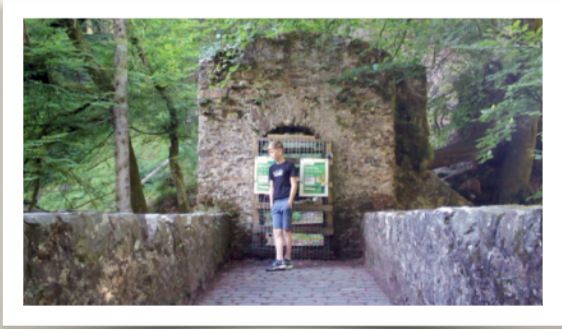


DAVID MACKIN



THE HERMITAGE SUITE

25TH ANNIVERSARY RELEASE



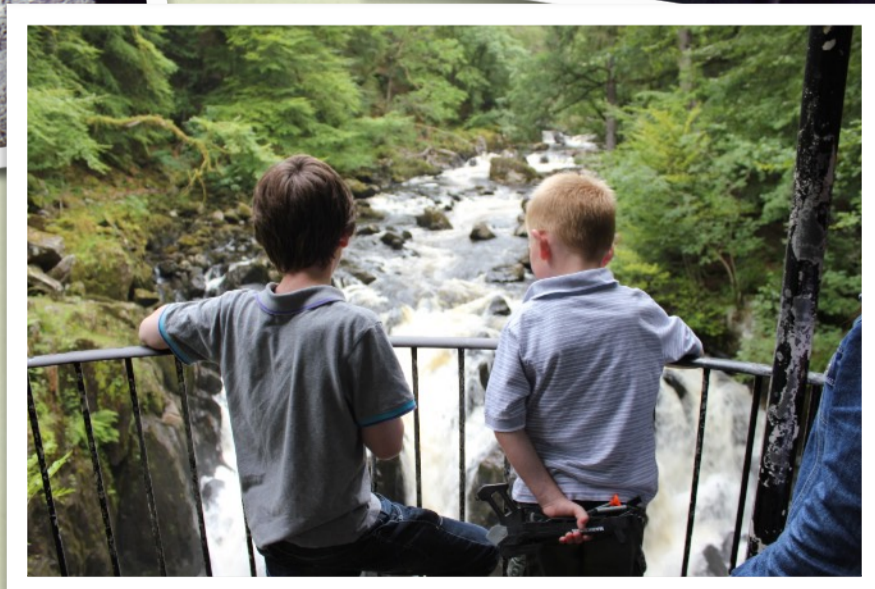
i do recall a waterfall.....

On 31st December 1987, I lost my Dad to oesophageal cancer when he was only 49 years old. I myself was only 18 and my two little brothers aged only 16 and 9. He was the most wonderful, loving and 'daft as a brush' father we could have ever had. He had the brightest of personalities that shone like a diamond; leaving a lasting impression to all who met him.

The loss of such a beautiful and precious man, at such a young age, was a devastating blow to my family and one we never really recovered from.

In 1997, ten years after his death, I released *The Hermitage Suite* which was intended to be a tribute to the spirit of my amazing Dad and a method to deal with some of the emotions I was tackling over the ten years since losing him. These included some disastrous life choices; namely a failed marriage and my efforts to come to terms with all of this. With no Dad to ask for advice, I subconsciously put all this pain into my songs in an effort to find some answers. Trying to come to terms with his loss and the huge emotional void that was left behind, this album had massive therapeutic benefits for me. Having a discussion with my father, which I certainly would have had if he had been alive, within these songs was certainly a comforting experience. He would have given me some sound advice. The vulnerable state I was left from his loss left me in a strange state of mind for many years.

So why *The Hermitage*? *The Hermitage*, just near Dunkeld, has always been a very special place to my family. My Mam and Dad found this captivating folly in 1967 just before they got married. Now owned by The National Trust Of Scotland, if you ever visit this place you are in for a treat. You walk from a car park area through a lovely woodland area containing some of the tallest and finest trees in Scotland. You will arrive at the Brann Falls with a lovely stone bridge with an archway gateway on the other side. A 17th Century Folly for The Duke Of Atholl looks over the falls and has been upgraded over recent years with artistic mirrors to emulate the original effect intended by the original architect. The idea was to pull back a screen and have the falls reflected all around the viewer. No special effects are required though because the Falls themselves are spectacular. The photo of my Dad at this place became the cover of my album but there is so much more to this story if you are prepared to read on.....



DEvised FROM a sick man's DREAM.....

Those are the words of William Wordsworth taken from his visit to The Hermitage in the 1800s and, like my parents, he fell in love with the place. He was so impressed that he wrote a poem about it: 'Effusion in the Pleasure-Ground on the Banks of the Bran'.

What pains to dazzle and confound!
What strife of colour, shape and sound
In this quaint medley, that might seem
Devised out of a sick man's dream!
Strange scene, fantastic and uneasy
As ever made a maniac dizzy,

The allure of The Hermitage also beckoned Beatrix Potter during her childhood, a sanctuary where she embraced the local wildlife, sketching it with detailed strokes of her artistic hand. Even the renowned composer Felix Mendelssohn graced this beautiful place, sketching the enchantment of Ossian's Hall, which stands as a testament to the site's ever-enduring magic. I would like to think it inspired his wonderful Hebrides Overture.

However, for me, I was introduced to it by my parents on one of our many Holidays to Aberfeldy and Dunkeld when I was a child. The sweltering summer of 1976 to be precise when I was only 7.

There is not one occasion that I have ever visited the Braan Waterfall and not witnessed the awe-inspiring spectacle of salmon leaping fearlessly against the ferocious currents, bravely journeying to their spawning grounds. Each time, I can only stand dazzled by this wonderful wonder of nature

When I was a teen, full of romantic inclinations, I took a pine cone from the bridge and vowed to return it one day when I took my future wife to the bridge and propose to her. I did just that in 1990, as a bottle of champagne whispered its effervescent secrets to the soulful tones of Nat King Cole, I proposed to the wrong woman. The largest of romantic gestures wasted on the wrong person but that is another story for another day. I got it right in the end. All the same, a wonderful memory was created from this place and a lot of songwriting material was gained.

Throughout the years, I have revisited The Hermitage, many times with my own family in tow. It remains a very special sanctuary, a place where laughter and love intertwine. It is my favourite place on planet Earth.



TRACK 1 - OSSIAN'S HALL

This 17th Century Folly of The Duke Of Atholl overlooks the spectacular Braan Falls. It originally had mirrors on the walls that created a special effect when a door was opened to allow the reflections of the falls to cascade around the walls.

In recent years a new art installation has been created to provide a similar effect. The most incredible effect this folly offers though is the chance to stand and gaze on one of the most beautiful wonders of nature: a chance to see a salmon jumping an impossible leap to bounce on the rocks to return to the spawning grounds higher up the river.

I used William Wordsworth's poem in the first line of the song. As I mentioned earlier in this book, Wordsworth marvelled at The Hermitage during a tour of Scotland. To me, this place has always been imbued with a sense of magic, weaving a tapestry of personal connections to my ancestral home, the serene Northern Irish village of Mullaghbawn, nestled beneath the watchful gaze of Slieve Gullion—a mountain steeped in myth and legend, where the fabled giant Fionn mac Cumhaill once resided. This legendary giant is the father of Ossian, according to folklore.

James Macpherson deceived the literary world with a fraudulent interpretation of The Works of Ossian, creating a fictional long-lost Celtic Bard. This Folly will have been created as a result of this literary deception. The fact that the links to my ancestral home are so strong should not go unmentioned. The song allowed me to throw all of my Celtic influences at it and here is the result. The opportunity to embellish the recordings with new technology has allowed me to create the version of the song that I could only dream of back in 1997.

A bridge of dreams where I left my soul
a very long long time ago



TRACK 2 - YOU CAN OPEN YOUR EYES NOW

This very intimate song records the moment when a wonderful lady helped me through one of my darkest times. The enduring friendship that resulted from this has been one of the highlights of my life.

Life's unpredictable journey often confronts us with the daunting task of moving on from the comfort of what once was familiar. Whether navigating the waters of starting anew after a divorce or the loss of a beloved partner, caution and trepidation stand as constant companions. In these pivotal moments, the people we choose to accompany us must be the right ones, guiding us through uncharted territories.

Within the verses of this song, I delve into the uncertainty that looms like a shadow, contemplating the path ahead. It is a song exploring those messages, speaking of resilience and hope while embracing change and welcoming the love and support of those who matter most.

This song is a testament to the transformative power of friendship and the impact of a single person who touched my life beyond measure. In the face of uncertainty, she stood by my side, and through her, I discovered the strength to face my fears and embrace the future with newfound courage.

I will always be grateful to the wonderful person who inspired this song.

To walk down the road of caution
Not knowing where it leads
Defend all your shattered feelings
Never sowing love's first seeds



TRACK 3 - EMOTIONALLY FREE

This song reflects the choices of life and what directions they may take. With the wisdom of hindsight, the song has the advantage of revisiting the emotions from 25 years ago when it was first written and reflecting on the sentiments it contained.

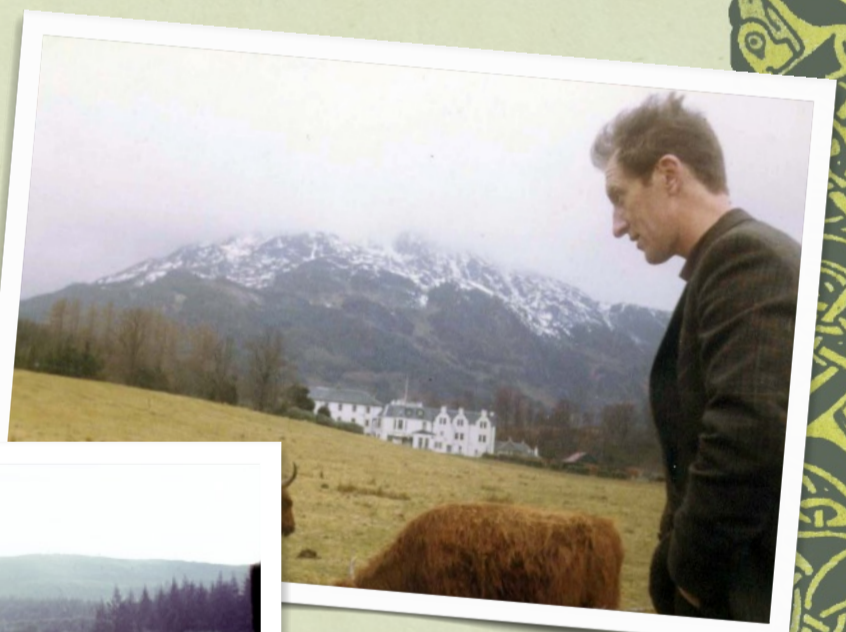
I have recorded a new main vocal to this version however, the backing harmonised vocal is the recording from the original version from 25 years ago. My 54-year-old self combined with my 27-year-old self span together two bookends of 25 years.

Friends bear children while I sit and slowly wonder
If that pleasure will ever come to me

Knowing the answers to the questions I originally raised in this song from 25 years ago puts things in a rather reflective perspective. I did go on to have three wonderful boys who have filled my life with more happiness than I could ever have imagined. I know their Grandad would have been very proud of the amazing young men they have become.

Although they never met him, I feel that they have had a chance to get to know him within this record. I see glimpses of his spirit in each of them. Much like my own Dad's stories about his late mother allowed me to know her in a certain way, I hope to have achieved the same for my boys through these songs and my stories of him. It is as if the essence of their Grandad shines through them, making him proud of the amazing young men they have become.

I sense his guiding presence in the choices I've made, gently steering me toward the right paths; often when I have taken very wrong ones.



TECHNOLOGY USED ON THE CREATION OF THE ALBUM



When The Hermitage Suite was originally recorded in 1997 I captured the audio on a Yamaha 4 Track tape machine. It was mixed by John Taylor at Mirage Music using The Crash Test Dummies old mixing desk. Nothing has ever been a straightforward journey for me. The forward and rewind motor broke during my sessions so any corrective “drop in” recordings had to be achieved by playing the tape in reverse until the correct position could be found. The process was painfully laborious.

When I decided to re-release The Hermitage Suite I was able to make some artistic decisions on the new enhanced version. I now have a fully professional Logic Pro Studio. I recorded all of the master 4 track tapes into Logic from the original machine. The motor wasn't fantastic and the tape speed was slightly out of making the tracks slightly detuned from concert pitch. I corrected the speed issue and looked at where tracks had been bounced together reducing the opportunity to give a true stereo panning field. I was able to re-record certain elements of each recording and revisit some of the vocal parts. The addition of real string quartets, cajun box rhythms and pianos was a refreshing addition for me; things I could never have imagined back in 1997.

The most striking bit of technological advancement is how I was able to enhance my Dad's voice. When he recorded the poem 'Ideals' by Carey Holbrook on a tape recorded back in 1978 in Saudi Arabia he was simply trying out a cheap microphone he had bought for his Sanyo Radio/Tape machine. There was a noisy air conditioner in the background that I just could not filter out the sound with equalisation or noise gates. Back in 1997, I had to tune the music around the poem to A minor to fit the noise. The music software company Waves has an amazing 'plug-in' called Clarity Vx Pro that can eliminate background noise. This worked perfectly on my Dad's voice and, for the first time in 35 years, it felt like he was speaking in the same room as me.

Using Spitfire Audio BBC Symphony Orchestra Strings brought the orchestral sections alive. Wave's Abbey Road Studio 3 mixing facility allowed me to look at the clarity and detail of the mixes like never before. The ability to use a Mellotron and other wonderful ambient synths within the recording enhancements was also mind-blowing for me.

This recording is a true bookend of my experiences from first dabbling with this recording technology with a primitive version of Cakewalk and a 4-Track machine back in 1997 to the full power of unlimited tracks in 2023. The album was recorded in Kensington Avenue Normanby, Lambton Street in Normanby and concluded in Blue Box Studios in Grangetown.



TRACK 4 - THE BLOOD OF BELFAST



My family originate from the picturesque village of Mullaghbawn, nestled at the foot of the majestic Slieve Gullion which is one of the Mourne Mountains of Northern Ireland. This place was, until recent years, a forbidden magical ancestral home that I was never allowed to visit due 'the troubles'. I remember writing a letter to my cousin Tommy Mackin asking if I could visit him and explore the place when I turned 18. My Dad, mindful of the danger that loomed, forbade me from sending the letter. As a young Englishman amidst a turbulent backdrop of sectarian conflict, I would have stood out like a sore thumb, vulnerable to the chaotic divisions between Catholics and Protestants.



At the time, I struggled to comprehend the ferocity of 'the troubles.' Having grown up on Teesside, surrounded by Protestant friends without any issues, I found it difficult to grasp the depth of the animosity. However, with diligent research, I came to understand how many events led to such violence and entrenched all of the grievances. In 1997, like so many people, I hoped and prayed for an end to the senseless loss of life, longing for a glimmer of peace that could illuminate a brighter future for these beautiful people.

The Good Friday Agreement was in the process of being brokered (another amazing story with a local link that I will discuss in a blog on my website sometime). I was very proud of the sentiment this song carries as it did mean a lot to my Dad. He would have loved the fact that I have not only been to Mullaghbawn many a time now, I have taken my family there for very enjoyable holidays.

I chose Belfast as the theme for this song. During my childhood, it always seemed to be Belfast that faced the brunt of sectarian violence. Through the lens of time, I stand proud of the journey that led me to embrace my ancestral roots, overcoming barriers and creating special memories in the very place that once seemed like an impossible dream. I spent an evening in Belfast just a year ago with my son.

This song embodies the spirit of hope, reconciliation, and a yearning for a future bathed in harmony, paying homage to my Dad's dream for the future and celebrating the enduring resilience of the people who call Northern Ireland their home.

When I heard Vin Garbutt's 'Troubles Of Erin' a few years later I realised that I was just a mere songwriting novice when I saw a real master craftsman convey the same sentiments in a much more precise way. I recommend any reader to check out Vin's song. And, speaking of Vin Garbutt we can move on to my next track.....



It's in the past
The Blood Of Belfast



TRACK 5 - WINGS (BY BRIAN BEDFORD)

When I first heard this beautiful song performed by Teesside Folk Legend Vin Garbutt it had an instant impact on me.

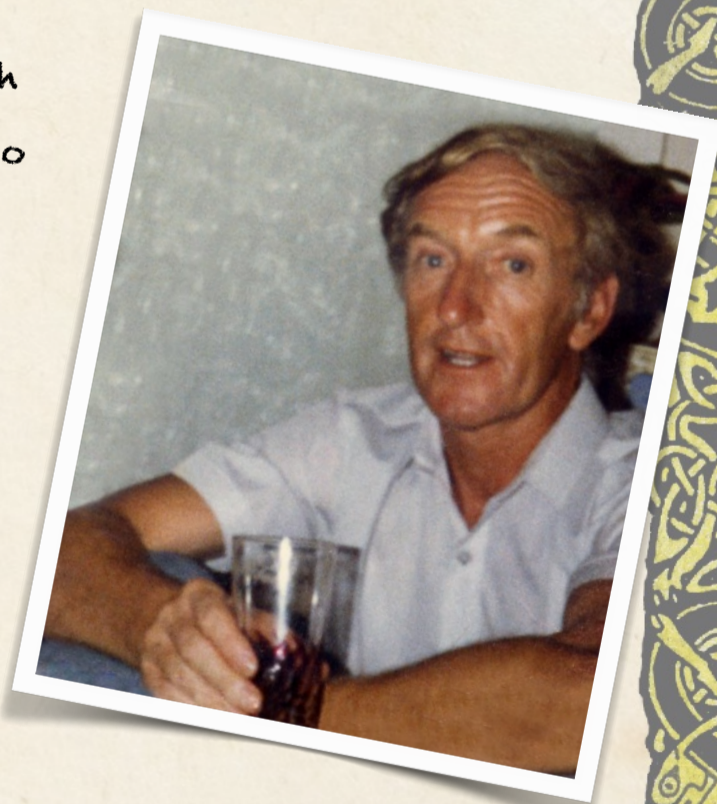
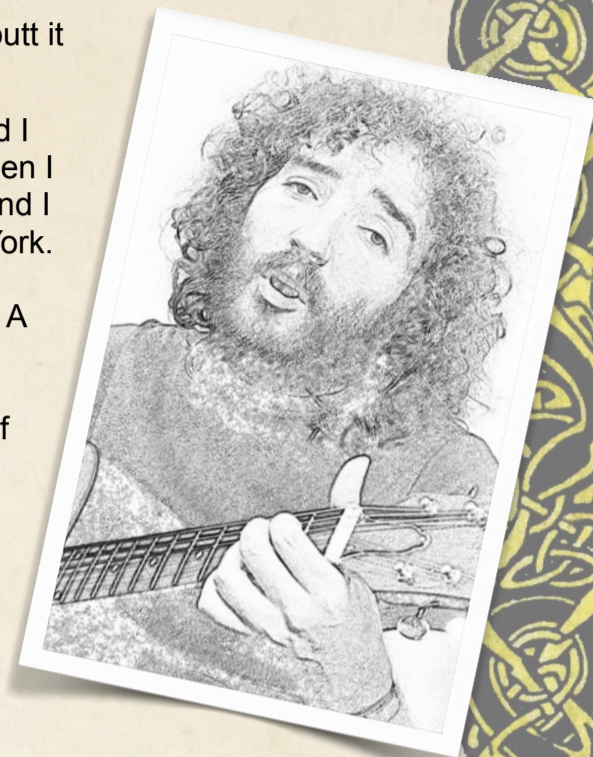
Vin was also an alumnus of my school St Peter's in South Bank Middlesbrough and I have followed his career since being a child. My Dad took me to one of his gigs when I was younger and, even at a young age, I was impressed with his songs. My Dad and I even chatted to him on a train on our way to London; Vin was en route to a gig in York. As a connoisseur of selecting the best songs of other writers too, he provided a perfect realisation of this song by Brian Bedford of the Folk Band Artisan from Hull. A song about giving love its freedom and hoping it will return to you if you do. It is perfectly composed by Brian who I have since had the pleasure of speaking to and complimented his wonderful craftsmanship. This song is perfect. It holds the kind of sentiment that I know my Dad would have used in any advice he could ever give me. Giving your love the freedom to flourish. Never trying to control someone but let them fly high with their own wings.

After speaking with Brian he told me he had penned it with his children in mind, recognising the importance of letting them fly free when the time comes. With love and nurturing, they will always find their way back.

Vin's masterful rendition of the song elevated it to new heights, spreading its beautiful sentiment far and wide. In fact, during Artisan's visit to Australia, the audience knew every word of the song, thanks to Vin's mesmerising performance that had already made it a colossal hit on the folk scene.

I am very grateful to Brian for crafting such a beautiful song, one that encompasses the very advice my Dad would have given—allowing love to flourish freely and never attempting to control someone's journey, but rather, empowering them to soar with their wings. And to the late great Vin Garbutt, I offer my appreciation for sharing this gem with such a vast audience, allowing its message to touch countless people across the world. Together, their collaboration has created a timeless masterpiece, one that I just had to include on this album.

I could have found adventure said the angel fish
But my world's so small there's nowhere else to go
I could have ruled a kingdom said the lion
Now the world inside my head is all I know.



TRACK 6 - TOMMY THE TRENCHER



My Great Uncle Thomas Mackin was killed on 10th May 1917 in Arras; another tragic victim from the ravages of World War 1. My Dad had the Soldiers Penny that had been sent to his Grandparents as a cruel commemoration of this valuable life lost. Hardly a consolation for the devastating loss of this wonderful young 22-year-old lad in what was to be a huge tragedy to my closely knit family. My Dad often talked about Thomas and how important he was to our family.

My Uncle Patrick safeguarded the precious letters that Tommy had penned from the trenches, each one a window into the thoughts of a brave soldier, separated from home by the horrors of the war. As a child, in the company of my Dad, I would visit Mr John McGrogan, a friend and comrade who had stood alongside Thomas during that fateful moment. Listening to Mr McGrogan's stories with my Dad, he painted a vivid picture of the harrowing realities of war—conflicts that exacted unimaginable pain, while those leaders who instigated them remained untouched by the fatal blows our innocent soldiers had to endure. War should never be the answer to our troubles.

Over the years I have often found myself contemplating the life Thomas would have led, had fate allowed him to survive, and the cousins I might have known from his strand of our family tree. My Dad, too, served in Aden during his National Service but thankfully avoided another chapter of violence which escalated after his demobilisation in 1962.

My song is based on Uncle Tommy's letters and the stories told by Mr McGrogan. I wrote it with my good friend Ian Erving and I am very proud of the song. I have even named

my own son after my wonderful, never forgotten Great Uncle

Thomas. His name has also been remembered by other family members such as Tommy Hart and Tommy Mackin. Ironically, his words have been preserved more than any other family member thanks to the letters we still have. The Ellie mentioned in this song is the reference he always made to his baby sister Ellie. He always signed his letters off with kisses to her.

In the end, this song serves as a beacon, a method to preserve the memory of a remarkable young man whose life was extinguished too soon by the tragedies of war. As long as this song is played, the spirit of Great Uncle Thomas Mackin will continue to influence the lives of generations to come, ensuring that his legacy of courage and love remains a guiding light for my family.

LEST WE FORGET

Pen and paper in my hand
Send nice thoughts to home
Keep it pleasant keep it short
Keep the realism unknown



TRACK 7 - AS WISE AS A SERPENT BY GERRY RAFFERTY

It was my Dad who introduced me to the amazing music of Gerry Rafferty. We bought him the City To City album in 1978 and he never stopped playing it. I fell in love with all the songs on that album and, when I started earning my own money from Saturday jobs, I began purchasing Gerry's other albums. To this day, he remains my all-time favourite songwriter, and it felt only fitting to record one of his finest songs for this album, as it perfectly aligns with its sentiments.

My own Dad possessed a wisdom akin to that of a serpent and a he was certainly had a gentle, selfless nature like that of a dove. He was a modest man, quietly weaving magic and performing true acts of kindness for others. After his passing, I uncovered some of the extraordinary things he had done, as he never spoke about them himself. I strive to follow a similar code of life, inspired by his example.

A few years after releasing The Hermitage Suite, I was taken aback to receive an email from none other than Gerry Rafferty himself, requesting my recording of "As Wise A Serpent" to be sent to his solicitors in London. Fearful that I might be facing legal repercussions, I reassured myself that I had obtained all the necessary licenses through the MCPS. To my astonishment and honour, Gerry engaged in conversations with me online about songwriting and music. It was a humbling experience to have my hero reach out in such a manner. We shared the belief that songwriting is one of the most noble art forms, with music as the language of the soul, and lyrics as the language of the mind. He was a very wise man.

Gerry Rafferty's influence has been immeasurable in my musical journey. When I had the opportunity to play the piano at the pinnacle of The Shard in London, it could only be a Gerry Rafferty song that graced the moment. I could say I have sung my highest-ever note to one of his masterpieces.

For those wishing to delve further into Gerry Rafferty's music, prepare yourself for a treasure trove of pleasant surprises. This master craftsman wove songs that speak directly to the soul, leaving an enduring legacy that continues to inspire and touch his listeners today; especially me.



TRACK 8 - ENTWINED

This is the track that has made this release of The Hermitage Suite an enhanced one. Whilst going through my demos and writing tapes for the album I recalled that this is the one that got away. I just didn't have the technology at the time to record this song the way I had intended so it was never included on the original release of the album.

It was only fitting that I allowed the reflection of the last 25 years to include my life's most significant person in a song on this release. I composed the lyrics to the hums and whistles of 25 years ago to make this song a dedication to my wife Lisa who has really made my life a happy and complete one. The melody was just too good to not be used and I am delighted with the result.

I even added an element of surprise into the song last minute that has taken my music away from its expected comfort zone. I am very happy with the result of it. The technology of today has finally allowed Entwined to see the light of day.

Entwined stands as a symbol of love and musical evolution, weaving together the memories of yesterday with the artistic prowess of today. It is a heartfelt tribute to my Lisa, my wife who has enriched my life with love and laughter, and its inclusion in this release completes the circle of emotions that The Hermitage Suite strives to portray. My Dad never met Lisa but I know he would have loved her.

Life's a funny thing

With all to the sadness and joy that it can bring

Now we're here to stay

I wouldn't have it any other way



TRACK 9 - LOST STAR

LOST STAR (f, 18) seeks man in the moon for long letters, afternoon tea, poetry and trips to the sea. Into Pulp, Veruca Salt, The Monkees. E206

When I was a small boy I had a fascination with the music of Glenn Miller. My Dad had some albums and I was able to explore this wonderful sound of four saxophones closely harmonised with a clarinet lead; instantly identifiable as Miller's signature tone. Dad bought me a tape cassette in WH Smiths that contained some of Miller's songs, that were often overlooked in favour of his instrumental hits. Miller recorded these brilliant songs with the fantastic vocals of Ray Eberle and The Modernaires.

One of the stand-out numbers for me was The Man In The Moon which is the inspiration for this song becoming a reality. The original song explains that The Man In The Moon is such a friend of the narrator. That funny old moon helped him find the one he loved. A pure classic old romance which ended up with me taking the wrong person to the Hermitage bridge in 1990 and popping an important question to a Nat King Cole record and a bottle of champagne. Married in 1992 (far too young) and it all being over by 1995. It was times like that I missed seeking my Dad's wisdom and advice.

In 1996, while residing in my family home, I stumbled upon an interesting advertisement in the classified section of Select Magazine, purchased by my little brother. The advert immediately caught my attention: "Lost Star seeks Man in the Moon for Long letters, afternoon tea...." Intrigued and compelled, I couldn't resist writing a response, hoping to connect with this mysterious Lost Star. With my usual bad luck, no reply came, but this experience served as the inspiration for a song dedicated to the imaginary Lost Star. What was she seeking? Did she find her Man In The Moon? Crafting this song was an enriching exercise in songwriting, a response to an intriguing and thought-provoking stimulus.

With a flavour of Nick Drake thrown into the recording that intertwined with life's romantic journey and the enigmatic call of a Lost Star, this came together in a melody that explores the depths of emotion and imagination.

Through this song, I embarked on a lyrical exploration, offering my allure of the Man In The Moon to a Lost Star and began a dream-like journey filled with the magic of music and the poignant musings of love and longing. Hell, I can talk some b*****s when I get going.



The magic of her words come alive
In a paragraph full of charm
I feel a sense of yearning come out
From the depths of my broken mind

A faceless paper queen cries out
For a poetical man in the moon
She has a love for afternoon tea
But does she sit and weep in a lonely room?

TRACK 10 - BEN ADHEM'S RETURN



My Dad's favourite poem was James Leigh Hunt's 'Abou Ben Adhem'. Its beauty lies in the profound suggestion that loving our fellow humans outweighs any devotion to gods. Embracing one another's cultures, beliefs, and traditions is the key to our collective progress as humanity, sentiments my Dad displayed all his life. Wherever my Dad travelled around the world he would always make time to chat with his fellow traveller and, in doing so, he created some amazing friendships. His respect for people became a fantastic example for his sons to follow. Across languages, colours, and creeds, my Dad effortlessly found common ground, leaving with a trail of pen friends from his journeys. His ease with people never ceased to amaze me.

Through my song, I envisioned the original character of the poem returning to our world today, contemplating whether he would be content with what he sees. Sadly, the reality he encounters is a world where compassion for one another has waned, replaced by the destructive power of bombs, guns, and knives that shatter lives. It pains me to witness families resorting to food banks and relying on the charity of strangers in a land where poverty should have no place. The grand promise of democracy has, in some instances, ushered the richest and most powerful people into positions of influence, perpetuating

their insatiable hunger for even greater wealth and control.

My heart is broken by what I have witnessed over the past 25 years, and I find it hard to hope for a brighter future. The world seems entrenched in its struggles, with little hope of redemption. Despite the despair, I hold on to the legacy my Dad left behind—the conviction that compassion and respect for one another can be a guiding light in this horrible world. We must strive to rekindle the spirit of 'Abou Ben Adhem,' for in cherishing each other, we may yet find the strength to mend the fractures and heal the wounds of our time.

Ian Erving appears on this recording. We used to perform the song in our duo The Dog's Dinner back in the early 1990s.

Take these words of wisdom and put them in a song
Let the people round you know what's going on
Feel it every moment and feel it everyday
And ask yourselves
What the Hells gone wrong?



TRACK 11 - WHEN WE SAY GOODBYE

When we were told the devastating news that Dad was not going to get better, he showed the most incredible stoic strength of character I have ever witnessed. My brother Michael and I wrote this song; one I am so very proud of. I attempted to read Dad the words but the emotion was too much for him. All he ever kept telling us was that he loved us and he would never ever be far away from us. I have felt this in very low moments in my life.

As his health deteriorated, and he was confined to bed, Dad remained determined to make a difference. He took pen to paper, writing letters to politicians to express his frustrations (I often wonder what he would be writing about today). He corresponded with the Pope, the highest Islamic Iman, and the leading Jewish Rabbi, earnestly beseeching people to embrace love and respect for one another. He felt an unshakeable conviction that he still had much to accomplish. Uncle Patrick promised him that he would carry on his work in his stead. He did such a fantastic job fulfilling that promise before we lost him in 2020

In the final moments, Dad spoke of a vision he had in the corner of his bedroom. He shared with us that wherever he was headed, it was a place of indescribable beauty. Saying goodbye to him was the most difficult task I have ever faced. In moments of struggle and hardship, I have felt the warmth of his embrace, whether it be wishful thinking or a comforting reality. This belief has been a solace during my most difficult times.

I STILL FEEL HIS GLOW ALL AROUND.

Looking through photographs taking us back
To the times when nothing was wrong
I find it hard to say the things that I feel
So I'm telling you through this song



TRACK 12 - OSSIAN'S HALL REPRISE



When working in Saudi Arabia, Dad bought a Sanyo Radio/Tape machine. It came with a microphone and Dad tried capturing his voice by recording two different poems he must have read in a book or pamphlet and thought to be beautiful.



Beautiful they certainly were. The first was a poem called 'Ideals' by Carey Holbrook. The second was a poem called 'To Parents'. When I listened to these fantastic recordings after Dad's death, I really cannot believe what lovely advice he has unwittingly left us. The poems became a huge comfort for me and the whole purpose of writing The Hermitage Suite was to, somehow, include the recording of Ideals with some music accompanying Dad's recording.

When Dad recorded the poem in Saudi there was a very noisy air conditioner in his room. I have tried for years to filter this out of the recording and only recently achieved this with the brilliant Waves Clarity Vx Audio plug-in that has made Dad's voice sound perfect with AI.



I have tried to research the origins of the poem and Carey Holbrook. There was an archive of Holbrook's material at The University of New Mexico and my correspondences with the University discovered that the collection was given to the University in 1978 shortly after Carey Holbrook died in 1974. Ideals is not amongst this collection and I am trying to find his family to discover more. At the very least, the use of the poem could open more people to the beautiful words created by this talented poet.

To have such a great recording of my Dad's voice made the recording of this album very special. You may wonder why I have used so much penny whistle throughout this album. That was another creative decision I made in 1997 when I

wrote The Hermitage Suite. The Celtic flavour of the album is very appropriate given my ancestral heritage of Irish and Scottish roots.

I like to feel that the whistle is my Dad's guiding spirit weaved into the fabric of the songs on the

album. He told me on his deathbed that he would never be far away; I strongly believe him on this one. The meanderings of the whistle throughout the album all conclude perfectly into this reprise where his voice closes the work.

This is the gold your heart will hold,
These are the things that live.



SECRET TRACK - SILENT WONDER THE RETURN OF THE MAN IN THE MOON

This was the secret track that appeared at the end of the CD; a novelty that was used in the 1990s to make the last track longer with a hidden 'easter egg' of a song at the end.

As I discussed in *Lost Star*, *The Man In The Moon* became almost a calling card for me. My old romantic sentiments were always lost in transmission but, at the point of writing this album in 1997, I felt I was ready to step back into the world and embrace relationships once more. *The Man In The Moon* was back.

Inspired by Glenn Miller's timeless melodies, this song allowed me to embark on a journey that, when looked back upon 25 years later, led me down unexpected and fascinating paths. Again, I would have loved the wisdom of my Dad to have guided me along the way but, in a way, he sort of did. The *Ideals* poem has been a wonderful ethical code that I have tried to follow. The unused 'To Parents' poem did feature on a later song called 'Moonbeams And Fairytales' and became great advice on how to raise my three wonderful sons.

The Hermitage Suite stands as my most significant and intimate album, a testament to the growth of my songwriting and a newfound confidence in my artistry. Ironically, it took 25 years for me to summon the courage to present it once again, performing as a solo artist. I have always believed in taking my time with things, and I genuinely hope that you enjoy what you hear.



the man who looked like postman pat



He was 20 when I was born. I was 28 when he died. I still have the first gift he gave me 'Teddy One Leg' bought on the day I was born with his brother Patrick, my godfather. I also have the last gift, a small purple box of Roger and Galit soap, purchased in some far-off airport shop during a long journey home.

I consciously met him for the first time on July 26th 1964, my parent's sixth wedding anniversary. He had returned from national service in

Aden, bearing

wonderful gifts, mosaic studded belts, and a Japanese geisha doll on a music box. He bought a car, the first in our family, I remember it vividly, a brand-new bottle green Cortina, ASG 633B. It had curious rear light sectioned like the CND symbol. We all went to the Poverina for lunch and then off in the car across the Yorkshire Moors to Flamingo Park Zoo.

He got a job as a fitter in the shipyards. We went to the launch of an oil rig 'The Ocean Prince' that he'd worked on. It was an exciting day, the rig later sank.

He spent time in Oban working on the swimming pool. He loved the town. He was so pleased when I came to live here. He never came to see me. There wasn't enough time left.

My husband only knew him as a sick man. The photographs bear testament to this, but I remember him differently. I remember the laughing young man from earlier snapshots, with his mother, the Irish cousins, or solemn and serious in football

team, photos, and a special family portrait taken of my son's christening, during what turned out to be his last summer.

He wasn't at my wedding, he was working in the oil-rich Middle East, an economic migrant, like so many from our Teeside home, after a year of unemployment. I was walking beside a stark autumn shore with my parents, husband, and baby son. We'd walked miles and were on the homeward stretch. I hadn't asked how he was, not wanting to know the answer. "He isn't going to get better," my mother, always ready with a euphemism told me. I thought she meant he'd always be ill, it was October half term, the doctor had given him until Christmas.

I will forever, be impressed and amazed at the way he came to terms with the finality of his illness and prepared himself for death. In immense religious faith and love for and of his family and multitude of friends were his mainstay. He loved life, but accepted death.





For those of us who were to be left behind, it wasn't so easy. We watched his last outings to important places, and a steady deterioration from clothes to pyjamas, from downstairs to the bedroom, from his chair to his bed.

His loved and loving wife, nursed him tirelessly, even decorating the bathroom and fretting over the fact that she hadn't got the usual baking done. We watched endless reruns of Auf Wiedersehen, Pet and talked constantly of the past, but never the future. The house was constantly busy with visitors, some of whom could not control their emotions. He had a nine-year-old son, I had a baby both called Christopher, they lightened the gloom and made

us laugh. He loved my little boy as he had loved me and my brother long before his own three boys were born. He insisted my Chris was to have a humming top for Christmas - it is a treasured toy.

He died on New Year's Eve. I wasn't there. Typical really, I'm the only member of the family not to live within a mile or so of the others. I was at my in-laws celebrating dad's retirement. We found out that night that he'd been awarded an MBE. A time of great sadness for my family was a time of pride and joy for my new relations.

My daughter was born in the months following his death. His wife is her godmother. Next year, my little girl, who we never knew, will be a flower girl and his eldest son's wedding. As the years go by the pain eases, but we all miss him. When I returned home he used to bound in with awful jokes and his latest anti-tory rhetoric. He was always putting the world to rights. My father misses him constantly, especially on match days when they would have been going off to watch The Boro together. Two of his boys are men now, funny, kind and full of enthusiasm, just like he was.

This isn't a sad story because we gained so much from knowing him. Somehow I feel he's always with me guiding my decisions and helping me on my way.

ANNE MARIE MACKIN
NOVEMBER 1991



who was Laurence Mackin?

My Dad Laurence Mackin was born on 10th August 1938 at 25 Lime Road in Teesville, South Bank in Middlesbrough.

This football-crazy lad grew up as the youngest son of Michael and Agnes Mackin with his older brothers Brian and Patrick. The three were inseparable and shared the closest of brotherly friendships.

Laurence attended St Peter's Comprehensive School in South Bank and left school to become an apprentice fitter at Smith Dock's Shipyard. He was compelled to put his career on hold to serve his National Service and was sent to Aden at the time the conflict was just beginning. This adventure led to a fascination with the middle east which resulted in him feeling rather comfortable when the lack of work in the UK took him back to the area in his later life.

He met his beloved wife Patricia Watson at a dance at The Redcar Pier. He thought she might be Irish due to her emerald green dress. She was impressed by his brand new Cortina car and shy demeanour. They fell in love and were married on 23rd March 1968. I was a honeymoon creation (apparently made in Mullaghbawn) and was born in time for my mother to bring me home from the hospital on their first wedding anniversary. Together, they were blessed with two more sons, Michael and Christopher, completing the family that Laurence cherished with unwavering love and pride.

We enjoyed a blissful childhood. A love of walking on the moors, playing football, telling terrible funny jokes and swimming wherever we could; Dad was the biggest kid of the four of us. If he kicked the ball over our neighbour's fence he would race to the kitchen door and shout at us to go and collect it and apologise.....making us take the blame.

He was always full of stories. He would put his slide projector on and show us his slides from Aden. I really believed that a football stud scar on his shin was a bullet wound; he was really that convincing. Although my Grandma Agnes had died in 1967, Dad's stories of her always stuck in my memories and I know so much about this wonderful woman.

He was passionate about the Teesside area and notably how the Thatcher administration had destroyed our industrial heritage leaving Dad and so many of his friends desperately looking for work. He sought employment in Saudi Arabia which took him away from the family that he loved. It did make him realise though that, after cooking for himself, he did like cheese; something he had avoided from being a boy.

He became involved in local support groups for unemployed people. He attended political lectures looking for ways of improving our area. He was a fantastic letter writer and wrote many passionate pleas to politicians in an attempt to change the direction of the policies that were being created. Thursday night's Question time would often inspire fury with him once memorably throwing his slipper at the TV in frustration with what was being discussed. He was a man of principle and his influence on those matters have certainly been transferred to this particular son.





I was just at the age when he would take me for a pint of shandy when he started to become poorly. The illness that took him robbed us of a man who had so much to offer the world. I don't think I have ever recovered from his loss. I have told my own sons many stories of his life and they tell me that they feel that they know him; in a similar way that he illustrated his mother to me through the stories he told me.

What he would have thought of the current state of Teesside and the world remains a matter of speculation. He would have been delighted that his beloved Boro finally won a major trophy in 2004. I do believe that he would have been very proud of his three boys and would have idolised his beautiful grandchildren. I can imagine him still throwing slippers at Question Time in frustration with today's discussions

This album is the closest I get to keeping his spirit alive. His love for humanity will always be his greatest legacy and he created a code of life that I have proudly followed all of mine.

Laurence Mackin's life, in the grand scheme of things, may only have been just a small spot of time, but that life burned so very very brightly and, to those who loved and remember him, it still does today.



the people of influence

When we lost our Dad at such a young and vulnerable age, certain people saw the huge void that Laurence had created and stepped in to offer love and support. They promised him that they would do so and boy, did they keep their word! I am fortunate to reside in one of the most beautiful communities in the world and I feel privileged to know so many people within this community. We certainly felt the love all around.

In my original sleeve notes, I made sure to acknowledge the individuals who stepped in to fill the void left by Laurence's passing. Many of them have since passed away themselves, and their loss has been deeply felt. But their presence enriched my life in immeasurable ways, and I will forever be grateful for the love and support they provided.

My beloved Uncles Brian and Patrick Mackin were Dad's older brothers and both took us boys under their wings along with their wives Auntie Eileen and Auntie Elaine. My Uncle Dennis also did the same along with my Auntie Margie.

Family friend Uncle Jim McParland took us to the Boro games and kept the terrible jokes going as well as taking my Mam out every Saturday night with his gorgeous wife Auntie Barbara and listening to girl talk all night. Tony and Vicky Pattison were also there for us. Joe Mullen, my fantastic former Deputy Head at St Peter's School, became my Piano Teacher and mentor. Kel Dennis, my Trumpet Teacher, gave the same sort of support. My Mam, Nana and Auntie Margie kept us in check as we grew up whilst also trying to come to terms with such a devastating loss. All of these people made me who I am today and I will never forget their kindness to me in helping me deal with the loss of my Dad.

In what has been a rather eventful 35 years of a life filled with music and deep thinking, I have been fortunate to have these amazing people support me in that journey. The Hermitage Suite is a reflection on the man who was Laurence Mackin and a son's conversation with him in an attempt to fathom out how to get through life without him.

My Dad told me, before he died, that he would never be far away. I still believe him to this very day.

David Mackin 2023



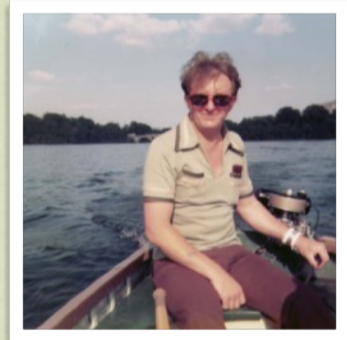
Uncle Brian, Uncle Patrick and Dad



Mam, Auntie Eileen and Auntie Elaine, Uncle Brian and Uncle Patrick



Uncle Dennis with Dad, Michael and Me



Uncle Dennis



Uncle Dennis and Auntie Margie



Tony Pattison



Jimmy McParland



Vicky Pattison, Jimmy and Barbara McParland



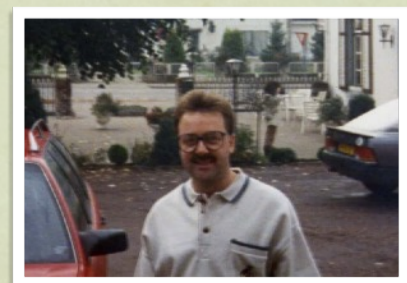
Nanna



Joe Mullen



Joe Mullen with Me



Kel Dennis

the participants

1- Ossian's Hall **(D.A. Mackin)**

David Mackin - Drum Programming, String Arrangements, Piano, Guitar, Bass, Penny Whistle and Vocals

Recorded at Lambton Street and Blue Box Studios

2 - Open Your Eyes Now **(D.A. Mackin)**

David Mackin - String Arrangements, Guitars, Bass, Piano and Vocals

Recorded at Lambton Street and Blue Box Studios

3 - Emotionally Free **(D.A. Mackin)**

David Mackin - Cajon, Guitars, Bass, Piano, Whistles, Mellotron and Vocals

Recorded at Lambton Street and Blue Box Studios

4 - The Blood Of Belfast **(D.A. Mackin)**

David Mackin - Bodhran, Guitars, Bass, Piano, Penny Whistle, String Arrangements and Vocals

Recorded at Lambton Street and Blue Box Studios

5 - Wings **(Brian Bedford)**

David Mackin - Guitar, String Arrangement, Irish Harp and Vocals

Recorded at Lambton Street and Blue Box Studios

6 - Tommy The Trencher **(D.A Mackin & I.M Erving)**

David Mackin - Drums, Guitar, Bass, String Arrangement, Trumpet Solo, Trombone, Tenor Horn and Vocals

Recorded at Lambton Street, Blue Box Studios and Kensington Avenue

7 -As Wise As A Serpent **(Gerry Rafferty)**

David Mackin - Drums, Cajon, Guitar, Bass, String Arrangement, Penny Whistle, Synths and Vocals

Recorded at Lambton Street and Blue Box Studios

8 - Entwined **(D.A. Mackin)**

David Mackin - Drums, Cajon, Guitar, Bass, String Arrangement, Penny Whistle, Synths and Vocals

Recorded at Blue Box Studios

9 - Lost Star **(D.A. Mackin)**

David Mackin - Drums, Guitar, Bass, Mellotron, Penny Whistle, Electric Piano and Vocals

Recorded at Lambton Street and Blue Box Studios

10 - Ben Adhem's Return **(D.A. Mackin)**

David Mackin - Cajon, Guitar, Bass, Mellotron, Penny Whistle, Electric Piano and Vocals

Ian Erving - Vocals

Recorded at Lambton Street and Blue Box Studios

11 - When We Say Goodbye (**D.A. Mackin and M.P Mackin**)

David Mackin - Guitar, Penny Whistle, String Arrangement and Vocals

Recorded at Lambton Street and Blue Box Studios

12 - Ossian's Hall Reprise (Ideals) (**D.A. Mackin and Carey Holbrook**)

Laurence Mackin - Vocal

David Mackin - Celtic Harp, Drum Programming, String Arrangements, Piano, Guitar, Bass, Penny Whistle and Vocals,

Recorded at Lambton Street and Blue Box Studios

12 - Silent Wonder (The Return Of The Man In The Moon) (**D.A. Mackin**)

David Mackin - Guitar, Strong Arrangement and Vocal,

Recorded at Lambton Street and Blue Box Studios

A huge thanks to: Brian Bedford. Martha Rafferty. Nancy Brown-Martinez from University Of New Mexico. Clare Ferguson for being there for me. Anne-Marie Phelps for providing a place to record. John Taylor for mixing original version. The Late Richie Huck for the loan of his beautiful Takamine guitar on which many of the songs were written. Anne-Marie Mackin for use of her story. Ian Erving for being a fantastic collaborator. Lisa, Ben, Reeves and Thomas along with all my family for huge support.

Produced, Engineered and Mastered by David Mackin. Jack of all trades, master of none.



DEDICATED TO LAURENCE MACKIN 1938-1987

