an arrow through the heart. Just listen to the readings of "When It All Comes Down" and "Reap The Richest Harvest" both now fifteen years old and still sounding as fresh as the day they were written. If this is your first introduction to the words and music of Ian McNabb then you are in for a treat. If you are in the fan club this will confirm what you already know that Ian McNabb is one of England's treasures and will keep us amused till the release of the new studio album "Ian McNabb" is released next spring. Roll on 2001, that's what I say.

LIVE AT LIFE AGAIN

It wasn't the dungeons of the Life Café this time but the main room (going up in the world). But this wasn't an Ian McNabb solo performance, but a charity show with many artists showcasing their talents.

Of the major talent on display Ian was on first. There were also a few other firsts I should think; for one Ian followed a female opera singer, then he was introduced by a transvestite, socialist poet named Chloe Poems !!

Ian's set consisted of all Icicle Works songs: Understanding Jane, Hollow Horse, When It All Comes Down, Love Is A Wonderful Colour and Birds Fly (magic bus) medley, which was of the usual high standard that we have come to appreciate, but not by large sections of the audience who came to talk not listen which was forcefully pointed out later in the evening by Michael Head of Shack.

If you have the opportunity to buy the video - which I believe will be on sale - buy one. Not only will the proceeds be going to a cause well worthwhile but you will also get to see some excellent talent, Thomas Lang and the star of the show Jennifer John amongst others.

Mark Ryan.

Ian McNabb Interview February 2001

A few weeks ago I had a chat with Ian about his activities since the last issue of Camaraderie. I would like to thank him for spending the time with me and for his assistance and encouragement with the magazine. (Sorry about getting your age wrong Ian!)

Ian, thanks for agreeing to do this interview with me. It's great to see so much activity after a very quiet year.

Great isn't it?! I love it.

I'd like to begin by asking you a bit about your new record deal with Sanctuary Records. I know your old mate Pete Wylie is also signed to them, did he recommend them to you ?

Not exactly! But he did tell me there were fans there.

How many albums are you signed up for ?

It's not a record deal - it's a licensing deal. They have Emotional Party, Live At Life and the new one for seven years - then they revert back to me. There is no option on a new record.

I imagine it's a relief to sort out the contractual side and be able to concentrate on getting out on the road and playing in front of us eager fans again.

Yes. I miss it terribly. I was born to rock you know!

How much are you looking forward to going on the road with a full band again? It's the first time since December 1996 when you did the Gak Mummies tour.

It'll rock. We're going to have a party on stage in front of our good friends every night.

Who is going to be in the band with you ?

My buddies - Roy and Mokka, and drummer Geoff Dugmore who played on the album. I thought about getting some new blood in, but I'd have to teach whoever came along the history of rock before I showed them a song. Roy and Mokka know how to play with me - we play at each other's houses for fun when we're drunk - we have radar - we love the same music - they're not afraid to give me as good as I get. I hate it when everyone's scared to speak around you - I've seen that in other bands! We may have a wind player on a couple of the shows.

I'm looking forward to seeing the band & hearing the new tracks played live. Have you formulated your set or will you be using the "human jukebox" approach ?

The set list will include most of the things people want to hear. It's more ordered when there's a band - it has to be, otherwise the rehearsals will last longer than the tour!

Staying on the live theme, what was it like playing the last night of The Lomax last year ?

Great! There were a couple of technical problems - I guess I wasn't meant to play acoustic guitar that night. It didn't spoil the fun though.

I imagine it was quite emotional for you having played there on its opening night and supporting the venue as both an artist and club-goer regularly over the years.

I've been more emotional - it's only a club. There's a new one now anyway which is great.

I'd like to speak about the new album "Ian McNabb". Can you describe the feel of the album to us ?

Very 'up' and electric - the complete opposite of Emotional Party. It's great being able to do both. It's a great record if you like electric guitars - that's all I can say really... It's funny in places too - you don't get that much anymore - bands take themselves terribly seriously these days - you can do both and still be revered.

Who else plays on the album - any special guests this time ?

Liam McKahey from Cousteau sings with me on one track - I shied away from the special guest routine this time - it sometimes detracts attention from the music. I was going to ask Ian Broudie to do a bit but I thought it might look desperate what we me trying to get a deal etc.

Was it good to get back to your "grass roots" after the acoustic project?

I thought the acoustic album was grass roots! I guess you mean a lot of people associate me with anthemic pop/rock - I always feel totally connected to a record while I'm making it - if I don't, I just stop - like I did halfway through Merseybeast - which was the most difficult album I've made (by a mile).

Did you go off the title of "Attitunes" for the new album or might it be used for future work ?

'Ian McNabb' seemed a better title - plus the fact it felt a bit like a fresh start. I'm hoping people are going to end up owning this album who don't own any other Ian McNabb records. Attitunes is a good title but not a great description of the LP as a whole. It also sounds like a new wave band title. I'm not new wave. I don't know what the hell I am - relatively unknown I guess! (still).

How do you feel the album ranks alongside your previous material ?

Oh, it's up there alright. It's a strong record, Emotional Party is hard to beat, but this is strong in a different way. They're opposite ends of the same thread. Both albums compliment each other. Emotional Party makes more sense when you know what's coming after it - the same can be said the other way 'round.

As with the Emotional Party album you have re-recorded some tracks which have been lying in the McNabb vaults for some time. I understand that you are planning a complete album of such tracks for release in the autumn. Can you give us a

sneak preview of some of the tracks you will be including on this outtakes album which you have given the working title "Waifs and Strays".

It will be a 14-track album with some real gems that I'd forgotten about that didn't fit the albums they were intended for at the time. I'll talk about its contents in more detail when we get close to a release date. I like to focus on what I'm doing right now - which is talking up the imminent release. I'm chuffed with the title "Waifs And Strays" it's perfect...

I think it is a superb idea as you have played many unreleased songs at your shows such as "Road Not Taken" and "Me And The Devil". These tend to be one-off performances so for most fans this will be the first time they have heard these songs.

'Me And The Devil' is my favourite unreleased track of mine - a great story song - that's on there - it was meant for 'Merseybeast' - it comes from the same session as 'Little Bit Of Magic' and 'Too Close To The Sun' but then I wrote 'I'm A Genius' and well... You know! 'Road Not Taken' I don't even remember - it couldn't have been much cop - although sometimes I forget I've written a song, as I tend to write so many (not all good either - obviously).

One of the questions I get asked a lot by fellow fans is when will you be releasing a new single. I remember that you were considering re-recording the rock version of Liverpool Girl and putting it out as a single early last year. You also contemplated releasing two further singles in subsequent months in an assault to crack the singles chart. Is this still a possibility or might you put out a single from the new album?

'Liverpool Girl' is on the new album in full rock mode, with a brief foray into house music for eight bars in the middle! I really don't see the point of putting out singles. Artists like me don't have hits unless Robbie Williams covers one of our songs or we're picked for the soundtrack of the big new movie. It's a relief I don't have to do all that anymore - I always hated it so much. Making videos was always the most depressing part of it. You have to get up at five in the morning - I'm not a fucking actor. I became a musician so I wouldn't ever have to get up early again. I'm not going back that way in a hurry. Music should be listened to - not storyboarded.

Can you tell me about playing keyboards with The Waterboys in January. How did that come about?

Mike just asked me. I think he likes being on stage with me.

Was it the first time you have played keyboards since around 1985 with Icicle Works?

No, I play piano almost everyday. If you look at the album credits I think I've played some kind of keyboard on every one of them (apart from the live one).

Whilst on the subject of Mike Scott, I have included an article in this issue about a Travelling Wilburys style band which Mike Peters wants to set up featuring Scott and yourself. Would you be interested at all?

No, we've done this one before haven't we?

Has he actually approached you about it ?

A few times, yeah. Mike Peters is a lovely, sweet guy - but I've never liked his music. It's nothing personal. It's just that when I play with someone, I have to be a fan of their stuff, at least some of it anyway.

If you were setting up such a group yourself who would be your choice of fellow band members ?

I always think you should play with people better than you - it raises your game. I could think of a hundred people I'd play with. I don't know if they'd play with me though.

I believe you are planning another acoustic tour for the autumn. Will this be on a large scale like last time or just playing major cities like the impending band tour ?

I can play more shows as a solo act, because at the level I'm at, I lose money playing with a band. I would like to do maybe as many as twenty shows in the autumn - we'll see what happens. I'm going to do more band shows at the end of the year too.

You said in the "Rights to imagination .." interview in this issue that you still believe in the principle that a good song is one you can play on an acoustic guitar and it will still sound great. You have proved on the last acoustic tour that your back catalogue is full of such tracks. You have already played "Living Proof" from the new album in acoustic form on the Janice Long show. The version on the album is entirely different, being played in the same vein as "Prepared To Dream". Which other tracks from the new album might we expect to hear played in acoustic form in the autumn ?

Well, any of them work in the acoustic format as that's how they started. I'm going to play a lot of new material on the acoustic tour - I love to do that. I've got about 12 new songs I can't wait to play for people - I think my writing is improving all the time - I'm a late bloomer.

How about throwing in "Rockin' For Jesus" in the encore ?!

I might even open up with it.

Another question I get asked regularly regards the re-release of Permanent Damage which was mentioned in Issue 1. As Sanctuary are planning "proper" releases for "Emotional Party" and "Live At Life" towards the end of this year, might we see Permanent Damage and/or other Icicle Works material following suit

Beggars Banquet own all the Icicle Works stuff - they want to do some stuff with the catalogue this year I think, but I find it hard to get excited about the past - especially so far into the past. I also think so much of what TIW's did was, well, shit. Ian McNabb is a much more valid artist than TIW's ever were. I'm also pissed off with Beggar's 'cos they passed on my new album. With regards to 'PD' - what i'm doing now must always take precedence over any re-releases. I have to wade through tons of red-tape to release any of my past albums again - it's too much of a drain on my energies - but I will get around to it at some point - maybe in July! It

really upsets me that you can't get the first three albums anywhere except car boot sales - disgusting. Shame on you Universal - if I suddenly did a David Gray they'd re-release everything tomorrow. It's all about money.

You turned 40 last November, how did you celebrate ?

I'm 38! I drank a bit too much and went to bed - happy. As usual.

It is a psychological milestone or just another year for you ?

It has no effect on me whatsoever. My lifestyle is no different now than when I was 20. You only have one birthday anyway. I'm fit and healthy. I love the life I live and I live the life I love.

Many thanks for doing the interview Ian.

Thanks!

Pspyched (Spiked) - The Secret Underworld Of Alternative Nuggets

In 1999, Beggars Banquet released the above CD compilation of "14 radically different artists compiled into a cohesive whole; the link is guitars and imagination". The Icicle Works track One Time (first released in 1992 on the Best Kept Secrets CD given away with the Best Of compilation) was included and described on the sleeve notes as follows :- "the last track ever recorded by the original band, one of the most successful on this compilation, whose eclectic taste spawned a catalogue of rainbow diversity. This is a take on electric folk and it's a fitting tribute to their 60's roots with Ian McNabb on guitar doing his finest McGuinn-isms".

Bits And Pieces

Interesting to see that You Must Be Prepared To Dream was used on Anglian television whilst screening highlights of Norwich v Ipswich recently. This is reminiscent of when England needed to beat San Marino by seven goals to qualify for the 1994 World Cup finals. BBC1's Football Focus played Hope Springs Eternal during their match preview.

I recently picked up a compilation album entitled A Kick Up The Eighties. Amongst the tracks on volume five was Love Is A Wonderful Colour. The sleeve notes described the track thus :- "Love Is A Wonderful Colour was just the tip of the iceberg; the Liverpoolian trio had been discovered by John Peel , supported Dave Gilmour and Pretenders in USA, and musically remained defiant and uncatagorisable."

In a recent Janice Long interview ex-Alarm frontman Mike Peters expressed his desire to form a British Travelling Wilburys-style band. His choice of accompanying musicians was Mike Scott, Pete Dinklage, and Ian McNabb. Ian has already played on stage with all three of the musicians. He played bass for Mike Scott in 1997 and with Pete Dinklage whilst with Icicle Works. Ian joined Mike Peters for an encore at Liverpool's Lomax in 1996. They played Pete Dinklage's You'd Better Scream, Going Underground by The Jam, Dylan's Knockin' On Heaven's Door and The Alarm's Rescue Me. Mike introduced Ian as "A Scouse Legend"!

IAN MCNABB ALBUM LAUNCH

To launch his new album Ian played a quickly-arranged show at the Cobden Club in London's Ladbroke Grove on March 13th. The purpose of the gig was to showcase Ian's material to members of the press and other media but, keeping to his promise made on the web-site, Ian allowed his fans to be present. Judging by their smart appearance, several fans were on their lunch hour or taking the afternoon off work.

A crowd had gathered outside the venue and at 1.00 in the afternoon (when Ian was due on stage) the soundcheck was still in full swing. The band had rehearsed in London the previous day and were fitting in some last minute practice.

The upstairs room was stylish with mirrored walls at either side and comfortable armchairs in one corner. Complimentary drinks before the show proved very popular and, following the playing of several songs from the Beatles White Album CD, the band were warmly welcomed as they took to the stage at around 1.30.

Ian was accompanied on stage by Roy Corkill on bass, Mokka on guitar and new face Geoff Dugmore on drums. This will also be the line-up for the forthcoming tour. The opening number was Whatever It Takes which Ian described as "A song about self belief and carrying on in the face of adversity". He dedicated the track to Caprice and then added that it wasn't the Sicilian supermodel. This rocky track segued (like on the new album) into another new track What You Wanted. This version, with Roy and Mokka providing backing harmonies, is much punchier and louder than the one previously played in acoustic form.

Whilst Ian was changing his guitar for the next number a waiter came round with trays of hot Indian and Chinese appetisers ! Ian was unaware of this as he introduced Hollow Horse as "a blast from the past". He also quipped "Just to prove we are actually a real pop group we're going to do an a cappella version of Bridge Over The River Kwai – we're not manufactured !" (a jibe at the recent 'Popstars' series) . This crowd favourite was, as ever, well received and Ian kept us "in the same time frame" for When It All Comes Down. He said after the track "it's coming in a lot longer than in rehearsal". (The show lasted 45 minutes but Ian had wanted to play for an hour.)

A further change of guitar gave Ian the chance to introduce the band. He asked "are we still doing old stuff ?" before strumming the opening bars to Camaraderie. It was a nice change to hear this track with drums and a bass guitar accompaniment. Three guitarists and a singing drummer was proving to be a strong line-up. The next track Rockin' For Jesus went down a storm and had the added attraction of Martin Smith on the trumpet.

Another track from the new album followed. Friend Of My Enemy once again had Roy and Mokka harmonising. All too soon it was time for the final number. A false start to Liverpool Girl caused Ian to say "we've got to be professional – this is London!" Ian rounded off the song with his impression of a Liverpool Girl.

The show was a great taster for the new album and tour and was appreciated by members of the BBC as well as Messrs Broudie and MacCulloch. It was still daylight as I headed North and the band were busy contemplating whether to go straight home or stay in London to see the Bunnymen the following evening.

LONG AND LATE !!

In the very early hours of July 19th, on Janice Long's midnight Radio Two show, Ian gave the following interview :-

My career in radio kicked off in 1981 and one of the first people I interviewed was Ian McNabb and it's weird that all this time hence I'm still talking to Ian McNabb. I think that probably every job I've had I've spoken to you

I won't go away !

How are you ?

I'm very well, how are you ?

I'm fine

It's nice to see you.

Lovely to see you as well. What have you been up to lately?

I've just finished an album which I recorded on Ian Broudie of the Lightning Seeds' boat in Richmond. It's actually Pete Townshend's boat and Ian rents it off him. It's very nice and an idyllic location to record a record. I've just been doing that and now I'm talking about it.

You and Broudie have quite a history because you've worked on each other's albums over the years haven't you ?

When Ian decided to start the Lightning Seeds, because Ian was originally just a producer, the original idea was to have guest singers in. Then he decided he was going to sing himself but he wasn't completely confident about doing it. So he asked me if I'd sit in and produce the vocals, which I did. He went on to great success - all down to me ! He's come crawling back to me now grovelling and given me some cheap studio time. It actually wasn't that cheap in the end.

1981 was probably the first time we spoke on radio. The Icicle Works were young upstarts, raring to go, full of aggression, weren't we all !

We're old upstarts now, it's the same thing !

Did you actually think at that point that you would still be doing the round of interviews and what have you 19 years hence ?

No. When I was starting out the Icicle Works when I was about 21, I thought I'd be dead by the time I was 27.

Going to do a Jim Morrison ?

Yeah, and they'd be talking about me in the same hushed tones that they speak about Nick Drake. But unfortunately / fortunately I didn't die so I'm still here talking about what I'm doing, which is fine.

The Icicle Works were described as one of the greatest rock bands around at the time

Yeah - by me !

Yes- did you write for Sounds ?! But they were, weren't they? They were hailed as this great band, real power.

Yeah, we were into power pop. We were a three-piece band and the idea was that we'd be something of a cross between The Who and Rush. We had Chris Sharrock on drums who was a very busy Keith Moon type powerhouse

He doesn't stop now, does he ?

He plays with Robbie Williams now. I'm really glad one of us has gone on to great things ! You know what I mean. The idea was that because there were only three of us, and I used to play keyboards and guitar at the same time - I was a bit of a show-off, I've calmed down now - that we were sort of compensating for lack of members by being really powerful. We used to move around a lot as well, we did all the tricks. I think a lot of bands at that time were sort of standing there and we kind of stood out because we put on a show. I think a lot of bands still do just stand there. If I go and see a group I like to see a lot of action. I like to see people running around and doing scissors leaps off 4-12's or climbing up the P.A!

There were all sorts of things going on at that time. Whilst you had the Icicle Works, you also had the sort of mean and moody set or you had the dance-based groovy hip-looking things like Frankie Goes To Hollywood.

Janice, it's so long ago that I can't remember. There was a lot more variety in those days. Everybody was basically playing guitars and writing songs in many different ways. Whereas these days there seems to be people who are playing guitars and writing songs like for instance Coldplay. Their album has gone straight to number one and they are hailed as a real rootsy group that do things in the traditional way. Most of the things you see on Top Of The Pops now tend to be dancers and really young kids. We had none of that [in those days]. Do you remember Tiffany? She was about 16 and she came up by playing in all the shopping malls.

Like Debbie Gibson, the original Britney.

It was a big deal that there were kids doing it that young without guitars and dancing and all that kind of stuff. Whereas now it must be very confusing to be about 12 because I'd think that the normal is that before you put a record out you've got to be able to dance.

You're so worried about your next dance step

When they do the dance steps they're all worked out in advance whereas when you see the great dancers they kind of busk it a bit. In those days it just seemed more geared around musicians. Am I making any sense here?

You are, you are. I tell you what though we'll have a song. What are you going to do for us Ian?

I'm going to play a new song, a song called Living Proof

I love this, we've been playing this

Which you've been playing. Thanks very much for playing it by the way. This is what it sounds like unrecorded.

I love that track and as I said we've been playing it. This album "Ian McNabb" it's got some great songs on it. What's this one about Jesus ?

Oh, right ! You've just gone straight for the weird one there !

I was thinking "he's a 'born-again' !"

Well, no, that's the comedy track. The thing is that you can't have every track dead serious can you ? You need a break. So I wrote this song called "Rocking For Jesus" which is basically the idea of ,you know there's all those Christian bands - not that I've got anything against it folks- I just thought it was quite a good idea to write a song about a really heavy rock band singing for Jesus. That's what that one is about. Your CD player won't play that one - signs of relief all around the nation !

No, it won't play tracks 12,13 and 14 for some weird reason. Your career has been quite incredible when you think about it.

Well it's been a bit up and down, let's be honest.

Do you get excited about that do you think ?

I'd like it to be more up than down. It's difficult you know, because basically I've always been a singer-songwriter but since the Icicle Works broke up what people tend to do is when a successful band breaks up is either go solo and sort of disappear into obscurity or become massive or start another group. I didn't really want to start another group because the Icicle Works, to all intents and purposes, wasn't actually a group. I think groups should be bunches of people writing songs together, exchanging lead vocals everyone's kind of pulling together. Whereas in the Icicle Works I wrote all the songs and we played them. I just figured that there was not really much point starting another group with another name so I became Ian McNabb. As soon as you become a solo artist singer-songwriter, certainly in this country, people are not sure what to do with you.

Well where do they put you ?

Well people at radio like group names and they like new groups. It's kind of more pop to be in a group. Whereas if you're a guy on your own, obviously there are exceptions for instance Ronan Keating - he writes songs and he sings them. But everybody knows him as the guy out of Boyzone that was this massive band. So it's quite difficult being a singer-songwriter at this time with the music business the way it is at this point now.

So was it a case of adopting Crazy Horse then ?

Well on the second solo album I did the record company that I was signed with suggested that I go to America to record an album and I didn't want to do that. I kind of facetiously said that I had a song that kind of sounded a bit like Neil Young so I said "If you can get me Neil Young's backing band I'll go - tee hee" thinking that that would be the last of it, you know. Then I got a phone call a couple of days later saying "Hey listen we've made contact with them and they haven't said no!" And it was like "Wow !", you know. So that did draw a lot of attention to me because it was a bit of a "Jim'll Fix It" situation - a guy from Liverpool playing with these legends. Because of that it generated a lot of publicity and people, even if they were going to knock it, they wanted to hear it. I got nominated for the Mercury thing that year so that was a real high point. But when I did the record after that which was called Merseybeast, people were like "So who've you got playing with you on this one? Steely Dan?". I thought I'm not going to have a solo career whereby I play with people who are much more famous than I am. So it's been a little bit difficult, you know. I just want to write songs and play them. Hopefully if people get to hear them they like them. Thanks to people like your good self people are getting to hear some of the stuff I'm doing now.

If I can make the comparison between you and Ken Dodd... this is going to sound mad really... but Ken Dodd goes on stage and you can never get him off !

Am I talking too much ?

No, no ! I've been to see several Ian McNabb gigs and they can't get you off, the crowd won't let you get off. I've seen you do in excess of three hours and they won't let you go.

I open the fridge door and do ten minutes ! I went to see Elton John the other night in Liverpool and he was amazing. He's got three hours worth of material and I'd like to think that I've got maybe half as much as that.

That must be such a buzz going out and doing that long

Well if you've got the stuff to be able to go out and do it. In the early days when the Icicle Works used to play we only had an hour's worth of material and then we'd do covers for an hour and if people want to leave they can.

Is there an Icicle Works tribute band ?

There was, actually. There was a band called the Bicycle Works. I started getting these tracks cropping up on my PRS statement and we'd never played them. They were all from pubs in Walthamstow. It was some band called the Bicycle Works and somebody said "do you want to come and see them, I know when they are playing". I couldn't think of a worse thing to do.

When did you ditch the cowboy boots? I've never seen you in trainers !

I wore cowboy boots from 1976 up until ...

About two months ago !

No, actually I've got a pair of Ellesse trainers on now. I was walking down Rodney Street in Liverpool about five years ago and I had my cowy boots on and my tight

drainies - I've still got my tight drainies.

But a Hawaiian shirt ! I've never seen that before !

Hang on, let me finish my story ! There was a bunch of lads and a couple of girls walking down the other side of the street and they looked over at me saw the cowy boots and went "ha ha ha - Jimmy Nail !! ". So the cowboy boots went into mothballs. But they're going to come back because everything does. Perhaps you should ask if anyone who's out there listening to Radio Two is still wearing cowy boots. We should get this back on track.

The last pair I had I sold in one of those garage sales outside your house when you move. I wish I'd kept them now because they were beautiful they really were. They were gorgeous.

Some listeners questions now. What do you think of the state of the music industry at the moment ?

I think it's a bit too orientated towards what the youngsters are after, which I think is fine. But I think there's room for everything. I'd like to see more programmes like this that play a much wider range of music that just "smile for mummy, smile for mummy" music.

That's a good description. What was the last CD you bought ?

Birth, a group called Birth. I think you've actually played one of their tracks. Signed to Hut Records, kind of blue-eyed soul music. Excellent, go get it !

What do you think is the best song of all time ?

Best pop song of all time? Probably either Strange Fruit or Good Vibrations by the Beach Boys.

Really ? Why ?

Because it's the first to capture many different symphonic/classical movements in a 3 minutes 35 pop song. I'm good aren't I !

Who have been your mentors ?

The guy that taught me to play classical guitar when I was 12, Pierre Bethel. Neil Young for his attitude and sticking to what he wants to do and not really listening to anything else that's going on, just getting on with it, believing in what you do.

What did they tell you to do at school ?

Well I was the kid who stood up in school and said "I want to be a rock'n'roll star" in the careers thing and everybody just fell over laughing. So ha ha ha got you !

That obviously didn't stop you ?

No. You know what it's like, people say to you "are you sure about this Janice? Do you really want a career in DJing? It's very difficult you know, you might struggle."

It just makes you want to try even harder.

What kind of education did you have?

Roman Catholic education. I left school when I was 17 and went to music college which was a bit of a cheat really because I'd already been going to music college. It was just a way of not having to get a job. I was great at school until I got in a group - and I got in a group when I was 14. Then it just went out of the window because I was tired all the time because we were playing at the weekends.

How do you actually write songs ? Which comes first lyrics or tune ?

Some famous songwriter always answers this brilliantly and I'll just use his quote. "What comes first? The phone call !" I think Sammy Karn said that. It depends, sometimes it's a mood. I actually get influenced by hearing someone else's great song like when I heard that New Radicals single that made me want to write ten pop songs. It can be anything really.

Final one. When's the new album going to be released & when are you going to tour ?

I'm doing a one-off gig at Ronnie Scott's in Birmingham on August 5th which is part of a songwriter festival. But apart from that I won't be doing any gigs until the new album comes out. Maybe a single before the end of the year.

I've heard it [the album], you'll love it. So you're going to do an Icicle Works track for us now ?

I'm going to do the one that started it all for me, a quick blast of Love Is A Wonderful Colour

Ian McNabb thank you very much indeed

Thank you Janice.

Trying To Sell A CD ?

DUNCAN WYATT is looking for the Understanding Jane cassette single which contains the title track plus several live numbers. He is also looking for (I go) My Own Way 4-track CD single. If you have a spare copy of either of these items then please contact him at :-

GAVIN WILKINSON has various Icicle Works 12" singles for sale. Please contact him at my address for further information.

DAVE HINGLEY has various Ian McNabb and Icicle Works items for sale.

Jean Jacques-Burnel Questionnaire

How long have you been a fan of Ian's music ?

I don't know if I can say I am a fan of the band but I am a fan of the Permanent Damage album, and will listen to more of Ian's work. I've rarely been a fan of an artist more of specific songs, although when you generally appreciate the body of work of an artist I suppose that when you become a fan. Anyway that's my way of looking at it !

Which is your favourite Icicle Works album and why ?

Permanent Damage. When I first heard it I played it to death. It was always being played in my house and as a result represents, now, a certain period. Every song is a strong song.

Have you heard Ian's first solo album "Truth and Beauty" ?

I'll get it at Christmas, OK ?!

How seriously was Ian considered as a replacement for Hugh Cornwell ?

He was one of several names passed about a) because I liked his voice b) because he was a strong songwriter

If Ian had joined the Stranglers, would you have incorporated any of his songs into the live set ?

Probably, but which ones I couldn't say. Why not ?

Describe your first meeting with Ian.

Brief !

Do you think that Ian will ever receive the commercial and critical success that he deserves ?

In a just world everyone gets what they deserve. However,

Who decided to ask Ian to support the Stranglers in 1991. Was it your idea?

Yes.

Have you any other comments that you would like to make about Ian or his music?

All I would like to add is that I send all Ian's fans a big hello and congratulate them on their taste in music. I think it shows courage and "largesse d'esprit" to enjoy something that is not necessarily thrust down your face or being hyped or this month's fashion. Please convey my best regards to Ian and hopefully I will get the chance to meet him again.

P.S. Does he ride a motorbike ?

Probably Ian is sick of hearing about the Icicle Works and Whisper to A Scream. And I could not blame him. He has worked hard throughout his career and made many recordings that I am sure are equally rewarding and worthy of listening. I have not heard much else of the Icicle Works or of Ian McNabb, because I don't think there's much out there that can reach my inner world as "Icicle Works" did. And that's a special place, this inner world. Few records are allowed in. There's four or five now that I've let in. They stay with me.

When I was 17, me and my friends would drive through central Illinois on crisp autumn afternoons, on our way to parties. The thrill of going away to college and the idea of becoming your own person despite whatever price or poverty you must pay to have that. Tremendous freedom. We realized that this passageway full of corn and crows and bumpy gravel roads only meant something greater that stretched across the horizon. The future is a pretty big thing.

On those road trips I remember several records ... the Go Go's first one, U2's War, The Police Synchronicity and Ghost In The Machine, The Clash, Modern English's After the Snow, REM's Murmur, and of course, Icicle Works ... It fit our attitude, punk with a little self-consciousness. Black boots and trenchcoats and a little dye in our hair.

And that was the Reagan 80's. You know, "everybody wants to rule the world". And in the 90's I thought the Reagan 80's were really horrible and dark. But now I realize that maybe a little disillusion is good. Maybe painting a nice picture of what the future could be really is a good thing, despite whatever evil propaganda machinery is behind it.

That is nearing 20 years ago already. It's hard to believe.

Recently, on my way to a meeting, dressed in a nice suit with a little grey in my hair now, I listened to "Icicle Works". It was a long drive too. For the first time I listened intently to the lyrics of "Love is a Wonderful Color". I found myself deeply moved. How beautiful! Here is this song of a young man readying to go on his hero's journey to find love. Love is a pretty big future too. The record keeps revealing itself to me.

And here is this little pop record full of myths and metaphors. What a quiet giant!

Now I am 34. "Icicle Works" has survived the years and has been part of the soundtrack of my life. And when the summer is over, and the air turns crisp there is the smell of burning leaves and the sky turns indigo blue and pumpkin orange, and college students come back to life, and the wool sweaters come out of the little cedar chest at home ... I will take my car out for a nice drive and I will listen to Icicle Works. It's part of a personal ritual for me now. I do it every year. I don't miss the old days, although it may seem like that. I miss the sense of expansiveness. I lose sight of the big future. It's always there, isn't it? So when I listen to "Icicle Works", it is a little map that steers me in that direction. What a terrific gift.

I always found "Icicle Works" to be the sister record of Prefab Sprout's "Swoon" ... There is a spirit, optimism, and daring romanticism to both of those records that I have not found anywhere else in rock or pop music. It really speaks to me. It's so eloquent and evocative. It's like that great infinite horizon wrapping the globe that I believe still exists.

I am so glad this record found a way into my life.

Thank you!

Gene Skala, Chicago, Illinois

With A Little Help From His Friends

As a very big Beatles and Icicle Works fan throughout the 1980's I was pleasantly surprised to discover several links between my two favourite groups.

I was first made aware of this on attending my first Icicle Works gig at Manchester University in 1986. As it was approaching the end of the year, Ian remarked that "1986 has been a very big year for us - and we've had a lot of big years". I immediately recognised this as coming from the Beatles 1964 Christmas Fan Club record - which takes pride of place in my Beatles collection. On meeting the group after the show, I mentioned this to Ian and he seemed surprised that I recognised the source of his remark.

On the 1987 tour, the Icicle Works played a brief riff from "Don't let me down" (from Let it Be) at the end of "Who do you want for your love". Ian also played this track when rehearsing with Crazy Horse in 1994. This also appeared on the "Live at the BBC" CD. Another "live" Beatles-related release was "Cold Turkey" by John Lennon.

My next link came in 1989 again in Manchester. I was attending a benefit for the Hillsborough disaster which the Icicle Works were headlining. Also on the bill was Frank Sidebottom, who joined the group for a rousing encore of the Beatles favourite "Twist and Shout". Twist and Shout was performed several times by the group in the late '80s.

Four other Beatles songs covered by the band were "Nowhere Man", "Get Back", "I Saw Her Standing There" and "You've Got To Hide Your Love Away" (also featured in more recent solo shows). When Ian played with "The Band" (see previous issue of Camaraderie for details), they performed "Helter Skelter". The Beatles connection in the 1980's was complete when Ringo's son Zak joined the band for a while. There was even talk of Ringo covering the track "Permanent Damage" but this project never saw the light of day.

The "Electric Solo" tour of 1993 provided several Beatles references. The live version of "Still got the fever" included a segment of John Lennon's "Imagine" as well as the line "rave on Mr. Lennon". Lennon was, of course, also namechecked in the 1986 single "Up Here In The North Of England". We were also treated to a version of the "white album" track "Blackbird" - complete with whistling! The gig at Hull Adelphi saw a brilliant John Lennon impression during a break in the set. "They said you talk just like the Beatles" was definitely true that evening! Also in this year, Ian performed Lennon's "Working Class Hero" on a Dutch radio station and at Leicester HMV. The only McCartney cover I know of is "Let Me Roll It" (from Wings "Band On The Run" album) which Ian performed on stage with Squeeze in 1998.

Later versions of "Still got the fever" included snatches of "Dig it" - again from the "Let it be" album. It came complete with references to Matt Busby and Doris Day.

The Xmas shows of 1994 provided further references to the Fab Four. Ian remarked at London's Mean Fiddler that he had enjoyed the year because of three Beatles double albums being released. He then continued by playing "Till there was you" - an early Beatles cover which originated from the show "The Music Man". This song was also played at the Lomax gig later in December.

More recently, Ian has included snatches of "Rock 'n' Roll Music" in live versions of Evangeline. This song was played live by the Beatles when they were on tour in Hamburg in 1960 and continued to feature in their sets until their live demise in 1966. Another such song was "Roll Over Beethoven" which was also covered by Icicle Works in the mid-80's.

Also in 1996, Ian included part of "Eleanor Rigby" during "Don't put your spell on me". He also sang "Ticket to ride" on later dates of the tour.

Ever since performing Beatles covers in his first band and entering local talent contests, Ian has continued to show an interest in the Beatles throughout his career. I interviewed in December 1996 him about his interest in the Beatles.

Rich: My name's Richard, pleased to meet you

Ian : Alright, Richard

Rich: I'm writing an article about the Beatles' influence on your live performances. I've seen you a lot of times and there's always a lot of references to the Beatles in them

Ian : Do you think so ?

Rich: Yes, I think so. You know, the "Eleanor Rigby" bits, "Don't let me down", etc.

Ian : Well it's just the songs really, just the songs.

Rich: Were you a big fan when you were younger ?

Ian : Yeah. I got into them when I was about 12.

Rich: I remember when I saw you in 1986 you mentioned the Beatles Xmas record "We've had a lot of big years". Have you got that record ?

Ian : Yeah I've got that. I think all musicians have had an influence on me. I think it's the fact that they had so many great ideas in such a short space of time. They never did the same thing twice. They always did something, thought "great", and then moved on

Rich: Did you see Backbeat the other week ?

Ian : I've seen it before

Rich: They played "Rock 'n' Roll Music" which you include in "Evangeline"

Ian : I'm not a big fan of that one

Rich: It just fits in does it !

Ian : I thought the acting was a bit naff

Rich: You should have been in it! As Paul McCartney ?

At this point the subject changed to matters more current.

This chat underlined that Ian is simply an admirer of the Beatles - a fan. He doesn't feel they have had any particular influence on his career. I'm sure we'll see further Beatles references at Ian's shows in the future.

My comment about Ian pretending to be McCartney came "true" 3 years later as illustrated in the following extract from a review of the second of last December's shows at the Life Cafe.

"The announcer came on. The anticipated Macca joke came earlier than expected as he announced how proud he was that Paul had decided to switch venues and perform for us at the Life Cafe... And on came Ian sporting a Paul McCartney mask and wielding a Beatles style bass with which he performed a very amusing mime to "All My Loving". The mime over, he threw off the mask and asked "Can we all get on with our lives now?" Ian also did another brief impression at February's Lomax show this year.

When asked about the McCartney gig down the road, Ian said

"I think it's a masterstroke! Have you seen the coverage it's had? It's been on ITN Evening News and everything. His album hasn't sold anything so it's a masterstroke".

At the previous night's performance at the Life Cafe, 3 Beatles songs were played before Ian took to the stage. They were It's All Too Much, A Day In The Life and "Daytripper" (also a favourite in jam sessions). Ian had chosen these tracks himself. An earlier benefit gig that year, also in Liverpool, saw Ian perform "All You Need Is Love" with Pete Dinklage at the soundcheck. He then sang a snatch from "Love Life" - the Rutles parody version of the same song.

Ian was asked the following question in "On the Merseybeat" in 1998 :-

"Of course, being a musician from Liverpool, you never know with musicians of later generations whether it's a blessing or a curse to have the Beatles come from this city."

Well when I first started out in a band, which was in about 1975, it was a curse. The shadow that the Beatles cast was just too huge. So everywhere you go if you try to get a record deal or get anybody to listen to you in London they just say "Oh - Beatles" you know. It killed it for us. But then what goes round comes round and then towards the end of the '70s when all the new wave thing went off and you had bands coming through from Liverpool like Echo And The Bunnymen, Wah Heat and Teardrop Explodes, then it was like a baptism of fire. It just killed off the Beatles thing. Most bands were sounding like they came from New York or Los Angeles that came out of Liverpool and then the stigma was broken. The Beatles were very - I don't know if big is the right word - but people didn't speak too much about the Beatles in the 80s. It was a decade where they were always there but there wasn't too much made of it. And then Oasis came along in the early 90s and then that just got a new generation into it and now you can't move for Beatles. The thing about the Beatles was, apart from the fact that they were four very charismatic people who didn't hide behind sunglasses, they actually communicated with people. They had two incredible singers as well as songwriters. I think that's the thing that separates them.

Paul McCartney is a fantastic singer and John Lennon is a fantastic singer. Oasis tend to do the sort of shouty helium Lennon sort of thing and the Beatles never had guitars that sound like that.

I never thought for a minute that Oasis sounded like the Beatles - ever. I just thought that there was that kind of Lennony sort of "waaah waaah" (does nasal Lennon impression) going on which a lot of other bands did before Oasis did it anyway. The La's for one. People love to find something that they can identify with - something from the past- it helps them like something new a lot better.

From Issue 1 of Camaraderie

You were born in 1960. What was it like being brought up in Liverpool at the time when the Beatles were really heavy ?

We loved them. But when I started trying to do a band it was very uncool to sound like them. And we came from Liverpool as well so we couldn't even really acknowledge that. I go into the Beatles around 74-75 - the second generation. I dragged Chris (Sharrock) out to see the La's. Nobody sounded like the Beatles - I still don't think the La's sounded like the Beatles - but that was obviously where it was coming from. The Beatles thing was always there - I listened to them from about 1975 till about 78 and then I was into punk. The Beatles were always there though.

From "The Rights To Imagination And Madness" interview :-

"I got a cheap guitar, started practising and so on, then I started working my way backwards through the entire Beatles catalogue".

"I Wanna Hold Your Hand" is just as relevant to me as "Strawberry Fields Forever", Kylie Minogue is just as relevant as "Light My Fire". Good songs should be there to make you feel good, or bad, or dance or stand still, but ultimately to react."

"However, when "Permanent Damage" came out I was quite narked when it got a little two star slugging in one crap magazine which said "This track sounded like the Beatles, this track was like Neil Young, this track was like so-and-so."

Here are some extracts from reviews to illustrate Ian's point :-

"Tonight you've got the Icies, whether it's in song or just in sound , as The Beatles" - Liverpool Picket 1989

"Shades of The Beatles colour many of the songs" - review of Permanent Damage

"The Beatlesque balladry of Baby Don't Burn" - review of Permanent Damage

"It's as if he's soaked up Lennon in some cosmic rainstorm" - Review of Melanie Still Hurts

"Ian McNabb digs The Beatles and symbiotic harmonies" - review of Truth And Beauty

"Up Here In The North Of England and Understanding Jane showed the influence of McNabb's heroes The Beatles". - Guitar 1990

"Little Girl Lost is lazy pop reggae with a George Harrison solo" - NME 1988

"Full of crafted melodies and Beatles influenced songs" - review of Truth And Beauty

Some quotes from Ian about The Beatles :-

"The only British band I listen to is The Beatles" - Guitar 1990

"When I listen to I Still Want You it sounds like me trying to do a Beatles riff in the way The Byrds would have done it" - Guitar 1990

"I've never been able to get out of black drainpipes and Beatle boots"

"I've always wanted to make songs as important as "Hey Jude" - NME 1991

"Brookside has replaced The Beatles as people's idea of Liverpool" at T&C gig 1986

"Liverpool Girl is meant to be an update on the old folk song 'Maggie May'" (this track is on The Beatles "Let It Be" album)

Some extracts from interviews where Ian discusses The Beatles :-

Ian contends Merseyside bands have only been allowed to display Beatleish influences since "There She Goes" by the LA's. Recent local bands he finds "a bit retro, they seem to be going for it in a Rutles-type way". Ian illustrates this comment with his dead-on Ron Nasty impersonation and a few bars from top Rutles hits "A Girl Like You" and "Cheese And Onions". - NME 1991

What do you think of the Paul McCartney drugs bust ?

"It's ridiculous, The press have made it into such a big thing, even though loads of people smoke dope. It's probably because he's always had the golden boy image" -1984.

From Guitar 1990 :- What records particularly influenced you as a guitar player?

"Revolver by The Beatles because I think it's one of the best guitar albums ever. It was that period when The Beatles were moving from being a pop band into an experimental rock band. It was the first time that anybody had heard that overdriven, jangly guitar sound. It's very easy to get a heavy sound, but to get that inbetween jangle is the trick of great guitar noise. It was also before they went overtly psychedelic, so it's still a 'guitar' album. 'Sergeant Pepper' is a great album, but not really a guitar album.

"A charity record for a project for heroin addicts. "We only came to meet Paul McCartney", a hero of Ian's who was reported to be appearing, but didn't" -1987.

In an A-Z article of favourite things, Ian chose H- Henry the Horse (Mister Kite) (from the "Sergeant Pepper" album)

When asked to choose his "Favourite Riffs", Ian described his choice, The Beatles track "And Your Bird Can Sing" thus:- "Some of George Harrison's stuff is bloody awful - the intro to Roll Over Beethoven anyone could have played better than George - but from '65 to '67 he got this great razor-like sound just between clarity and distortion. This is also one of the first tracks to feature harmonic lead runs and considering how primitive technology was back then, this still sounds great".

Tour Of Liverpool Article in LM magazine 1987 :-

We head for Mathew Street and The Cavern. I decide to try a different line of chat. All Scousers love the Fab Four, so here goes: Are you all Beatles fanatics?

Chorus:"No!"

Singer Ian McNabb adds, "We've all been through the stage of really liking them, but you grow out of that. Like, I was about 14 and really into them when everyone else at school was playing Black Sabbath and T-Rex and stuff like that"

Julian Lennon?

"We don't like him. He's trading in on his dad. Cashing in - absolutely. He can't help for being who he is and sounding like his dad, but if he wasn't Julian Lennon I don't think the kids would be interested. He's not really had many stunning songs, has he? He's got about as much writing ability as Cynthia Lennon." The new Lennon album's called Menlove Avenue and at the bottom it's got "John Lennon was born and raised at 251 Menlove Avenue". I mean, imagine it's like your house now. It's actually got signs outside saying Keep Away. You go down there now and you see loads of Japanese out the front click-clicking with their Toshiba cameras, or whatever. You get Beatles tours all over the city, full of tourists. You wouldn't catch a Scouse on one of them, though."

Beatles Auction article from Vox :-

Ian McNabb has volunteered to act as Vox's bidder. "I've never been to one of these before", he admits. But McNabb is a Fabs fan and knows his Apples from his Au Pairs. "I had all those Beatles Monthly magazines. Wish I'd kept them now. When we first toured America with Icicle Works, they all kept saying 'New Beatles'. Very flattering, I suppose, but it didn't exactly translate into sales". McNabb's management offices are opposite the Christie's auction rooms in South Kensington, and he once did try on John Lennon's glasses - "They were like the bottom of bottles, he must have been blind." Eventually, Lot 549 comes Ian's way : a £1 note signed by Paul McCartney is Ian's for a mere £120. "Pound notes don't exist anymore," he explains later, "Paul McCartney is the richest man in pop, so I thought an extinct note by the richest man in pop was highly desirable." A lock of John Lennon's hair sells for £650 - in saleroom terms, Paul is worth just £170, while Ringo and George's follicles are valued at a mere £160. "They're still growing theirs, I expect," reasons Ian. As Lot 541 comes up for grabs, McNabb becomes suddenly agitated: "A pink, girl's vanity case with the four Beatles on the outside lid with facsimile signatures over each image." He's bitterly disappointed at losing it. Later, he's close to tears as he watches a Beatles blanket and napkins go under the hammer.

Auction frenzy strike and McNabb makes a personal purchase: a framed copy of Paul and Linda McCartney's wedding certificate. "I wanted it because they've been married for so long," he reasons, "and this is a souvenir of a marriage that's an example to us all."

His jubilation soon turns to misery, however, when a set of Daily Express psychedelic Beatles posters are sold for £150. McNabb's own copies hadn't survived all the moves and follies of youth. Still, he's not bitter". "If I had real money, I'd like to own Lennon's lyrics to 'A Day In The Life'"

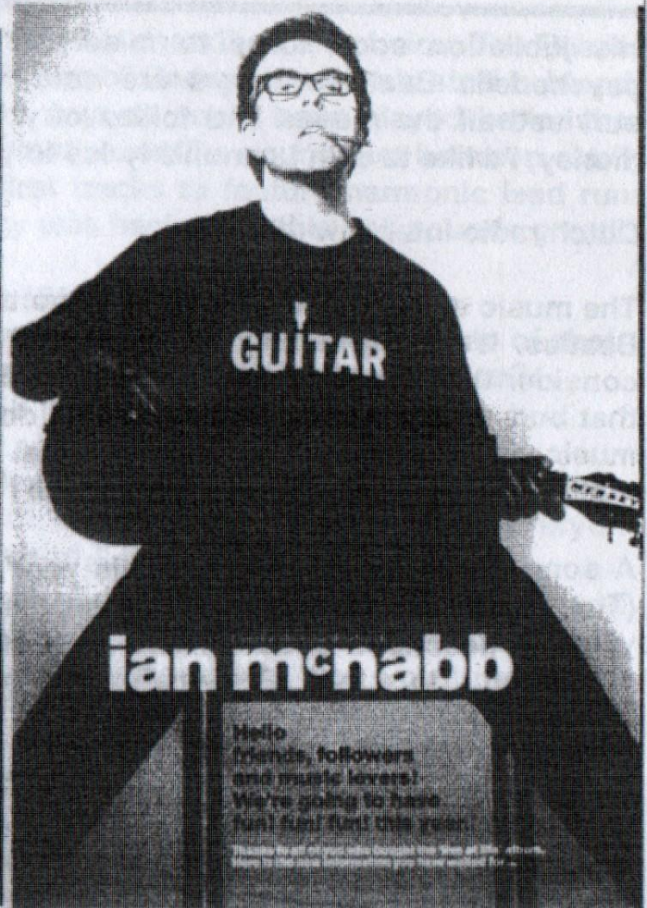
Dutch radio interview 1993

The music scene doesn't seem as vibrant as it was ten years ago, listening to The Beatles. It's a frightening body of work that The Beatles have got, when you consider that they started producing class music in '63. By '70 it was all over and that body of work was just incredible. I don't think that anyone who's into popular music can deny the power of their songs. They're not the main thing - I'm a big fan of all kinds of music. But that was where I got on board.

A song given it's live debut at this year's Ronnie Scott's show was "Rollin' On (The Things We Gave Away)". When Ian recorded this track in demo form last year, he described it as follows :- "Beatle influence present and correct (not something I do a lot)". Personally, it is reminiscent of the track "Because" from "Abbey Road".

Finally, in an interview with my local radio station (Radio Cleveland) in 1996, Ian was asked to select tunes for their "Hatches, Matches and Despatches" regular feature. The song he chose for his "despatch" was The Beatles track "Penny Lane", "reminding him of his native virgin soil".





ian mc'nabb

Hello
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fun! Fun! Fun! this year.

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THE LAST NIGHT AT THE LOMAX

Hello,

I've just recovered from seeing Ian last night, and I thought that I would put finger to key to let those that didn't make it envious of a the top show that Ian put on.

Ah well, the wait was finally over for me, after catching Ian numerous times over the last few years doing solo acoustic shows, this was the 1st time since the 'Merseybeast' tour that I have seen him playing with a full band. And boy have we been missing out ! Although during his acoustic shows he still manages to entertain and excite you, there are some things that are meant to be - and Ian is meant to be a rocker !!

After watching the excellent ' Real People ' open the evening and stir up the crowd, it was time for the ' night to begin '. Opening up with the customary 'Hollow Horse', Ian then proceeded to run thru some old classics such as 'Love is a' and 'Birds Fly' with the usual medley in the middle. He then launched into an absolute shit kicking version of ' When It All Comes Down ' with a guitar solo from heaven. All of this was suitably impressing my bird who was making her McNabb debut. So far so good. Then as Ian prepared for a spot of acousticness, gremlins set in with the equipment, so we were advised by Ian to " get a drink and return in 10 mins".

On his return there was still no joy with the gear, so after a short outburst of expletives, Ian summoned the band to re ignite the show. And boy, if any song is going to do it, it's going to be ' Fire inside my Soul', it seemed to be played with extra determination to rock the house and this then set the tone for the rest of the show. ' I don't want to talk ', ' Evangeline ' and 'What she did to my mind ' all received the same treatment which got the crowd right where he wanted them, he even treated us to an ' Ozzy Osbourne ' ditty (in jest).

Next to come was a couple with Ian alone singing 'Little girl lost ' and the Dylan classic ' Mr Tambourine Man ', and you could sense the finale was going to be something else. A cover version of The Doors gem 'Roadhouse Blues ' (1st time I'd heard him do this one) complete with bottleneck guitar set the scene and had the crowd suitably bouncing to plunge for the killer ' Understanding Jane ' and the night just kept on going. I can honestly say that of all the shows that I have seen, Ian looked to be having more fun at this one and really enjoying being the top rocker that he is.

Why this man has never received the acclaim that his outstanding talent deserves is as much a mystery to me as it no doubt is to him. After the typically rousing, crowd singing ' Stone my soul ' Ian invited the manager of the Lomax onto the stage to give a speech as this was the last ever concert their due to a venue change. He thanked Ian for all the support that he had given to the club from the outset, and in helping to establish it as a venue that made a real impact on the local music scene. With the pleasantries finished Ian proclaimed " This is the last song ever to be played at the Lomax, keep supporting me and I'll keep supporting you" and with that he gave us a version of 'Keep on rocking in the free world' that Neil Young could only ever dream of.

What a night , what a star.

Andy Fletcher

