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Interview
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That elusive lady Sandy Denyn finally talked to me after three months of persistent pestering on my part - during which time she almost deserved comparison to that equally silent woman of the movies, Garbo. But there the comparison ends, and Sandy has now, as we say, pushed herself out of her self-made shell.

She discussed in detail the progress of her career, from being a wandering folk minstrel while at art college to becoming one of Britain's most talented and respected vocalists and songwriters.

The career has included spells in the Strawbs, Fairport Convention and Fotheringay. Now a concert performer, she is still continuing her association with Richard Thompson and Pat Donaldson, an old associate in Fotheringay who has joined with her.

STEWARD: At art college you were performing as a solo artist. What made you decide to join the Strawbs?

DENNY: I don't know. I wasn't really looking to join a group. But they asked me, and I thought 'oh, well it's something to do'. I mean, I wasn't looking forward or backwards. Anyway, it didn't last all that long, because I wasn't doing what I wanted to do. Not that I didn't like them all - I really had some good times.

STEWARD: Was it from the Strawbs that you went into Fairport?

DENNY: No, I left the Strawbs and just started back on what I did before: going around concerts and the clubs. Actually, I did more concerts after I left them - not quite so many clubs. Then about nine months or a year after that I joined the Fairports.

STEWARD: It was with them you came into prominence as a good vocalist. Did Fairport help you to develop?

DENNY: I don't know. You see I've never really had any definite plan. Even when I left college to sing professionally I didn't have any future thoughts in my mind. I just wanted to do something from day to day, which is something that I always do.

Like, I'm not very good at making clothes because I want them to be completely finished immediately, and that's the trouble with me - because I always live for the moment. And I don't really know whether Fairports helped me, or whether I was just going on from day to day as I always was going to anyway. It just so happened that I bumped into them, and it developed into quite a long relationship. But I think I must have acquired an awful lot more musical ideas from them than I might have done from any other group. Their influences are so mixed. Our tastes began to develop together, and also in different channels if you know what I mean, which is why people have always been branching out from Fairport. I mean, I don't know what is going to happen now, but I think it will carry on as it always was.

I think we've all helped each other in a lot of ways.

STEWARD: Why did you leave Fairport?

DENNY: It was very...I get strange mental aberrations at times, and I'm also very frightened of flying. And we were just about to embark on a tour of the States, and I wasn't very stable at the time in my head. I just didn't think I could face it, and now I'm glad that I didn't. I just started getting very nervous and I thought that was it.

STEWARD: Why, then did you help form Fotheringay?

DENNY: I don't know.

STEWARD: The point I want to make is, do you feel happier playing in a group format?

DENNY: Yes, well I do really. I've never owned up to being a guitar player for instance, although I have been playing guitar ever since I became a professional singer. But one has to own up that I'm not the greatest. There are so many things that can be done with the music that accompanies a song, and I think it is so much more creative having a whole lot of people doing it. You see, if I do play something it will either be on piano or guitar. A group can embellish the song, where I might not be able to.

STEWARD: Fotheringay split during the making of the second album. Do you feel that you were developing as a performer during the Fotheringay period?

DENNY: Yes I did actually. At the time that Fotheringay split I think they were really...well, we put one truck down, and this is the day I remember most of all. We did it in two takes. It was a song we'd been playing for about a week, and it was really great. I suddenly remember getting up from the piano and thinking 'wow, that really was great,' and when we listened to it back it was then. We broke up about a week later. It was really quite amazing the feelings that flowed around. It was quite a strained affair to say the least.

STEWARD: And what feelings did you come out with?

DENNY: I don't know...I felt very void because everyone kept asking me of going solo, which is something that I've never actually said I was going to do. When I say solo I mean on the stage in my own - that is what solo means.
Although in some respect you can never recover from the rest of the group, and literally call them your backing group, I’ve never wanted to do that with the people I play with, because I don’t look down to them in any way whatever, in fact I look up to them.

TRAVELLING: Well, they are human beings and they happen to be putting their channels of energy into some other musical instrument. From time to time in the future I may do a gig or two completely on my own. But I won’t make a habit of it, because I prefer travelling with people, and also playing with them on stage. I like the feelings that come over.

STEWART: I think it was more the publicity that came with your first album and appearances that led to the belief it was the solo Sandy Deny. You weren’t billed as a member of the group.

DENNY: Yes, but I can’t do anything about that. There are advertisements for my album that I got really annoyed with, but I can’t do anything about it without creating an amazing fuss. I’m not really into it.

Like for instance that poster with the drawing on it, a line drawing thing. It said that it was my first solo album and all that kind of thing. Well, I hadn’t even seen that before it went out.

STEWART: Let’s turn to your songwriting. That did develop through Fo shortage and was given an explanation of what you were going to do after the split. But was it with Fairport that your writing first started to show itself?

DENNY: No, it’s not quite. Because I wrote most of the songs in Fotheringay, and I didn’t really write very much with Fairport at all. It was only when I left them that I really started to write. Because the ones that I wrote before I joined Fairport are things like “Who Knows Where The Time Goes,” and it was a very strange time...

STEWART: Yes, I noticed on the albums you did with Fairport, and with your other work, that there wasn’t a great deal of your own material. But you did write with Richard Thompson in Fairport, and then Trevor Lucas in Fotheringay, and I thought there must have been some reaction from other musicians that enabled you to do so.

DENNY: Well, funny enough I think that my first songwriting influences came well before that, from somebody called Jackson Frank. He’s an American bloke who made one album over here just called “Jackson Frank.” Paul Simon produced it.

I really loved the way he wrote, and he probably had more effect on me than anyone. Because I still hear his influences in my songwriting now. And I think with all the other influences that I’ve come in contact with since then, I have developed along my own lines, but still with this classical background of music.

STEWART: What is it that inspires you to write?

DENNY: Sounds, just sounds. STEWART: And the influences to write them?

DENNY: I don’t know, it’s so funny. I can’t tell you. I can’t tell you about my songs. They’re strange. They’re about people. I don’t know why they are — they just come out like that. I try to write a bit more cheerfully, but it doesn’t always come off.
THE NORTH STAR GRASSMAN
AND THE RAVENS
by SANDY DENNY

Slowly

1. They stood up on the deck... as the ship went out to sea... The

wind it took the sails... and left the land... a memory...

All up on the shore... for to wonder why... the sail... or go.

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All to close their eyes and wonder what the sailor knows.
That is you to them, that is how they think you are,

Never on the land, but sailing by the North Star.

2. To the tower and to the ravens,
And the tale which hopes they'll never leave.
What if they should go?
We always dreads to think of them.
I wonder if they flew one day,
And no-one ever knew they'd gone.
To circle over ships at sea,
Claiming yet another son.

That is you to me,
That is where I think you are,
Never on the land,
But gone to find the North Star.
CRAZY LADY BLUES

by SANDY DENNY

Slowly

1. Missed the morning rise before noon.

She's a lazy lady today.

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Al-ways yawn-ing, you with your eyes on the moon.

You're a cra-zy la-dy, I'd say.

2. Now should I say more, for I know so well,
And you're no lacy maiden in grey.
How can I be sure, it's not easy to tell,
But you're a crazy lady, I'd say.
Crazy lady.
NEXXT TIIIME AROUUUNND

by SANDY DENNY

Slowly

D

1. Then came the quees- tion and it was a-bout time...

A

The

am7

answer came back and it was long...

Bb

The

d

house it was built by some man in a rhyme, But

Am
what-ev-er came of his tal-ent-ed son?

Who wrote me a dia-logue set to a tune?
Always you told me of being a-lone,

ex-cept for the sto-ries a-bout God and you.
And
2. They put up the walls with no more to say,
   Nobody stopped to ask why it was done.
The stream was too far and the rain was too high,
   So into the cities the river did run.
Because of the architect the buildings fell down,
   Smothered or drowned all the seeds which were sown.
I wish I were somewhere, but not in this town,
   Maybe the ocean next time around.

3. I seem to remember the face and the name,
   But if it's not you I won't care.
I know of changes, but nothing could change you
   To Theo the sailor who sings in his lair.
And then I'll turn and he won't be there,
   Dusty black windows to light the dark stair.
Candles all gnarled in the musty air,
   All without flames for many's the year.
JOHN THE GUN

by SANDY DENNY

Slowly

VERSE

Em

1. My shadow follows me wherever I should chance to go,

Em

John the Gun did say. If you should chance to meet me as I

D

wander to and fro,

Em

Sad would be your day.

Em

2. My
life was mine and the light did shine till the guns they did go thru me,

So now I shall never fall I deals of peace are gold which foes have found up on the plains of war I shall destroy

CHORUS

them all Put a-way your guns of steel Death
3. I am the master of the games
   Which you will hardly ever play.
   So I will teach your sons,
   And if they should die
   Before the evening of their span of days,
   Why, then they will die young.

4. Condemn me not
   For always will I play the game of war,
   In moonshine or in sun,
   And if any cross the path I choose to tread,
   Their chances they are poor.
   My name is John the Gun.
To cross the wide sea I deserted,
From the shore I did fly,
I thought it time that I travelled, so I
took to the roads of the sky.
It was late and the wind it did gently blow,
Oh, the night it was calm.
I saw the flower of the ocean, And the universe did me no harm. It said to fly on. The sea captain loved the ocean.

But his ship was on fire. His hands they did stretch out before him, For to take one of many desires, But there was no time.
cross the wide sea he de-parti-ed, From the ship he did fly. He thought it time that he trav-elled, And

I saw him as he passed by. And I saw him as he passed by.
BLACKWATERSIDE

Traditional
Arr. SANDY DENNY

1. One evening fair, I took the air down by Blackwater side.
   'Twas gazing all around me when the rich lad I spied.

2. All through the first part of the night
   We did lie in sport and play,
   When this young man arode and he gathered his clothes,
   Saying fare thee well today.

3. That's not the promise that you gave to me
   When first you lay on my breast,
   You could make me believe with your lying tongue
   That the sun rose in the west.

4. Go home, go home to your father's garden,
   Go home and weep your fill,
   And think upon your own misfortune
   Which you brought with your wanton will.

5. There's not a girl in this whole town
   As easily led as I,
   And when the sky does fall and the seas they run dry,
   Why, it's then you'll marry I.
LATE NOVEMBER

by SANDY Denny

Slowly

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2. The wooded ravine to the wandering stream,
The serpent he moved, but no-one would say,
The depths of the waters, the bridge which distraught us,
And brought to me thoughts of the ill-fated days.

3. The temples were filled with the strangest of creatures,
One played it by ear on the banks of the sea,
That one was found but the others they went under,
Oh, the tears which are shed, they won't come from me.

4. The methods of madness, the pithos and the sadness,
God help you all, the insane and wise,
The black and the white, and the darkness of night,
I see only smoke from the chimneys arise.

5. The pilot he flew all across the sky and woke me,
He flew solo on the mercury sea,
The dream it came back, all about the tall brown people,
The sacred young herd on the phosphorous sand.
But you see the wa-t-er
and watch it flow and float an empty shell.
And you think that I am
hid-ing from the is
2. Time? What is that? I've no time to care.
I've lived for a long while nearly everywhere.
You will be taken, everyone, you ladies and you gentlemen.
Fall and listen with your ear on the paving stone.
Is that what you hear? The coming of the sea?

3. Sea flows under your doors in London Town,
And all your defences are all broken down.
You laugh at me on sunny days, but mine's the slight of hand.
Don't you know I am a joker, a deceiver?
And I'm waiting for the land.
NOTHING MORE

by SANDY DENNY

Slowly

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2. Oh, the pearls that you hold in your hand,
   They are beautiful to see,
   But you show them not to anyone,
   Not even me.
   For you are like the others, he said,
   I never can be sure
   That you wish just to see the pearls,
   And nothing more.

3. Why can you not see reason?
   Our lives they are not long,
   Why can you take no time
   To tell us all we're wrong?
   My tune it does not change, he said,
   And neither does your song,
   And words, I use them rarely,
   When I'm all alone.
PEACE IN THE END

By SANDY DENNY and TREvor LUCAS

Moderately

La la la la la la, La la

Come on, Ma-

-ry re you, John, to which re-
bours to come and sing songs,

- tion do you be-long? You and your lo-
- are we left be-long? We have our lo-
- ed to all a-long— I’ve seen them smile— for their friends,

peace in the end. What about me,

hope in the end. all in the end.

You may think our lives are forever. I think you could be wrong. But if we were together together.

I know we could get on. Go ask your neigh-

D. at Coda
La la la la la, La la la la la

I've seen them stand at the top of the hill, and

La la

But who will be the last one to kill, and

nose of them coming down.

who will be the clown?

Come on, Ma-

D.M. and fade
WINTER WINDS

by SANDY DENNY

1. Winter winds they do blow cold,
The time of year it is chosen.

Now the frost and fire, and now the sea is frozen.

2. He who sleeps, he does not see
The coming of the seasons,
The falling of a dream
Without a time to reason.

3. When she walks through evil
Or the paths of broken illusions,
Carefully now she lives
For she has mended her confusion.

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THE POND AND THE STREAM

by SANDY DENNY

Moderately

Anne wanders on the land. She loves the freedom of the air.
leaving here tomorrow to find a new town far away.

one who loves to smile, to show that she is free.

She finds a friend in every place she goes. There's always a
She says, "Won't you come too? You need a break.

But is she thinking now it's time to wander

face she knows, somewhere new.

I wish that I was there.

And find another day.

Back again,

To see her friends and me.

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BANKS OF THE NILE

Traditional

Arr. SANDY DENNY

Moderately

1. Oh hark, the trumpets do beat,
my love. No longer can we stay.

The bugle horns are sounding

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clear, And we must march away.

We're ordered down to Ports-

mouth, And it's many's the weary mile.

To join the British army.
2. Oh Willie, dearest Willie, don't leave me here to mourn,
Don't make me curse and rue the day that ever I was born.
Oh, the parting of our love would be like parting with my life,
So stay at home, my dearest love and I will be your wife.

3. Oh, my Nancy, dearest Nancy, sure, that will never do.
The Government has ordered, and we are bound to go.
The Government has ordered, and the Queen she gives command,
Am I bound enough, my love, to serve in a foreign land.

4. But I'll cut off my yellow hair, and I'll go along with you,
I'll dress myself in uniform, and I'll see Egypt too.
I'll march beneath your banner while fortune it do smile,
And we'll comfort one another on the banks of the Nile.

5. But your waist it is too slender, and your fingers they are too small,
The sultry suns of Egypt your rosy cheeks would spoil.
Well, the cannons they do rattle and the bullets they do fly,
And the silver trumpets sound so loud to hide the dismal cries.

6. Oh, cursed be those cruel wars, that ever they began,
For they have robbed our country of many a handsome man,
For they robbed us of our sweethearts. Why, their bodies they feed the lions,
On the dry and sandy deserts which are the banks of the Nile.
In Nottamun Town, not a soul would look up, Not a soul would look up,
Not a soul would look down, Not a soul would look up, Not a soul would look down,
To show me the way to fair Nottamun Town.

2. Met the king and the queen,
   And a company more
   Come a-walking behind
   And a-riding before.
   Come a stark naked drummer
   A-beating the drum,
   With his hands on his bosom,
   Come marching along.

3. Sat down on a hard,
   Hard cold frozen stone,
   Ten thousand stood 'round me,
   Yet I was alone.
   Took my hat in my hands
   For to keep my head warm,
   Ten thousand got drowned
   That never was born.
FOTHERINGAY

by SANDY DENNY

1. How oft-ten
2. The evening hour in
3. Her days of preci-ous

she has gazed
fading
from cas-tle win-dows o'er,
with-in the dwindling sun,
And wash-ed the day-light
And in a lone-ly
To live such fruit-less
fading
free-dom,
for-feit-ed long be-fore,
To live such fruit-less
fading
free-dom,
for-feit-ed long be-fore,
To live such fruit-less

pass-ing
moment
years
with-in her cap-tive wall,
those em-bers will be
gone,
with no one
And the last of all
But those days
pass-ing
moment
years
with-in her cap-tive wall,
those em-bers will be
gone,
with no one
And the last of all
But those days
pass-ing
moment
years
with-in her cap-tive wall,
those em-bers will be
gone,
with no one
And the last of all
But those days

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to heed her call.
the young birds flown.
will last no more.
To-morrow at this hour,
she will be far away,
Much farther than these
islands or the lonely.
Father in gay.
AUTOPSY

by SANDY DENNY

Moderately

You must philosophize,
read 'round the eyes,
spend all your time crying.

But why must you bore me to
ty me things no one else
crying the hours into
tears.

2. You're hears.

3. You years.

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Crying the hours into years.
ow-ing what you see,
For re-mem-ber that you're free.

And that's what you want to be,
So just lend your time to me.

years.
CODA
COME ALL YE

Moderately

Come, all you roving minstrels,

And together we will try to

rouse the spirit of the air, And move the

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1. Those that dance will start to dance—

And those who don’t will sway in time to this our mer-ry—

tune—That we play for you to-day.
2. Our fiddler, he just loves to play.
   That's why he plays so good.
   And now he plays a violin
   Made out of solid wood.
   Chorus

3. Possessor of the magic touch.
   But no magician,
   He will play for you some magic notes
   Instead as you will see.
   Chorus

4. The sound of beating on his drums
   From behind you'll hear,
   And to the rhythm of guitar
   We hope you'll lend an ear.
   Chorus

5. The man who plays the bass does make
   Those low notes you can hear.
   The high notes come from you and me
   For we will sing so clear.
   Chorus
WRETCHED WILBUR
by SANDY DENNY

Slowly

The summer was— the reason why it took so long to see— That
even if I do possess some seeds of honesty— There is no

garden, so how come I have no land? I shall be waiting here a while

to see what comes to hand—

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Mis-ers mise and com-pro mise; I know what I have seen. The
wan der-ers are in the east. That's where I should have been, but I did not
— go there; I couldn't find the way. I do believe I made a try,
but I really couldn't say. Oh,
that wretched Wilbur, he keeps ploughing up the land.

He fights the battle thoughtfully with roses in his hands, but where is the fight now? So play us your merry song.

The autumn it has blown away, and the winter it is long.
A SAILOR'S LIFE

Rubato

Traditional
Arr. FAIRPORT CONVENTION

1. A sailor's life, it is a merry life.
He robs young girls of their hearts de-light, leaving them behind to weep.

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2. Well, there's four and twenty all in a row
   My true love he makes the finest show.
   He's proper tall, genteel and all
   And if I don't have him I'll have none at all.

3. Oh, father, build for me a bonny boat,
   That on the wide ocean I may float.
   And every queenship that we pass by,
   Their island choir for my sailor boy.

4. Oh, they had not sailed long on the deep
   When a queen ship they chanced to meet.
   You sailors all, pray tell me true,
   Does my sweet one sail among your crew?

5. Oh no fair maiden, he is no more,
   For he's been drowned, we bring him here
   On yon green island as we passed it by,
   There we lost sight of your sailor boy.

6. Well she wound her heart and she tore her hair.
   She was like a young girl in great despair.
   And her little boat against the rock did run,
   How can my real love, my sweet William is gone.
THE OPTIMIST
by SANDY DENNY

Slowly

1. The steps he took were nice and easy.

He never knew he could stumble and gaw down.

As he saw the buildings and the mountains crumble, over the road he would
take to the town.

He said,
"Next year I'm coming back, I'll see you later..."

It takes longer when you're far away.

"This year I'm coming back, I'll see you later..."

It takes longer when you're far away.

Next year there will be many flowers..."
2. There's a tale which says he was pursued by an assassin,
    What he knows of that, no-one can tell,
    How close he came to the trapper,
    But he stopped by a wishing well.
    He said, "Next year there will be many flowers,
    Each one much brighter than the one before."

3. As he turned he caught the feeling,
    And he smiled as he walked down the road.
    All my days they are filled with meaning,
    But I have yet to fathom the code.
    But next year I'll call the tune and it won't be easy,
    The timing's all out of place with how you feel.
In the summer of 1970, readers of "Melody Maker" voted Sandy Denny Britain's No. 1 girl singer.

In a trio she was "discovered" by the nation's daily press who were labouring under the illusion that the only ladies working as singers were called Dusty, Cilla, Sandie and Lulu.

So it was that, after more than four years as a folk club singer, as a member of the Strawbs, lead singer with Fairport Convention and the instigator of Fotheringay, Sandy Denny became a star.

And, such is the lady's way, that she promptly packed up what she was doing and announced her temporary retirement. She did not, she said, want to get into the stardom bit.

Sandy Denny is pretty casual about herself, and gets as much enjoyment out of being called a star as she gets pleasure from just getting up on a stage with a guitar or piano for accompaniment, and singing a bunch of nice songs.

Sandy is 23, and made her debut at a London suburban folk club called "The Bale". She decided to get up when she heard the girl there doing a lesser job than she knew she could do.

A year later she left art college, her diary already pretty full with club bookings. The money wasn't great, but Sandy decided singing was a better way to earn a living than anything else she could think of.

For two years she worked solo, then was asked by the early Strawbs to work with them. She did, briefly, gained confidence, and then replaced Judy Dyble as lead lady with Fairport Convention, sharing vocal duties with Ian Matthews.

She also consolidated her songwriting reputation when American singer Judy Collins recorded and had a hit with her "Who Knows Where The Time Goes?".

The time came, as it eventually does with talent, like Sandy's, that she outgrew Fairport Convention and her own band, Fotheringay, became more than a passing idea and more of a necessity.

Fotheringay lasted one album. A good one which promised great things, but the heavy pressures which arose from being fully responsible for keeping four musicians in work, and the unwaxed glare of publicity which MMM still win money, was too much for her.

Not that Sandy was ungrateful for the award, just that she got a bit embarrassed by the ensuing fuss.

So the wheel has turned full circle, and Sandy is on her own again - albeit assisted by some of the friends she has worked with along the way.

She made her solo debut, or re-debut, at the Lincoln Festival with such names as The Byrds, The Stooges and Taylor.

One reviewer, Robin dinner, writing in the said columns of "The Guardian", said of her appearance: "Sandy Denny showed what an extremely fine and original singer she is. Sounding happier than in her other two bands, and performing the spitter, brooding ballads from her forthcoming album, she demonstrated at last the full range and subtlety of her voice, which is equal to wistfully heavy rock, or her arrangements of traditional songs like 'Black Waterfall'. Here was the most encouraging performance of the festival."

In September, Sandy is to make her first visit to America as an artist after playing London's Queen Elizabeth Hall and her solo album "The North Star Grassman and The Rovers" will be released.