

WILDE AND WOODY

Christmas is coming, and tradition dictates that means the mighty Status Quo will be touring. This year the boys are once again out on the road, but on a package tour aptly titled Quo-Fest 2011, which sees the veteran boogie rockers supported by a couple of other big names, in the forms of Roy Wood and Kim Wilde. Intrigued by the line up, James Gaden decided to investigate - he placed a call to a man who, as a friend of Roy Wood, former band mate of Kim Wilde and bass player for Quo for the last twenty five years, was uniquely positioned to be able to talk about all three. That man is John "Rhino" Edwards, and the affable bass player, fresh from a live Status Quo concert broadcast on Radio 2 the night before, was in talkative mood...

It's very nice to speak to you -
Yeah, I know. (laughs)

(Laughs) No, the reason I say that is because now I've got the chance to talk to you, it means, with the exception of Matt Letley, Jeff Rich and Pete Kircher, I've interviewed everybody in Quo. And I don't care about them, they're drummers. (Laughs)

Oh really? Oh, you'll have interviewed Andrew (Bown) recently then?

Yeah, I did, a few weeks ago.
He's got a great album out hasn't he?

It's brilliant, I really like it.
Yeah, I'm really thrilled for him, because he's such a nice bloke, is Andrew. He's a really good friend of mine.

I'd never spoken to him before except to simply say hello to, backstage at Quo once, so I wasn't sure how he'd be in an interview, how open he'd be...
But he's funny as fuck isn't he?

Yeah, absolutely! I think you guys were in Germany when I rang and some of the anecdotes he told me were great!

Yeah, it's safe to say Andrew has lived!

Yeah, for sure! I loved his solo album, I enjoyed Francis' stuff and his DVD, the Quo camp has been pretty prolific of late, with those products alongside a great new Quo album...

I start mine on December 27th. I did do a solo album before, years back...

Yeah, 'Rhino's Revenge' in 2000.

Blimey! You know more than I do! I've decided to do a new one on December 27th. It's bizarre, my band is all members of my family and my drummer is my nephew, so I have to base it around school time! (laughs) But they're cheap, that's the main thing! Anyway, what can I do you for then James?

Well, the main reason I was given for speaking to you was to put some press together for the upcoming Quo-Fest shows in December. And while I had you on the phone, I thought I'd get your opinion on the new 'Quid Pro Quo' album. It seems to have impressed a lot of people and sold a lot better than the last few records... I've said to Francis and to anybody who will listen, I loved the last few records, more so than the classics. I thought they were much stronger records, song for song.

Really? Oh, it's you, you're the one! (laughs)

(Laughs) That's me! But the point I make, is I think the classic albums get judged on the classic tracks they contain... for example, people say 'Whatever You Want' was a great album because 'Whatever You Want' is on it... but the rest of the tracks are mixed - it's not like the newer records, where I think the album is strong throughout.

Oh, I couldn't agree with you more. I have no problem saying this, I think every Quo album there has ever been, ever, have duff tracks on. And believe me, I've heard them all. Even the albums that only had eight tracks had some duff ones.

Since you've been in the band, I think from 'Heavy Traffic' onwards, the song writing was much, much more consistent.

Well, I can't say that that's down to me being in the band particularly, but I think most of the credit should go to Mike Paxman. He encourages everyone to do what THEY wanted to do. Before, with Pip Williams, it was a bit like... for example, we'd ask Pip which guitar he wanted on a certain track. He'd then suggest a guitar for a certain guitar part - fair enough, that's Pip's way of working. But with Mike, he won't tell us what guitar to use or what part to play. But he will tell you what sounds good and what doesn't. On a personal level, he's my closest friend anyway, but he really encourages you to put more of yourself into the process, instead of what you think it should sound like. So you get a collective input from the full line up.

I've seen this line up many times live and I think it's the tightest and strongest Quo line up I've ever seen.

Yeah - Alan Lancaster came to see us in Australia and he's a really nice chap. He said it's more of a show now, but he was complimentary about it. He said it was different from the band he was in, but it was a really good show.

Yeah, I interviewed him when the 'Live At The BBC' box set came out and he said the same to me, that it's not a tribute band, it more like a show which celebrates the band he was in and plays their music. He had nothing bad to say, nobody would blame him if he wanted to stick the knife in, but he didn't, he was very enthused about it.

Yeah, they've buried the hatchet, those guys - and not in each other's heads, I hasten to add! (laughs)

I do think you can take credit for the opening song on 'Quid Pro Quo', which is 'Two Way Traffic' that you wrote with Francis. That's superb, that harks back to the 'classic' Quo sound to me.

Do you know, I'm really pleased you said that, because I think it's fucking awesome! When I write with Francis, he sets me off. He comes up with something - for example, with 'The Oriental', which we still play now, he came up with that great lick. I went round his house and he's very clever, he'll come up with an idea and not know what to do with it, but he will know exactly who to give it to to finish, whether it's Andrew or me or whoever. He knew 'Two Way Traffic' would work for me the same as 'Rock And Roll And You' would work for Andrew. He gave me the basic idea for 'Two Way Traffic' and then I went away and wrote it. It's a co-write because the bit he gave me was so strong, I wrote the rest around it. It's a bizarre way to write, but it really works for us two.

I thought that had that energy you'd associate with that classic 'Frantic Four' line up with Alan and John Coghlan, but it still sounded fresh. I heard it live last night when you did the concert on Radio 2 and I thought it rocked.

Oh, brilliant! I can't listen to us live, literally the only thing I've ever seen of us live was when we did Glastonbury and it was on the telly. My kids were watching and they said I had to come and check it out. I watched it and thought yeah, it's really good. But normally I never listen or watch stuff back from live performances in case it pisses me off! (laughs)

Out of the three new ones you played, I thought that one made the transition to the stage with utmost ease.

I hope it gets a run in the set. We're on the A-list for Radio 2 which I think is quite radical.

I said to Francis when the album came out, I think the energy of the new album, combined with

the fact you're visible in Tesco has made people realise you're still there, still making new music.

Oh yeah, absolutely. I don't want to use the phrase 'wilderness years', but we're very fortunate that we don't have to concern ourselves too much - we're probably bigger here than anywhere, but it's a close run thing now with Germany, and Sweden, where we are heading tomorrow. We're touring France a lot to rebuild it, because we lost that as a "territory" - God, I hate using those business words! We play smaller gigs there to build it up again. But those 'wilderness years', there wasn't much cohesion on the records like this one - which is weird, because this record was produced by two different people! But that's down to our amazing engineer, Greg Jackman. He's got such attention to detail.

When I listened to the gig last night, I thought all three new songs fitted in well. Is three the number you're looking at including for the Quo-Fest, or was that more for the benefit of the radio audience?

I would imagine three will be the limit, I hope we don't clump them together like last night, I don't like doing them all in one bit. If people don't know the album, you'll probably find the toilets are quite full and the bar is rammed then! I hope they stay in, I don't see any reason not to have them there. Although it is called Quo-Fest, that is our "latest fab release" so we'll have to promote it with some tracks.

Who has the final say on the setlist then, Francis? Rick?

It's difficult. I actually put a new set together last year, or the year before, and we went out and played it. After one gig, both Francis and Rick said no, they didn't feel it worked and they weren't happy with it. We have certain songs we have to play, we're not the kind of band who say "Oh yeah, this is our new album that comes out next week - we're playing all of it and finishing up with the B-side of our fifth single". We're not like that, people come to see status Quo for a good time and they want to know a good chunk of the set. So it makes the bits you can alter very tough, it's not like we only have another five songs to choose from!

(Laughs) Well it's a bit more original than 'Must try harder'.

Yeah, mine just said 'Must try'. (laughs) But the tour... Roy Wood, when he leaves the stage there's a warmth, and almost tangible feeling, a palpable warmth when he's been in the room. It's such a pleasure to go on after Roy. He doesn't take anything away from us, everyone just goes 'Wow, that was really good, now let's have the Quo to top it off'. It's great. I think Kim will surprise a lot of people, just think how many hits she's had. We worked with her a few years ago and she was really good.

I think she is one of those artists, when she goes through her catalogue, people will think 'Oh yeah, forgot about that one... and that one..'

Exactly! She did 'Chequered Love' - what an amazing song! Apart from anything else, I was in her band for eighteen months, and she's supporting me now. (laughs) I really like Kim, I get on really well with her. I've done a lot of stuff with her - I've been around the block!

Did you ever envisage you would be in a band full time when you were working as a session musician? Was that what you wanted?

I always knew I'd end up in a big band, I've always had that inner belief. I've always known that when the chance came along I'd be good enough. I've paid my dues - that's difficult to do nowadays but I've played my fair share of toilets - more than my fair share! I've done gigs where it's cost me to play. That's my only thing now - if you want me to play in your pub, do some covers with some mates of mine, I'll do it as long as I come home with more than I left with and I've been fed and watered, that's good enough for me. I do this for the music.

Yeah, it's really sad when bands do stuff for the money - and you can blatantly tell it was just about the money.

I saw a band that reunited just for the money and you could tell they guys didn't like each other and that it was purely money. That's taking the piss out of the fans. That, and I thought they were crap!

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Christopher Guest.

I'm a big Michael McKean fan, everything I've seen him do has been brilliant.

Absolutely! But I digress, back to Kim... I do digress a lot, my school report said 'Possesses a mass of irrelevant information which he chooses to impart to the whole class at random'. That geezer had me down!

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'Two Way Traffic' and 'Rock And Roll And You' both seemed to be well received. 'Let's Rock' was a bit mixed.

Well, it... it is a bit pants! (laughs) It is, but it isn't... I mean, how do I phrase it? It's trite and banal, but I fucking love it! (laughs) As far as I'm concerned, good rock music has to have a bit of 'duhhhh' about it. And that has got shit loads of 'duuuuuuuuhhhh'! It could be better, I don't think the words are that good, it's a bit too gonzo in places, but I love it! It's great fun to play!

When I got the album and I saw there was a track called 'Let's Rock' and it was written by Rick, I already had a preconceived idea of what it would be, but it was different to what I expected, having the horn stabs in there and stuff. But I couldn't help but like it.

If you heard the demo, you wouldn't believe the difference. Oh yeah, Mike's such a great guy. They did the demo and it really wasn't very good. Mike said 'there's a guitar line in the middle eight that the guy Rick wrote it with plays, that is really good'. So that track, funnily enough, was put down originally with just me and Francis and I was playing guitar. It was fantastic. I was jamming with Francis Rossi! It blew me away! We were in his studio, just to get the feel, before the band came in, trying to get the right parts and the right vibe. Mike had really messed around with the song. So there was just me and Francis, Mike, Greg the engineer and a drum machine. I'm a bit in awe of Francis because he's a charismatic guy and I'm coming up with stuff and looking at him, he's looking at me and I thought 'Fuck me, I'm jamming with Francis Rossi!' (laughs) It was quite a moment! That was another box ticked - jam with Francis Rossi, check! So we messed around with it, then everyone else came in and we messed around with it some more.

I couldn't find one I didn't like off the album, so I don't care which three you play, but I'm really glad 'Two Way Traffic' made it. I expected 'Rock And Roll And You' because it was the lead off track. But for the third one you could've picked any of the others.

I'd have liked to have played 'Dust To Gold', that's my favourite song, but as Rick said, we could play that, it'll only take three weeks rehearsal! (laughs) But that track, for me, is, along with 'Two Way Traffic', the best things I've done with this band. I'd like 'Dust To Gold' to be our next single, but I think there's more chance of being hit by lightning.

Well, it's not like singles matter anymore these days.

No, they don't. I'm amazed we have a forum to be honest, because I'm amazed any of our punters have got computers. (laughs) In their caves. (laughs) No, I'm joking, I don't mean that, we have the best fans any band could have, because we've given them some shit records over the years in my opinion. Things like 'Perfect Remedy' and 'Thirsty Work'... for me, personally, they are poor records. They are singer-songwriter records, not Status Quo records. I think the turning point was 'Under The Influence', that was when we made it right as a band.

That was a good one. 'Heavy Traffic' was awesome, 'The Party Ain't Over Yet' I really liked, but I think some people felt there was a bit more of Francis' pop side on that one, 'In Search Of The Fourth Chord' was very good... I really like 'Thirsty Work', but I do like Francis' solo side and like you say, that was more of a Francis record than a Quo record. So while it suited me, I can see why some fans weren't keen.

My son is now playing guitar in Francis Rossi's solo band you know!

Yeah, Freddie... he's good as well! The St Lukes gig Francis filmed for the DVD, I was invited to that and I went - I really enjoyed it.

I tell you, my Freddie is a motherfucker of a guitar player. Isn't it weird, my son is, no shit, my favourite guitar player! We've got a little band together and we go off and do gigs - I just love working with him! Go on Freddie, do a solo and I just think Jesus Christ, he's amazing. He has that knack of playing the right notes at the right time. That's a gift. You can play loads of notes, but if they aren't at the right time, then you're crap.

I said to Francis, when I saw the line up with his son on guitar, your son on guitar, Francis on guitar... that's a lot of guitars! But it worked brilliantly.

It did, didn't it? I saw it in Amsterdam when he took the show there, and absolutely, all the guitars really worked well together. It's a good show. He knows what he's doing... but he's been at it long enough to have sussed it out!

Finally, you've always struck me as-
A twat? (laughs)

Well, I was going to say a roots rocker, but if the cap fits...
(Laughs). Sorry, I struck you as a rocker?

Yeah, so what sort of music are you into outside of Quo? I've already learned you have a big appreciation for Roy Wood and you rate Kim Wilde.

Yeah, I'm not into a lot of new music. I used to be, I keep my finger on what's going on, but I don't like Adele and stuff like that, that's not for me. I really like Frank Zappa and Steely Dan. But I also like thrash, I like Anthrax and Slayer. It's gotta rock, really, whatever it does, it's gotta rock. Rock music and blues are really my main things, which is odd as I have a scholarship from playing the violin! The Beatles onwards, that stuff... to nutshell it, I'd say really white rock, or really dirty black blues. People like Leadbelly. I think you can hear on my songs that I like the blues. Like on 'Reality Cheque'. I don't try to copy blues, as I said earlier, I'm heading out on a private plane to Sweden, I'm not exactly getting bitten by ticks in Alabama! I really like that kind of thing and I hope I'm not insulting blues artists with my efforts.

'Reality Cheque' would be a good choice to put in the set in favour of 'Lets Rock' if you wanted one for Rick to sing.

Yeah, but those three were the obvious choices I think. The pluggers wanted those songs in that order as well, so it seems to be working. I did an interview for a show a while back and the guy texted me to tell me that he loved the new single. Where are you based James?

I'm in Hull.
Hull. Wow.

Yeah. Quo have done some memorable gigs in Hull City Hall. I think we hold the record for the fastest ejection ever from one of your shows - a pogoing idiot thrown out before you've even hit the chorus of 'Caroline'.

(Laughs) Oh yeah! And I think you hold the record for the most cancelled gigs as well! Last time we were there, I went off to a pub up the road and I asked for a glass of red wine, as I am Rhino the Wino. They said 'oh, we don't sell wine'. What? I couldn't believe it! I know I'm a southern Jesse, but... Fish and chips isn't bad in Hull. The one by the big TV screen in the town centre isn't bad. And I bought a guitar there in the shop opposite. And a ginger wig. (laughs). I remember that really well for some reason! Hull's had a lick of paint since I was last there hasn't it?

Yeah, but you can't polish a turd. Once we get rid of the chavs, the single teenage mums, the speedbumps and the pound shops, we might be halfway there.

(Laughs) There are a lot of pound shops there, I'm a pound shopaholic. I've even got a badge saying 'I Love Pound Shops' on my guitar.

I do recall being in one once for some batteries and a woman at the till took an item to the cashier and asked how much it was, which sort of sums up a lot of the people who live here.

Brilliant! (laughs) I'm looking forward to the tour, are you coming?

I'll do my best, it's a Christmas tradition with me, to see Quo.

It's a pig to get to anywhere from Hull though, isn't it? Do you get a lot of bands coming there?

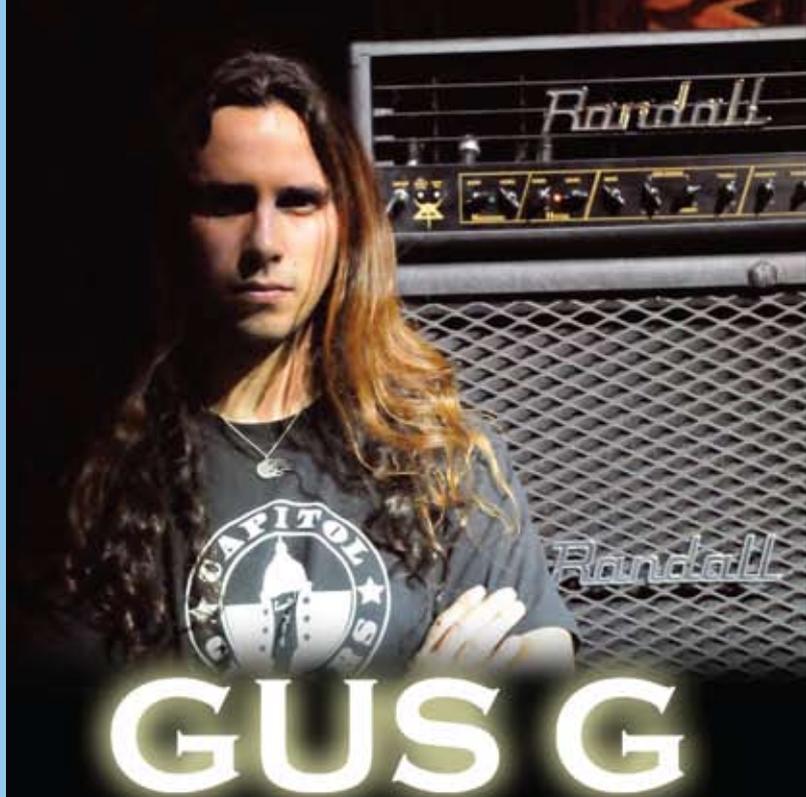
A lot of the City Hall bookings are mostly tribute acts at the moment. We've had some decent people play the stadium - Bon Jovi, Elton John, Bryan Adams, The Who... the trouble is, they play once and never come back!

(Laughs) I know a bit about the City Hall itself, I know it got bombed in 1941 and was rebuilt in 1948. It has got a really shit backstage though. Shit. It's like out of Loveboat or something, it's got those gas fires with the three big burners - oh, it's crap. But other than that, I love it! Hope you can make the tour, I know I've got to say this, but I mean it, I think it'll be a special one and I think Kim in particular might surprise quite a lot of people. Hope to see you there!

QUOFEST 2011 DATES

Sat Dec 3rd - Birmingham LG (NEC) Arena
Sun Dec 4th - Sheffield Motorpoint Arena
Wed Dec 7th - Nottingham Capital FM Arena
Fri Dec 9th - Brighton Centre
Sat 10th - Cardiff Motorpoint Arena
Sun 11th - London O2 Arena
Tue 13th - Bournemouth BIC
Wed 14th - Plymouth Pavilions
Fri 16th - Newcastle Metro Radio Arena
Sat 17th - Glasgow SECC

For booking information, visit www.livenation.co.uk or
www.statusquo.co.uk



Gus G is a famous guitar hero hailing from Greece. At 18 he left Europe to go to college in America but soon left that to concentrate on making his mark in the music industry. In 1998 he formed his own band Firewind. Since then the band has released 6 studio albums and 1 live album. Gus is now also the guitarist in Ozzy Osbourne's band. Dave Scott got a chance to sit down and chat with Gus a few hours before the band kicked off their European tour in Southampton.

When you first started Firewind back in 1998 did you envisage it becoming the permanent and successful band that it's become?

Well obviously I wanted the band to have longevity. I wanted it to be around for many years, and yeah, I'm very pleased that we're still here. We have made all these albums and were able to do our own tours around the world. It's definitely a good feeling.

Where did the band's name come from?

It came from Uli Jon Roth's album 'Firewind'. It was from when he formed his own band Electric Sun. Their second album was called 'Firewind' in 1980. I always liked that album in fact I liked all the Electric Sun stuff and I liked that title. I thought it would be cool for a band name that's why I used it.

If you had to suggest one track which best sums up Firewind to someone who doesn't know the band, which would you pick?

It's hard to say, we've had different eras in our sound. The first couple of albums are different, with a different singer. Then we did 'Forged by Fire' which is a bit more of a power metal album. Then we moved slightly towards a commercial rock kind of sound. And now were going back to playing heavier stuff.

I did think that with the new album, there's definitely a slightly heavier tinge to the music.

Yeah, and the next one is going to be even heavier. It's gonna be the heaviest thing we have ever done. I don't know if we can sum it up with one track. You know I think maybe the song 'World On Fire' from the latest album is a pretty good example of how we sound.

You also played guitar in another popular band Dream Evil. Was it a difficult decision to leave that band to concentrate on Firewind? Or was it an easy one given that Firewind is your own project?

At that time it was a hard decision to leave because there were feelings involved, they were my friends. I had also played in Dream Evil since I was 19 years old. The guys were really good friends, they helped me out with a start in the music business. I did my first tours with them, my first success in the music business with them. So it was tough to leave that. But at the same time, I knew it was the right thing to do. There were no second thoughts about it because they were not the most serious band. I was surprised we were having that much success. You have to remember the other guys had well paid day jobs; Frederick was busy with his studio. The other guys also had kid's wives etc. They were not really a touring band either; they didn't want to tour at all. I was like 23 years old and wanted to conquer the world. So I knew it was the right thing for me to do, to move on.

You recently won the "Best Shredder" award at Metal Hammer Golden Gods 2011 for your work with Ozzy and Firewind, what did winning this award mean to you?

Yeah it was unexpected actually; I didn't think I'd ever win something like that. I'm very proud of it because it was a contest voted for by the fans. So I guess it means if you really stick to your guns, work hard at it for years and believe in what you do, the fans