



Bert Jansch Foundation Newsletter No 15, December 2023

Reflections on Bert Jansch at 80!

Compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE, Bert Jansch Foundation trustee

(Find out how to get your souvenir programme of the RFH concert – on page 10)

Bert Jansch died in the early hours of 5 October 2011, aged just 67.

Despite obvious recognition and acclaim throughout his career, Bert himself had always eschewed the limelight and did not see himself as a celebrity. Yet the moment he passed away the media erupted with prominent headlines, pictures, column inches, radio plays and TV tributes, extolling his virtues as a singer-songwriter and guitarist extraordinaire.

On his passing, the Guardian's Derek Schofield wrote:



'Of all the guitarists to emerge from the early days of the British folk music revival [of the 1960s] it was Bert Jansch, who has died aged 67, who had the most sustained influence, not only within folk circles, but also on the wider music scene. To Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page, Jansch was "the innovator of the time ... so far ahead of what anyone else was doing". Johnny Marr of the Smiths described Jansch's effect on his musicianship as "massive ... one of the most influential and intriguing musicians to have come out of the British music scene". Other artists he influenced included Paul Simon, Donovan and Neil Young, with whom Jansch toured in the US in 2010 and 2011.'

The Los Angeles Times reported:

Neil Young was just one of the high-profile artists who celebrated Jansch's evocative songs and virtuosic, rough-hewn fingerpicking. ... In recent years, Jansch was embraced by a younger generation of musicians, led by Devendra Banhart, Bernard Butler, Pete Doherty and Beth Orton.

So how has Bert and his music fared in the last dozen years since his passing?

Pretty darn well I would say – if the 80th Birthday Concert for Bert Jansch at the Royal Festival Hall on 4 November 2023 was anything to go by. Of the 29 artists who took to the stage some were colleagues and contemporaries from the 60s, but more were from younger generations equally enamoured by Bert's legacy and being inspired to express themselves in the spirit of Bert Jansch.



The decade before Bert died:



At the time of Bert's untimely death, his star was riding high. He had found love, contentment and solid support with Loren Auerbach whom he had first met in the 1980s when he wrote songs and played guitar for her albums.

Around the time of their wedding on the Island of Arran in 1999, they had settled down in Kilburn, where they created a beautiful garden, Bert had built his own studio and was working on his next album, *Crimson Moon*. This featured Loren on some vocals, his son Adam on bass, along with collaborations with a new generation of star guitarists; Johnny Marr formerly of The Smiths, and Bernard Butler previously of Suede.



Crimson Moon was issued in 2000 to critical and popular acclaim. Also in 2000, the seminal biography of Bert (and his era) by Colin Harper *Dazzling Stranger Bert Jansch and the British Folk and Blues Revival* was published by Bloomsbury and found a great fanbase. A CD compilation of the same name accompanied the book. Also, that year, a TV documentary about Bert called *Dreamweaver*, was created by Matthew Quinn and shown on Channel 4.



For the rest of the first decade of the 21st century?

With Loren's expertise and support, Bert's renaissance and recognition continued. In February 2001, Bert was honoured with a lifetime Achievement award at the BBC2 Folk Awards. A new album – ***Edge of a Dream*** came out in 2002. Bert's 60th birthday in November 2003 was celebrated with a concert at the Southbank Centre's Queen Elizabeth Hall, where many of his more recent as well as contemporary collaborators joined him on stage. In addition, the BBC4 arranged and broadcast a concert at LSO St Luke's.

All this was clear evidence that Bert's music and artistry had, as Colin Harper said, "survived intact from the 1960s when it first dazzled and inspired." In 2006 another album ***The Black Swan*** – Bert's 23rd – and last – graciously swam out of the Kilburn studio via the USA indie label Drag City.



Gigs in the late 2000s

In 2007 Bert was invited to play at the **Somerset House Summer Series** bringing Bernard Butler and Beth Orton to join him there and at the **Manchester Festival**.

The Manchester Evening News reported

"As transcendent an acoustic gig as I can recall"

In June 2010, after a year of cancer treatment, Bert was invited to perform at Eric Clapton's gigantic Guitar Festival at the Toyota Park Stadium in Bridgeview Illinois.





Pentangle

Just as Bert's personal star was rising, so was that of his groundbreaking band Pentangle: In 2007 for the 40th anniversary of the band's formation in 1967, Colin Harper was commissioned to curate a 4-CD boxed set of Pentangle albums.



The band was invited to accept a BBC Lifetime Achievement award. On the strength of that, the original five members miraculously, with Loren's encouragement, got together again to prepare something for the Radio 2 Folk Award Show. A fully Pentangle UK tour followed, that was met with critical superlatives. Things could not have been better for Bert.

Shock Diagnosis

Then, in 2009, the bombshell came. After taking ill at a routine dental appointment and being rushed to hospital, it was revealed that while his heart was fine, there was a tumour on Bert's lung.

An extensive tour of America that he and Loren had meticulously planned had to give way to chemo- and radio-therapy. Loren who was taking him daily for treatment and feeling terrible, found out that it was not just stress, but that she too had cancer.

Everything changed. From soaring high, life became a struggle for survival for Loren and Bert with the dreadfulness of radiotherapy and chemotherapy – his and hers – followed by periods of remission.



In Remission

They made the most of those periods. Bert was invited to open for Neil Young on his Twisted Road tours across the states. Bert joined Neil four times in 2010 and 2011, also touring with Pegi Young. Loren was able to accompany him three times. Those were glorious and happy times.

Right: Bert in Boston

Below: Loren and Bert in the lakes; at the Cambridge Folk Festival; and on the acoustic stage at Glastonbury.



On returning home in May 2011, there was just time for a restorative Auerbach and Jansch family get together for a memorable week in the Lake District (left) before they plunged once more into a Pentangle Jamboree.

The band enjoyed a return, after a long absence, to the Cambridge Folk Festival in June. Below (left) Bert and Danny are being interviewed in a flowering meadow. And (below right) Pentangle onstage at Glastonbury. (photos by Loren)





Pentangle at the Royal Festival Hall 1 August 2011. (photo Geraldine Auerbach)

The band returned on 1 August 2011, to the Royal Festival Hall where their journey had begun forty-four years earlier. The concert was a triumph – but sadly it was to be Bert’s last public appearance.

Barely two months later Bert passed away at a North London hospice in Loren’s arms. Sadly, she was to follow him just two months after that. They are laid to rest side by side at Highgate Cemetery in a place that Loren chose so that his friends and admirers would find Bert easily – and even those that were not expecting to, might stumble upon him.

Outpouring of love and admiration – Creation of the Bert Jansch Foundation 2013

After Bert’s passing, there was so much love pouring out. So many of Bert’s friends, admirers and fans around the world wanted to express their love and respect and do something. There was no place that they could do so. So close family and associates created an entity in his name that could follow his ethos and be a focus for such attention and at the same time help young folk musicians. And so, the Bert Jansch Foundation (BJF) was established in 2013.

Funds were raised for the Foundation at the Royal Festival Hall tribute concert for Bert’s 70th in December 2013 and again at Celtic Connections ‘Bert Inspired’ concerts in 2017. These have enabled BJF to help dozens of young artists. BJF was also able to focus and bring together an international team of transcribers who had offered transcriptions of Bert’s music, and to create two volumes of *Bert Transcribed - the Bert Jansch Songbook*, published by Hal Leonard in 2017 and



2023. The Foundation has arranged Bert Jansch workshops in London, France and Denmark. During lockdowns, workshops and gigs were organised on Zoom.

Earth Records has brought out the most beautifully thought-out and designed reissues of Bert's albums. Jan Leman's *Acoustic Routes* documentary featuring Bert was re-broadcast and released on DVD. The recording studio at the Cheese and Grain in Frome, Somerset is named for Bert Jansch.

Around the world in 80 plays

Since 2018 in an inspired collaboration with Yamaha, the Bert Jansch Foundation has shepherded five guitars of Bert's favourite kind around the world. A hundred artists, young and old have played them and sent a message and video for Bert. Reading and listening to these has revealed just how much Bert, and his music, still means to musicians of all ages today.

<https://80plays.bertjanschfoundation.org/>

Bert 80: a birthday celebration of Bert Jansch at the Royal Festival Hall



Jacqui McShee of Pentangle at the concert to celebrate Bert Jansch. Photograph: Sonja Horsman/The Guardian

The Guardian's Robin Denslow said of the 80th birthday concert "Both sides of his work were reflected in a surprisingly slick show in which the constantly-changing cast were introduced by the very funny and impressively knowledgeable Stewart Lee. Jansch reached his largest audience with the classic early lineup of [Pentangle](#), who made their debut on this same stage in 1967, and the band's singer Jacquie McShee opened and closed the show with folk-jazz favourites from the era.



“Bert’s admirers in the 60s included Led Zeppelin, and **Robert Plant** has kept his memory alive, recording two of his songs with Alison Krauss on *Raise the Roof* (2021). Here, playing with his Saving Grace band, he started out on bass guitar as he joined Suzi Dian for a fine and gently gutsy treatment of *It Don’t Bother Me*. (Photo: Anete Lapsa, Earth Recordings)



“Bernard Butler once with Suede, played an important part in bringing Jansch’s music to a new generation, and he played a key role here, first with his electric guitar reworking of *Fresh As a Sweet Sunday Morning*, then providing backing for Sam Lee and Kathryn Williams.

“Bernard Butler (holding one himself) also brought on stage four young guitarists each one bearing a modern version of Bert’s favourite LL series guitars and led them through an adventurous treatment of *Veronica*.



From left: **Chris Brain** with the Graham Guitar (USA), **Daisy Rickman** with the Pilgrim (England and Scotland), **Louis Campbell** with the Wildcard that had been all over the UK and Ireland. **Sam Grassie** played the Beth that had criss-crossed the UK and **Bernard Butler** himself played the Johnny – named for Johnny Marr who initiated the journey before the guitar travelled to Belgium, Holland, France, Denmark, Israel and Italy for some spectacular performances.



The cast of Bert80 *Strolling down the Highway* (Photo: Anete Lapsa, Earth Recordings)

In *The Times*, Will Hodgkinson said: “It is extremely hard to copy Jansch’s playing style so most people didn’t bother. Sam Lee sang *Blackwaterside* acapella; James Yorkston was joined by an Indian singer Ranjana Ghatak; Jon Thorne on bass reworked traditional songs from Jansch’s repertoire, while percussionist Sarathy Korwar led his sax and cello trio through his instrumental pieces, *Osprey* and *The Black Swan*. It was a moving and impressive tribute.”

And *The Guardian* concluded: “All thirty or so artists came together at the end for Jansch’s *Strolling Down the Highway* which was frankly all over the place, but it didn’t matter. By then this three-hour celebration had captured the spirit of Bert Jansch perfectly.” (See the setlist for this concert on page 12.)

It’s clear that Bert’s star is still high in the sky, despite his physical absence for the last twelve years. Interest grows from all quarters and all parts – not just from one source. The Bert Jansch Foundation is the recipient and focus of much activity but not the creator. Here’s looking to the next decade – and beyond...

A musician who really did deserve to be regarded as a legend!

It’s worth repeating what Robin Denselow in *The Guardian* wrote at the time of his passing: “Bert Jansch was that rarity, a musician who really did deserve to be regarded as a legend, and who retained that status throughout his career. He was an extraordinary guitarist and a thoughtful



songwriter, and generations of would-be pickers sat at his concerts watching his fingerwork, with envy and astonishment.”

Guitarists and admirers can now watch many of his videos on YouTube; learn to play his pieces from the transcription books; savour all the re-released albums; and enjoy the new music produced by younger artists that were directly inspired by Bert Jansch – the man and his music.

Souvenir programmes: You can still get one! (or more)

If you were not able to be at the 80th birthday concert for Bert Jansch, you can still get a copy of the beautiful souvenir brochure, as sold on the night for £5. Hailed as ‘A work of Art’, it has 28 pages (A5 size) with photographs and biographies of Bert and all the artists. There are pages on the Bert Jansch Foundation and the Bert Transcribed volumes 1 and 2, as well as photos from the worldwide journey of the guitars in ‘Around the World in 80 Plays’.

To get your copy of the souvenir programme go to the Bert Jansch Foundation website, scroll down to the ‘donate’ button and donate £5 (We will not charge you for any postage) <https://bertjanschfoundation.org/>. (For £7.50 we will be happy to post you three programmes - again without charging postage). Make your reference ‘programme 1’ or ‘programme 3’

Then send an email to info@bertjanschfoundation.org with your name and address, so we can send the programmes to you.

Bert Jansch Wallpaper rolls for sale

To celebrate the 80th birthday of Bert Jansch BJF has created some exclusive ‘Wallpaper’ consisting of a compilation of photos, album covers, tickets and posters all about Bert Jansch throughout his career (see below). The size of this is: width 62cms wide and the Height 130cm. it won’t exactly cover a wall – but it would look grand on the back of a door for instance. (see the picture of the wallpaper below, on the next page)

We are offering just ten of these rolls at £50 each to the first comers. Make your payment on the donate button on the Bert Jansch Foundation website: <https://bertjanschfoundation.org/> with the ref ‘Wallpaper’. Then contact info@bertjanschfoundation.org to say that you have made your donation and send us your address to which to send the wallpaper.





Set List

JACQUI McSHEE & KEVIN DEMPSEY & MIKE PIGGOTT

I've Got A Feeling
O'er the Lonely Mountain

MARTIN SIMPSON & LOUIS CAMPBELL

Angie

MARTIN SIMPSON & LOUIS CAMPBELL & JON THORNE

Blues Run the Game

BRIGID MAE POWER & STEVE GUNN

Tell Me What Is True Love
She Moved Through The Fair

BERNARD BUTLER & CAIMIN GILMORE

Poison
Fresh As a Sweet Sunday Morning

JAMES YORKSTON & RANJANA GHATAK & JON THORNE

Sovay
High Germany

ROBERT PLANT'S SAVING GRACE

It Don't Bother Me
Gospel Plow

INTERVAL

SAM LEE

Blackwaterside

SAM LEE & BERNARD BUTLER & BRIGID MAE POWER
& CAIMIN GILMORE & JAMES KEAY

The Moon Shines Bright/Wild Mountain Thyme

AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 PLAYS Ensemble:

BERNARD BUTLER, CHRIS BRAIN, DAISY RICKMAN,
LOUIS CAMPBELL & SAM GRASSIE
Veronica

SARATHY KORWAR & TAMAR OSBORN & DANNY KEANE

The Black Swan
Osprey

KATHRYN WILLIAMS & MARTIN SIMPSON
& LOUIS CAMPBELL

Needle of Death

KATHRYN WILLIAMS & BERNARD BUTLER
& LOUIS CAMPBELL & JON THORNE

Crimson Moon

CHRIS BRAIN

Morning Brings Peace of Mind

ROBERT PLANT'S SAVING GRACE

Go Your Way (My Love)
Cuckoo

JACQUI McSHEE & KEVIN DEMPSEY & MIKE PIGGOTT

Travelling Song

TUTTI

Strolling Down The Highway