



SOMEONE'S LEARNING...

James Gaden interviews Status Quo originals Alan Lancaster and John Coghlan

As long standing British institutions go, you aren't going to be able to top Status Quo. For forty years their brand of boogie rock have made heavy impacts on the charts, embedded themselves into everybody's subconscious and woven a spell over all who has heard them - resulting in the unwitting listener having no choice but to tap their feet to the Quo's trademark shuffle. With 28 studio albums to their credit, thousands upon thousands of live shows and countless hit singles, the band in conjunction with the BBC have released a set documenting their various appearances on the British Broadcasting Corporation over the years, both on radio and TV. Available as a two disk, four disk or deluxe eight disk set, the amazing set spans 1966 - 2005 and includes recordings of the band as The Spectres and Traffic Jam, before they became the Quo we all know and love. To celebrate this set and talk about the old days, I phoned up original members Alan Lancaster and John Coghlan. Both were more than happy to talk about the band and I found out plenty I didn't know as Alan in particular was keen to dispel some Quo "facts".

It's great to talk to you - I'm a long term Quo fan, so it's great to be able to add you guys to the list of people I've spoken to. I've met all the current line up, interviewed Rick once and Francis twice, so it's fantastic to be able to talk to you.

AL: Oh, great. If you're a long term Quo fan you must be getting on a bit then!

I'm not actually, I'm only just into my thirties. My parents went to see Quo in about 1977, while my mum was pregnant with me. Apparently I was kicking in time to the music, so I guess that means I was a Quo fan before I was even born!

AL: It was that triple rhythm that got you up, the "dum-de-dum-de-dum"? (laughs)

Exactly! So, on to my reason for calling, which is the awesome new 'Live At The BBC' box set that is coming out.

JC: Yeah. Do you know, I've not actually heard or seen anything yet, I'm supposed to be getting it but I don't know how good it is.

There's some fantastic stuff on here going right back to the beginning, so that's where I'd like to start - with The Spectres, which is obviously the band you were in with Francis, which would eventually become Status Quo.

JC: Yeah, what happened was I was at school and there was a guy called Steven Ainsworth who was in the Air Cadets. He suggested I join so I went along and it was purely by joining that, I met Francis and Alan. They were rehearsing in a garage belonging to the Territorial Army and they heard a band playing in our drill hall. They came over to watch and I found out there were in a band - if you were in a band, oh God, cool! They needed a drummer because the guy they had they weren't happy with. They asked me and I came along. So yeah, it was having an interest

in the Air Force and the Air Cadets that led me down that path! Roy Lynes came in and we became a four piece. We met Rick much later, at Butlins.

AL: We had an organist called Jess Jaworski and The Spectres was the first proper name we ever had. One of the first names we performed under was The Palodins. Nobody knows that - people say 'Oh, they were The Scorpions first' or we were this, or that, even in the biographies say that... but no, we never performed under any of those names. Names were bandied around, thrown into a hat so to speak, but the only other name we performed under was The Palodins. That changed pretty quickly to The Spectres and that version of the band ended when we turned professional, which was when we left school. Roy Lynes joined us, taking the place of Jess and we became a professional outfit - aged fifteen!

We have some stuff from The Spectres on there, covers of 'I (Who Have Nothing)' and there's 'Gloria' which I know best because of The Doors... How did you end up getting a deal so early in your career?

JC: In those days everybody wanted to get a record deal. There was a guy called Pat Barlow who reckoned he had some contacts and he got us a deal with Pye as I remembered it. We put some stuff out but nothing happened. With us doing Shirley Bassey's 'I (Who Have Nothing)', that was outrageous - when you think about that now you think of Shirley Bassey and you don't think of her singing a rock song, but that's what we turned it into. We got an audition at Minehead to go to Butlins and that was great, playing twice a day, with an audience... plus it was great practice. Cliff Richard and The Shadows, The Drifters, Manfred Mann, everyone did it.

Did you guys always intend to write

original material and just did covers to cut your teeth so to speak, or did the writing just evolve?

AL: We did the covers because back then, we didn't know what writing was. All we could play was other people's stuff - Status Quo is a band that grew very slowly from us learning what we were doing at around twelve years old. There wasn't much around in those days to listen to, there was stuff like Acker Bilk, things like that. Then you had Shirley Bassey on the scene! (laughs) We grew very slowly, learning other people's songs and trying to do our best with them. We had a reasonable pop repertoire, but even then, it was always based around a rock and roll basis. When Jess was in the school band, were were doing things like 'You Really Got Me', 'Bloodhound', 'Green Onions'... stuff like that. Then we'd add in Beatles stuff like 'Can't Buy Me Love'. We'd do Shadows material as well because we started as an instrumental group. None of us believed we could sing. Well, anyone can sing, but not everyone is a vocalist, if you know what I mean! (laughs) We had to find songs that suited our limited vocal range - but we didn't know that's what we were searching for of course, we were just trying out songs that felt right. Because of that, we chose numbers we thought suited our range. On stage though, we were very rocky, even if we were playing pop stuff.

On record it was different. When we first got our recording contract, I was asked to re-arrange an established song and turn it into a new one. I did that in a couple of days, rearranged the Shirley Bassey one into a semi-shuffle and penned a song called 'When He Passed You By'... which was a load of rubbish of course! (laughs) It was naive, but they loved it. It was put out as a single, recorded on a four track... completely at odds with what we were about!

From The Spectres you changed your name into Traffic Jam which was the start of you becoming more

psychadelic. Did you change names because you were switching genres?

AL: No, Traffic Jam was much the same thing as The Spectres, we changed names because we had no success as The Spectres! 'I (Who Have Nothing)' was our first single and I think we had another two out before 'Matchstick Men' became a hit.

JC: Nobody liked the name The Spectres that much anyway. We chose Traffic, but then Steve Winwood came out with his band Traffic, so we decided to call it Traffic Jam instead. Which personally I thought was a bit of a stupid name! I think maybe Pat later on suggested 'what about The Status Quo?' and we didn't really like that either. But as it meant 'as you are' it stuck... and ultimately became a household name.

AL: Rick joined the band just as we changed the name from that to Status Quo. We'd already recorded 'Matchstick Men' so Rick didn't play on it. Rick came in really because our producer John Schroeder said we needed a vocalist. That was the kind of material he was feeding us, those sort of songs which we didn't really like at all. We thought we had to play them or people wouldn't like us or be interested. It was nothing like what we did live and we sat for hours trying to make something listenable. The early demos - just atrocious! Some of the stuff we came up with off our own bat wasn't that far from atrocious either, but things were given to arrange... that's what we had to record. So when Rick came in he sang the harmony for the recording of 'Matchstick Men' - he didn't



play because he couldn't really play guitar much then, he was still learning how to fit in with the group. He came in the middle of '67 I think.

JC: Francis liked some of that stuff but we were exploring really. I think he wrote 'Matchstick Men' sat in the loo! That opening riff stood out and I think it's a bit of a classic. I still play it with my band now when I do gigs. I give it more of a rock feel because the original was a bit all over the place. John Schroeder, our producer, said to me that he wanted me to play like Mitch Mitchell on it. I thought 'Well, I can't play like Mitch Mitchell!' (laughs) He plays quite busy, so I did my best, but it charted so it did well. Rick was in the band by then and I think the road was open. We started having other hits.

Yes, you followed 'Pictures Of Matchstick Men' with another hit, 'Ice In The Sun', which was written by Mce Wilde.

AL: Yeah, him and Ronnie Scott, a publisher. It was an out and out pop song. That's when the psychedelic era really took

off - 'Matchstick Men' went there but the first band I ever heard do phasing was The Small Faces. 'Matchstick Men' was done on a four track recorder, we didn't know what we were doing, where the wah-wah is on the organ, it had a four part harmony... all slightly out of tune! (laughs) We took that off and it just left a great big gap. We didn't know what to do and the person who saved it was Roy Lynes. He did the wah-wah thing and we thought 'oh, that's good!' (laughs) The engineer got the vibe and thought about putting some phasing on. That's also one of the only tracks where I double tracked my bass... which was daft, considering we only had four tracks anyway!

JC: Yeah, we rehearsed in Pat's basement. We were a pop band then. Back then, if you were a pop band and you had a hit, if your next record didn't get in the charts, you were dropped and didn't get many gigs. We got fed up with that genre and Bob Young suggested we do some blues and shuffles. We grew our hair long and threw out all the Carnaby Street jackets, reinvented ourselves. If we hadn't have changed, we'd have just split up I think. We were trying to be pop stars but none of us really wanted that, we wanted to just been seen as a serious band. I think it was Fleetwood Mac, they took the piss out of us at a gig for wearing those funny jackets, said we looked like a load of poofs! (laughs) That jacket I've got on in the 'Matchstick Men' photos, that caught fire. We were at Pat's house and he had one of those electric wall heaters. We're all stood around talking and someone said 'can you smell something burning?' and this jacket had caught fire. The problem was, I was wearing it at the time! (laughs) So I ripped it off and jumped up and down on it and I think that was more or less the start of us thinking that we should get rid of the silly clothes. (laughs) It was good experience for us though - and even now, the band is still going.

That brings us toward 'Piledriver', the first Quo album that really captures the true Quo sound (although there were hints of what was to come with tracks like 'Mean Girl'). With 'Piledriver' being the first full on heavy rock album, was that a result of you guys being frustrated with pop material and taking matters into your own hands?

AL: We'd been going in a direction for years, but Roy left in 1970 because his organ playing, keyboards, it was redundant. We didn't throw him out, he just left because it wasn't necessary for him to be there. The band had evolved into a four piece. We were nervous the first time we had to play as a four piece, but it was wild and the crowd loved it. The organ masked our sound. When it was removed, it really showed off the band dynamic much better as a four piece.

decided we weren't going to wear any of the silly free clothes and that, we started to try and record what we did on stage. 'Ma Kelly's Greasy Spoon' wasn't great although there was some decent stuff on there. 'Dog Of Two Head' was better, much better. That direction took us to 'Piledriver' and we were there, we knew what we were doing. And of course, we produced that ourselves, we didn't have an outsider in there. It worked wonderfully.

JC: I think Francis, Rick, Alan and Bob all found that writing in that vein, that four on the floor shuffle, we all knew it worked. It's a shuffle that I enjoyed playing and can play it well. It worked a treat and I thought that was a great album, it's gone down in history, that one.

I forgot just how many great songs



JC: It was more fun. We were playing every pub that had bands on and we really enjoyed playing that stuff. But with Roy... I remember to this day, we were on a train going to a gig. It was unusual, I think that Bob Young was driving our gear there and we were going by train. We got to I think it was Stoke, and Roy just said 'Look, I'm getting off.' We thought he was joking but he did. We see him walking down the platform and then realized there was no chance of him getting back on and he was serious! So we went 'Oh well, four piece then!' (laughs) It was really weird, I've never heard of anyone doing that. You'd think he'd say 'I'll do the gig but tomorrow I'm off' but not Roy!

It doesn't leave much room for negotiation!

JC: Nope! I think we sent him his keyboards. (laughs) He lives in Australia and Alan talks to him a bit. I haven't seen him for years. I don't know, but I don't think he regretted it.

So you made 'Piledriver' as a four piece and it still stands up now as a great Quo record.

AL: Yeah, the band were different on stage like I said. When we had a couple of hits, people were dressing us up for Top Of The Pops and stuff - giving us an image of an out and out pop band. We were getting photographed like that too. We never wore that stuff before we had a hit! (laughs) Our records were the same, gave us an image that were were a pop band. By the time 'Piledriver' came along... 'In My Chair' was basically a hit with no radio play, we were pulling in big crowds playing that type of music. Once we'd

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ALAN LANCASTER on 'Marguerita Time'

great. Some of the stuff from the early seventies on here is really powerful.

JC: That's right. I suppose they can't play them all, they'd be on for four or five hours! (laughs) I think there is a divide with Quo, fans like yourself who know and like the old Quo and there's newer fans who've come to the band later and maybe don't even know John Coghlan and Alan Lancaster. They maybe came to the band in the 80's or later - that's fair enough. I did some gigs in Holland and Germany not so long back and those guys out there just loved the old songs - it felt like being back in the seventies. The old fans are still out there. I left in '81 and when I do gigs there's people turning up and it's like going back in time.

Once you'd found that sound on 'Piledriver', you made a string of records in the same vein, but ultimately Andy Bown would be recruited to add keyboards.

JC: I can't remember who actually said that we needed keyboards. A lot of people didn't like it - the older fans certainly preferred it without them and I did too. We were a raunchy rock 'n' roll band with raunchy guitars, so I didn't think we needed them. That's a bit unfair to Andy who does a really good job and does play guitar and harmonica onstage too, but I don't think we needed them. Maybe Francis or Rick wanted them, I can't remember how it happened. But there again, without a keyboard player, we wouldn't have had that intro to 'Rocking All Over The World' so who knows?

That's the thing - Andy plays with



there were on the old albums, some of those album tracks get overlooked in favour of the usual choices on compilations, the hits.

JC: Oh yeah. I play with a couple of bands now, I have John Coghlan's Quo and I was asked to do some gigs and we like digging out some of the old stuff. We do 'Gerundula' and 'April Spring Summer And Wednesdays', things that people rarely hear and it goes down a treat. Everyone knows and plays 'Caroline', 'Down Down', 'Whatever You Want' - great songs, but it's nice to bring out some old album stuff that you'd never hear on the radio.

Yeah, the box set offers some great live versions of songs that are never played anymore and they sound

With your decision to leave, was there some major point of contention that caused your departure?

JC: I think it was our manager at the time, Colin Johnson, who said basically I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. What it was, it was too much work, too much partying, too much of everything. If we'd have said 'look, let's have three months off' so we could have chilled out, it might have been alright. But I just had to get off the merry-go-round if you know what I mean. I went home and I didn't touch a drum kit for a year. I didn't do a thing, just recuperated and felt so much better for it. Life is much better now. I play now with my bands, but at a rate I can settle with. I did a tour of Sweden last year, maybe the year before, spent ten days with a Swedish blues player in a three piece and it was awesome. We did a little tour and I really enjoyed it, it was great fun. As you know, you look at Quo's schedule - it's packed. And they still do it now. So they must enjoy it, but it's extremely hectic.

AL: Yes, the keyboards and then the departure of John, that changed the sound. John didn't write much but his sound was integral to the arrangements. It's not just about playing something, it's about passion and feeling. John had that mindset. That's what makes you a great band rather than a group playing something. You need that feel, or you sound like any backing band - and John gave us that. When he left, on a recording level it fell apart. Pete Kircher came in, a great drummer no doubt... and he worked really hard to not replace, but to substitute John. You couldn't replace John. Pete studied what John did and he tried to match the style and dynamic. He did a great job - like that gig at the NEC for Prince Charles, that was really good. He played in the style of John, but was probably a bit neater because he was fresh to the music.

I was going to mention that show because it's on this set - the footage that was shown on TV, plus the full audio of it on CD. Is that one of the major highlights of your time in Quo?

AL: It was a special show for me, yeah. The Prince's Trust - charity, a good cause and from memory it was a good show, a good concert. Live Aid would be for me the tops, but that wasn't a full concert so that Prince Charles gig would be one of my special ones.

That's the thing - Andy plays with



JC: They reckon that they split up and got back together for Live Aid, even though nobody was talking to one another. I would have liked to have been asked to do that gig. It was a strange feeling sitting at home watching it on telly with Pete Kircher in my seat. Then of course after that Pete had gone and they got in Jeff Rich. After that they got Matt Letley who is with them now - I speak to Matt a lot, he's great, a good drummer, good musician. He does it well. He's got a good sound with them.

Alan, round about the time you and Francis starting disagreeing about the direction of the band, 'Marguerita Time' is cited as one of the main points of contention. There's a oft-mentioned performance on Top Of The Pops where you didn't appear because according to what I read, you elected to stay at home with your pregnant wife rather than promote the single so Jim Lea from Slade filled in. However, on the box set there is a performance from the Little And Large show of it, and you're there...

AL: Yes, that's because that's incredible bullshit, all that. It's gone down in autobiographies, interviews, perceived as the main reason of us falling out - it was nothing to do with it!

Really? I watched some old Quo stuff on YouTube and there the one with Jim Lea, where Rick does his pratfall into the drum kit, but I found another one which looks to me to be Top Of The Pops and you're there, performing the song you supposedly despise.

AL: Of course I've done 'Marguerita Time' on Top Of The Pops. I've never missed anything with Quo. What really happened was, you've heard about all the drug scene and everything, how Rick and Francis were out of it and can't remember a thing? The management were doing it, the record people, everyone was into it, except really for John, when he was there, and me. I lived in Australia so I was away from it a lot. If I'd lived in England maybe I'd have been into it, but I had reason to get away from it. The band had disintegrated on a social level and because we were big and constantly busy, we saw each other all the time so we didn't socialize away from the band. Rick and I would get together sometimes but the social thing we had during the early albums had gone. You mentioned

were all over the place and didn't know it.

By the time 'Back To Back' came out... that load of tripe! We spent all our time laying in the sun.

I was intrigued about how you divided up the vocal duties with you, Francis and Rick all singing. One of the examples on 'Back To Back' was 'Ol' Rag Blues' which you wrote and sang, but there was another version with Francis singing it which according to the sleeve notes was another nail in the relationship's coffin.

AL: We never really argued too much, most stuff suited one of us more than the others. If I wrote a song with a bluesy, hard edge to it, usually I would sing it. Maybe Rick. If it had more of a classical scale to it, if it was more melodic, I'd ask Francis to sing it. I've asked Francis to sing a lot of my songs. With 'Ol' Rag Blues' I'd already put the vocals down. When it was chosen as a single, Francis went in and put his vocal on it. People think 'Oh, the record company chose' - more bullshit.



The version with Francis on was sent to the record company and they thought that was the one. I was annoyed because I'd put hard work in and effort to lay down what I felt was a good vocal and somebody takes it off and puts theirs on instead, you'd get angry. And that's what happened. That was a decision made during the big drug scene I mentioned so you have to take it in that light, but that's what happened.

With 'Marguerita Time', I didn't think it was right for the band at all, but I didn't mind recording it. Francis was making a solo thing at the time, none of us wanted to do it. Francis asked if the band would work it up because it was due for a solo thing. I thought it would be a great song for his solo thing too. I liked him working on that because I thought that stuff he was writing was against the grain of Quo's image. But I had no problem putting down a great track for him, he liked it and it suited him. What I didn't want was it to go on a Quo album and I had no idea it would be a single. That was the thing, the single. But as regards to me not being at Top Of The Pops for it, the truth is I wasn't there because my son was born. Everybody knew I couldn't come over for it. Usually they'd reschedule for me to be there, but at that point, again the drug induced decisions, they went ahead without me. Yeah, I'm glad I wasn't on that bloody video because that song was completely against the grain of what we did - a silly little Butlins Holiday Camp piece. We're a rock band! Whatever were they thinking? But I didn't miss the shoot for that reason, as you saw, I appeared for it elsewhere.

I agree with you - I like the song in honestly, it's okay, but I saw Francis perform a solo show not long back in support of his new album and he played

it then. It fitted in great with what he was doing because he hardly played any Quo stuff, but I can see why it stuck in the craw of someone like yourself and the hardcore Quo fans.

AL: Yeah, if you went out to go and see AC/DC and they came out and started off with 'Marguerita Time', there'd be some complaints! (laughs) It was wrong business wise, image wise, everything. 'Lies' wasn't right either, it was more pop rock, not hard rock with a boogie slant. I like stuff like 'Accident Prone' to be honest, that was a decent direction to follow, but it wasn't a big hit compared to other stuff which is why we didn't go that route. 'Marguerita Time' though sold loads of copies, twice as many as some of our hits, so everyone thought 'Hey, this is the way to go!' All the success that we'd had with our fans, we started trading that to try and impress Joe Public, who is sat in his armchair going 'Oh yeah, I like that one, I sing that down the pub'. If a song catches on, like 'Shaddup You Face' it catches on and sells a lot of copies... for one go. But then you'll be dropped like a bucket of cement and they've forgotten you. Meanwhile, your hardcore fans will drop you because you've sold out. But despite my feelings on the song, that's not why I missed the Top Of The Pops show. I was told about it while my son was being born in Australia - and I'm not saying this was Rick and Francis' fault, I think it was more the management wanting to oust me from the band.

I'm enjoying shattering so many Quo myths in one go, this is fantastic!

AL: I know - there's biographies and interviews from TV and radio, magazines, the general perception, even from my ex-manager Pat Barlow, one time he said we were The Scorpions on TV, before we became Quo. No we weren't, that was a suggested name. I think sometimes when you're asked a question and put on the spot, people get nervous and don't want to look like the can't remember or need to think hard about it. They want to look like they're with it and give you a quick, decisive answer. What with that and misquotes, things get out of control.

I agree - when I last spoke to Francis, I mentioned 'Marguerita Time' to him and he said you were embarrassed about the style of it compared to what Quo was known for, which tallies up with what you've told me, but with the sleeve notes on reissues and biographies and things written online, you'd swear blind that you threw a strop and walked out because of that song. It becomes a big myth, whereas your version is just common sense, you were on the other side of the world with your son being born. But there's no scandal, interest or animosity in that version is there?

AL: No! But when people are drugged, out of the loop, fed information, it becomes 'Alan said this, Francis said that' but all passed on via a third party. If I tell you something now, you know Alan Lancaster said it. But back then, Francis was being fed 'information' I think...and Rick was so out of it I think he'd just repeat anything he was told! (laughs) I was the big bad wolf, even though I started the band. As I remember it, I recruited Francis all those years ago! But the band lost their way and the management were doing things that just weren't right. A lot of it was regarding money, which I kept my eye on and knew a lot about. Nobody else was too bothered but I would follow it. I couldn't be thrown out of my own band, it's like a marriage, a partnership, assets get split. One of which was the all valuable name. Once John had left, around about 1982, Status Quo was effectively



over. Even though John wasn't there though, he was still a partner up until 1983. When I left, the partnership was completely over - I didn't dissolve it, Francis did. But the problem was, Status Quo - that is, the three of us at that time, had signed contracts which bind us together under the Quo name to fulfill commitments. That's serious stuff, especially when those contracts involve millions of pounds. If that partnership dissolves when the contract states there's another album to be made, that's serious stuff.

Francis started making a new Quo album without my knowledge while I was in Australia. I found out and filed an injunction to stop him putting out an album under the name Status Quo. The record company got involved by applying to be joint defendants with Rossi and Parfitt. I ended up fighting for an empire I'd help build from the start - and when the record company joined in it was like fighting God. I had to settle out of court because we were contracted to do another record as Status Quo. If one of us refused, they could sue you. By Rossi dissolving the partnership, Phonogram could come after me. I was the only one with any money - any worth suing for anyway. I injunctioned Rossi to stop him using the Quo name, Rick wasn't involved at first. I stopped Rossi from going ahead without me, but then Phonogram jumped in and said they'd accept Quo without me because they'd rather have an album then go around suing people. I settled out of court and let them use the name. But none of this had anything to do with 'Marguerita Time' or anything like that. It was the fact that after Live Aid, we were supposed to do another album and Francis started making it on his own.

He wasn't that into doing the hard rock stuff, he was writing pretty songs. It's easy to write a pretty little song, it's much harder to write a good rock song with any credibility. You have to write it with a performance in mind so it's not corny or contrived. But I left the band because when it came to the injunction, I either let them use the name and got a settlement, or I got sued for stopping the new album being made. That's the truth,



nothing to do with previous material, or that Phonogram would only accept an album from Rick and Francis as long as I wasn't there, none of that was the case. The record label just wanted an album from a band bearing the name Status Quo. Ironically, the whole reason the contracts were done in the first place locking Francis, Rick and I together was that when John left, people starting thinking 'Oh shit, any one member could walk out' so they wanted to keep us together so we were all part of the name.

So when you both left the band at your respective times, did you keep following their progress, or completely wash your hands of it?

JC: I took a complete break. I always go and see them now when they play Oxford which is near me though. It's great, I go and see the lads, we all still get on great, we have a drink and a chat, life goes on, you know?

AL: I didn't follow them too closely, but I know they had a couple of flops after that, low chart positions to what they were used to. When John was gone, Pete came in and the '1+9+8+2' album, which I think is a load of rubbish, went into the charts at number one and stayed in the charts for twenty five weeks, one of Quo's bigger albums! Crazy. When I left, 'In The Army Now' went to number two I think and was one of their bigger albums. So much hype and press surrounded people leaving, people flock out to buy it because they've been hearing all about the band in the newspapers. I don't think the long term fans liked the direction of the band when John left, or when I left, but Joe Public bought a lot of copies. It's confusing! (laughs)

The mid-eighties stuff wasn't so good. Even Francis admits things like 'Ain't Complainin'' were dire. It wasn't until 'Rock Till You Drop' that they really thought about maybe going back to their old sound. That did okay and they sort of built it back up from there. But a lot of the eighties releases are not well liked.

AL: There's some good tracks in the eighties, it was a good band too, but it was the wrong direction. In the latter stage of my time there, we weren't writing together which was when all the best stuff came out. Everyone was writing away from one another, people were writing pretty songs, people were submitting songs nobody else liked... I wrote some back then I thought were good, I hear them now and think no they weren't... in fact, a lot of that stuff then, mine, Rick's, Francis', it was decent stuff, just no good for Quo. None of it matched, we were never a band who had loads of great songs to choose from to make an album. We played the stuff in the studio but the passion was lacking because a lot of it we weren't that into. The drug thing affected things quite badly too.

I think it's great the band is still going and still filling venues and making good records. Obviously the box set features stuff from after you guys left the group and there's still some great material there. When you look at it as a retrospective though, spanning from the late sixties to 2005, you realize what a tremendous legacy the band has.

JC: Oh yeah! Also, if I meet someone and they don't know what I used to do, if somebody says to them 'Oh John was in Status Quo' suddenly they become your friend. I don't think there is anybody about who doesn't know who Status Quo are, it's a big household name with a current crop of fans and still some of the older fans from the first time around. I think it's great they're still going in all honesty.

John said he still sees the guys... Alan, I heard that you met up with Francis earlier this year when the band came over to Australia. Is that true, or is that more bullshit? (laughs)

AL: Oh yeah, Francis and I get on great. Recently we've been talking on the phone, texting jokes, we hear from one another in some form nearly every night. We talk about the old times, talk about this stuff I've been telling you a lot, he and I chat quite a lot. I went to see them - it's more of a Status Quo show now than a Status Quo concert, it's not what it used to be like, but it does feel



more like a show and I had a great time. It's not a tribute band, it's like watching a show documenting all the great songs we did. Rick and I have chats, I signed some stuff, we all went back to the hotel and Andy came down, we talked about anything and everything. It was great. There was mutterings about a reunion because of nostalgia, but you'd have to think of the logistics of it and more importantly, would it be as good, if not better than it was? If not, it's pointless. It doesn't matter if I've become a better bass player than I was or Francis is a better guitarist or whatever, if the mindset isn't there it won't be right. It needs the passion and you can't fake that. We're all older now as well. It's probably easier for them to do what they are doing.

Francis maybe is tiring of it and needs a break which is why he did a solo album and tour that you saw. When I was there I never thought of doing a solo album because I was devoted to Quo. I think Rick was too. But Francis has that other side - he writes good stuff and it suits him but not Quo. When you specialize in something, stick with it. We specialized in hard rock boogie, there was nobody bloody better. The only band I can think of that managed to follow us was Bob Seger's Bullet Band. None of the others did for me. When you start trying country songs or stuff like that, there will always be people

who do it better. If you want great country guitar playing and vocals, look no further than John Denver. That was his speciality. Francis does hard rock boogie the best, but I think he feels he has to try to be something else from time to time. Don't get me wrong, I've heard his solo album and there's some good stuff on there, but Quo is his speciality.

Well I'll bring things to an end now - it's been great, and the 'Live At The BBC' box set is a must have for any serious Quo fan.

JC: What are the TV bits like on the box set, are they any good?

That I haven't seen yet, the stuff I've been sent so far has been all the music side of things, given to me as mp3s over the internet. I do want to see some of the Top of The Pops stuff because I haven't seen some of those. Some are on YouTube but there's some stuff on there I've never laid eyes on.

JC: Yeah, they said they'd send us the full lot and I just have this feeling that I'm going to watch it back and think 'oh fuck, did I look like that?' (laughs) I'll be hiding it from my friends, they'll all take the piss out of me.

Ah, but you were in Quo and they weren't!

JC: Yep, good answer, there you go! (laughs)

AL: I've not heard it yet but I'm looking forward to it, it'll be like a little record of what I've done during my time in the band. And a bit of trivia, my son's band is called The Presence. I oversee them and they've just done a new single called 'All I Want Is Your Love'. It's the sort of thing I'd probably have done myself, I'm a bit jealous of it! (laughs) In the video they've done on YouTube he plays my old Mustang bass - 42 years old it is now, still sounds good!

JC: I've got my original Ludwig Super Classic kit, if you watch 'Matchstick Men', that kit I've had refurbished and I use that for gigs now. It sounds enormous. I think I got that in 1962, '63, something like that. So if you come to a gig mate, you'll see that kit - a bit of history!

I've really enjoyed this guys, it's been great to set the record straight on so many things I was brought up on as being Quo "facts".

AL: There's loads of them - a million and one things we've been misquoted on and things written which are totally wrong. Here you go, our first ever gig was aged fourteen, not thirteen! How about that? (laughs)