



Hats off to Paul Rodgers

ON the day of the Coca Cola Cup Final replay, I interviewed Paul Rodgers, who most of you will remember as the lead singer of bands such as Free, (*All Right Now* and *Wishing Well*) Bad Company (*Can't Get Enough* and *Feel Like Makin' Love*) and The Firm. (er....skip that one)

He has a new album out entitled 'Now' (SPV records 085 44662) and is at the beginning of a gruelling 18 month world tour, fitting in a few more gigs in the UK in the Autumn.

Paul is a Boro lad, and I touched on his days in Middlesbrough hoping to be able to put a longer article together for mss, but Paul left Middlesbrough at 16.

Even though he used to go and see Boro play a bit in his youth, he has been all over the world these last 28 years (selling more than 125 million albums) and, in his own words, has lost touch. Hardly surprising really. If I'd been able to travel the world in a rock band with all the attendant distractions for nearly 30 years, I'm not sure that my memory bank would bother to retain memories of home defeats by Grimsby on cold February evenings in the early 60's.

It was the huge Stateside success of Bad Company that kept Paul busy and took him out of the country for many years. You can understand him putting Boro on the back burner: "Bad Company was the classic rock n roll excess story. We seemed to do it all; the women, the booze, the drugs, the limousines. We even used to commute from gig to gig in our own private jet. Thankfully though, I came out of it all pretty sane and normal"

Incredibly sane and normal if you ask me. Nothing of the 'superstar' about this guy. I asked him about his childhood: "I was born in Valley Road, which was the same street that Brian Clough lived in, and went to St Joseph's and then St Thomas's school.

"When I was 16, the band I was singing in got a gig for thirty quid in Norwich, which was a fortune for us, but on the way down south, the engine on the van seized up. We decided to hitch hike back to Boro, but then I thought, 'hang on, I don't wanna go back yet', so I crossed the road and hitched down to London on my own". I expressed my astonishment that this apparent rush of blood completely changed the course of his life; I said 'if you'd have gone back, you'd probably be working at ICI now' and he said, "oh no, I'd probably have played for Middlesbrough!"

Paul still enjoys playing football, and is involved, whenever he is available, in a couple of charity teams. He is particularly proud of the fact that in a charity match at Wembley a couple of years back, he scored a goal that was laid on for him by George Best. I asked him if his last visit to Ayresome was Christmas 1974, and after some thinking he said it was about that time, because he was home for Christmas after recording the first Bad Company album. I was pleased at this, because it near as dammit confirms that it was him who Vince and I saw in the Holgate at the Sheffield United match (see mss 108). I mean, c'mon - who else would have dared to go in the Holgate wearing a cowboy hat?



Keogh's korker

- (a) When was the last time that Boro were drawn at home on the opening day of the season and lost?
- (b) In the last ten seasons, Boro have only lost the opening game of the season twice: in which years, and against whom?

Answers opposite

10 good things about being in the Nationwide League

1. Five Boro away games within 100 miles of London (Ipswich, Oxford, Norwich, Swindon, and Portsmouth) but only two in London itself (Charlton and QPR)
2. A new ground to visit as Boro play Crewe in the League for the first time.
3. January 10 1998: Robson resigns after shock 0-1 defeat at Charlton, but reinstates himself after chilling out at MSS annual bash later that night.
4. Dancing in the Underground after promotion is clinched at QPR (4 March).
5. Alan Foggon makes comeback but has fitness problems and is deducted three pints.
6. Ron Atkinson, overcome by sentiment, takes his old job as Oxford United captain for final game of season, on condition that he gets invited to the Fiesta at Stockton afterwards for the booze-up.
7. Before the season is over, Phil Stamp becomes the first Boro born player to notch up 100 appearances for the club since... ooh, must be Tony Mowbray? ***
8. Bring the kids to the matches! It's generally cheaper to get into Nationwide grounds.
9. And here's one reason why it's cheaper: For those of you who have only seen Boro at Premiership grounds, this is what to expect when visiting Reading: a. Don't. b. Well, if you must go, and you are driving, park in any pub car park about a mile from the ground and walk or phone for a cab. Don't try to park near the ground on the roadside or verge because even though there are no signs up, your car will be towed away during the match. c. Get to the turnstile early and have the right money. Last time we missed the first twenty minutes of the match because the turnstiles had run out of change. d. Visit the gents toilet. Ayresome wasn't so bad after all. e. Eat before you get to the ground. Inside the ground, it is served up by three lobotomised Doris's who would struggle to hold down a job on the Pick 'N' Mix at Woolworths, let alone cook a burger through thoroughly.
10. No more trudging home on Saturday night to see Boro lose again on Match Of The Day. We are only gonna see the Boro on there if we do well in the Cups. Roll on Monday night/Tuesday morning 1.30am for Nationwide Round-up. Can't wait. Such excitement. Yawn...
***Unless of course, you know different.

The director's cut

THE Sunday Times 'Rich List' fell through the door again recently. The football millionaires chart, that is, people who have a stake in a football club, and their own personal or family wealth rating, reads like this:

1. Joseph Lewis (Rangers) £3,000m
2. The Moores Family (Liverpool) £1,000m
3. Jack Walker (Blackburn) £550m
4. Steve Morgan (Liverpool) £260m
5. The Gold Brothers (Birmingham) £230m
6. Max Griggs (Rushden & Diamonds) £220m
7. Sir John Hall (Newcastle) £220m
8. John Madjeski (Reading) £200m
9. David Sullivan (Birmingham) £200m
10. Sir Jack Hayward (Wolves) £190m
11. Alan Sugar (Spurs) £186m
12. David Murray (Rangers) £150m
13. Peter Johnson (Everton) £130m
14. Stephen Boler (Man City) £120m
15. Nigel Wray (Notts Forest) £100m
16. Danny Finzman (Arsenal) £90m
17. Chris Wright (QPR) £90m
18. Steve Gibson 85m
19. Martin George (Leicester) £82m
20. Ross Warburton (Bolton)
21. John Wardle (Man City) £75m
22. Fergus McCann (Celtic) 70m

An interesting absentee from last year's listing was Owen Oyston, the chairman of Blackpool, now in prison. I spoke to one of the compilers of the rich list and asked why. He congratulated me on my astute observation, and said he had his reasons but refused to be drawn, muttering words along the lines of 'I was hoping no one would notice'. Wonder what that's all about, eh?

You may remember that last year (in the comprehensive listing), Steve Gibson was joint 212th in the UK, with an estimated fortune of £70m. (see **mss** 113). This year, even though his wealth has increased to £85m, he has dropped to joint 226th.

I bet he's really gutted.

TOO CLOSE

IT'S A very strange thing that we have here in the UK - this 'close season' bit. You spend winter afternoons (such as they are, what with it getting dark at about midday) ploughing through disgusting weather, risking your life on England's motorways just to get to see your team play. And then you wearily drive back to your southern bolt hole cursing our awful climate and longing for some sunshine.

The problem is, that once the sunshine appears, the football disappears, and sitting here in my office on a splendid June afternoon, I want nothing more than to watch Boro this Saturday, but I've got to wait another six bloody weeks.

We've had so many changes to our game in the past decade - all seater stadia, the backpass law, clean toilet facilities that don't smell like open sewers - and hey get this - WITH hand washing facilities, so why can we not have the season changed so that we have seven weeks off in the winter and seven in the summer?

We all love the summer, but wouldn't it be great for Boro to be part of it?

It's not an original idea I know, but am I in a minority, or do most of you agree?

Keogh's Korner Answers:
a) 81-82 v Spurs, 1-3.
b) 88-89 v Derby (away) 0-1.
92-93 v Coventry (away) 1-2