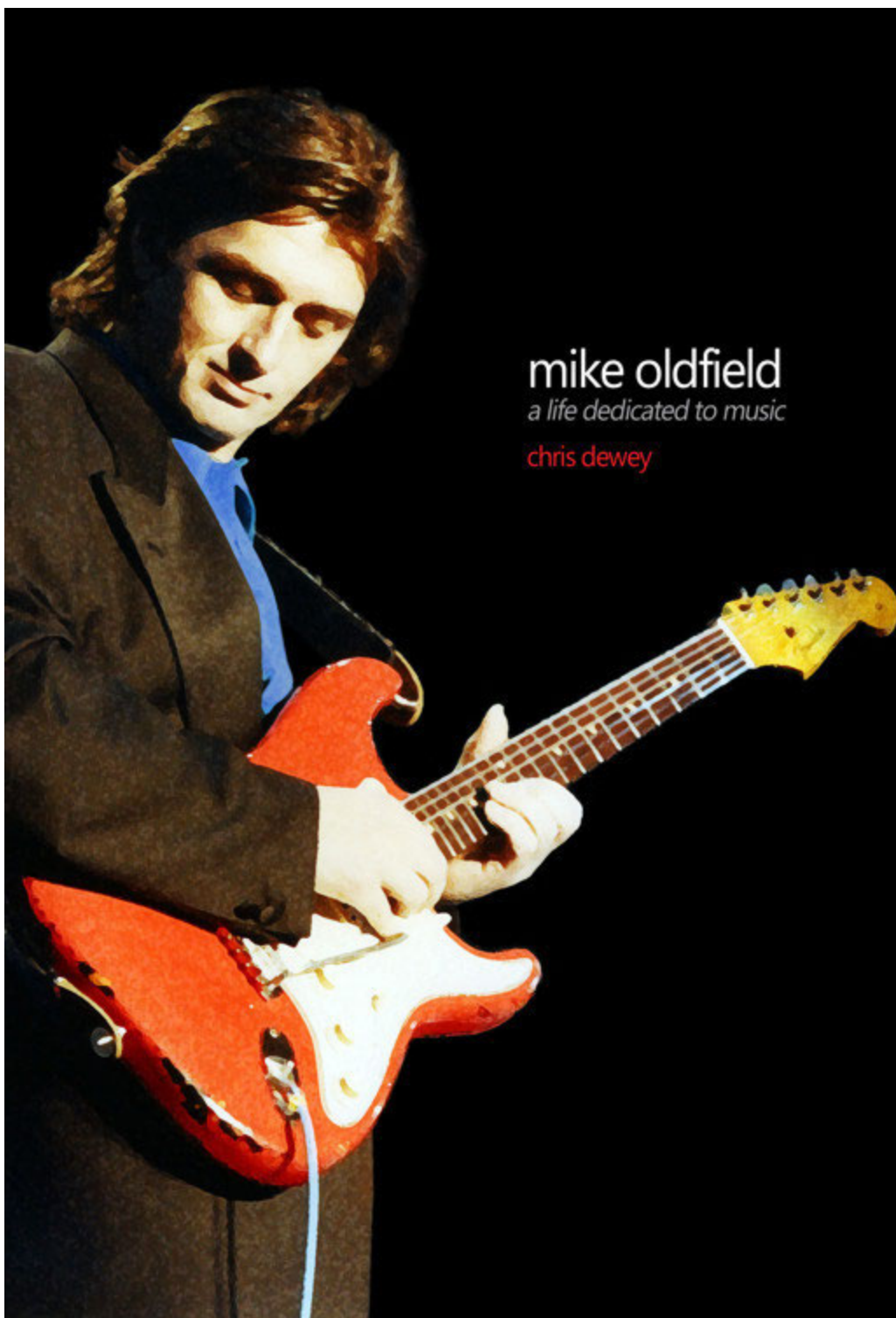


mike oldfield

a life dedicated to music

chris dewey



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mike oldfield

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chris dewey

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This book is dedicated to

great but departed friends

who are no longer able to share my passion for

Mike Oldfield's music

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acknowledgements

John, Paul, Michael, David, Thomas, Philip, my sons Jacob and Sam and particularly to my wonderful wife, Linda for help writing the book; thank you everyone for your support and contributions.

Key publications referenced within this book include:

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foreword

My introduction to Mike Oldfield happened through someone else's misfortune. Aged sixteen, I was working in a bicycle shop on Saturdays to earn some extra money. Not the kind of place for a musical education, you might think, but a blaring radio was present throughout the day. The mechanic was a keen audiophile with a passion for good hi-fi and buying lots of records! I was lucky enough to get his hi-fi cast-offs and regular loan of items from his extensive vinyl collection, which had a profound effect on my musical upbringing. I soaked up music and with the money I was earning, I too started buying records.

What has a bicycle shop and a mechanic to do with a book about Mike Oldfield? The shop was very busy, all manner of people from Dads fixing their kids' bikes, to teenagers pimping their rally bikes, people keeping their main mode of transport on the road and young ladies. The mechanic had designs on an attractive young lady who was a regular visitor and was desperate to go out with her. Wondering how best to approach this, he bought two tickets to a concert and plucked up the courage to ask her on a date, figuring if he had the tickets it would be much harder for her to say no. Sadly for him, she declined on that occasion, (for the

concerned, that story has a happy ending, they later got together and married!) and one Saturday morning I was greeted with a rather crest-fallen mechanic relaying the bad news and asking if I was up for going to a Mike Oldfield concert. "Yeah, why not" I said. "Who's Mike Oldfield?" I said to myself. It turned out he had front row tickets to the Platinum tour at Wembley. Maybe not quite the great night the mechanic was hoping for, but for me it was a revelation. The seats were right in front of the PA. I remember standing on my seat, dancing to the music pounding from the speakers and getting told to sit down by the security people, only to jump up again when they had moved on. I'd not experienced anything like that before. I was deaf and exhausted by the end (my hearing partially returned the following day!), but I had a tremendous night. That was the beginning...

I started saving to buy records, writing to Virgin Records to ask for signed photos (every couple of months!) and briefly helped out the Unofficial Information Service. Janet Arnold's information service was next and followed by Dark Star, which is how Chris Dewey and I got to know each other, through my subscription to the magazine. Chris was looking for a co-editor following the departure of Peter Evans, whose *Music from the Darkness* was one of the first books about Mike Oldfield. Following my response to a questionnaire, I was short-listed and then selected as the lucky recipient of the post, unpaid of course. It was an outlet for one of my passions and one that I could share with like-minded people such as Chris.

So began a friendship that has lasted over sixteen years and one which has shared the many opportunities that have come our way from being part of Dark Star. Most of them quite unbelievable, from invitations to listen to albums before they are released or even finished, to writing material for the record companies, organising concert ticket allocations for subscribers, getting backstage passes to gigs and going to album launch and after-show parties. The list goes on and for me personally, having many opportunities to visit the studio, meeting Mike, getting a private demo of his MusicVR project and being asked by him if I would write the Then and Now tour brochure notes. This led to Virgin asking me to write the sleeve notes to the Best of Tubular Bells album. What were everyday occurrences in these circles were treasures for a fan like me, and created an incredible collection of memories. I feel blessed.

Not content with this, Chris has taken all of this one stage further. With his long pedigree in putting together Mike Oldfield magazines, he felt that these experiences and those from people associated with him should be compiled into a book. Mike's career had yet to be told from the perspective of the people around him. There are few better placed to gather together all of the material created over the years and infuse this with the comment and fresh perspectives from those people that know or have worked with Mike over the years. It is remarkable, given the amount of material already written, that new information and facts have emerged through the research and interviews involved in compiling this book. This work brings all the knowledge and passion into one place, a real book, some might say like an old tin box of treasures, but refreshing in this transient electronic age.

When I get my copy on the fortieth anniversary of Tubular Bells, Platinum will be put on full blast and I'll be dancing on my seat again, raising a toast of thanks to Mike for all those wonderful memories and beautiful music.

Paul Harris, Gloucestershire, UK, March 2013

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preface

Although just a bit too young to have been aware of the seminal release of Tubular Bells in 1973, I have been an enthusiastic follower of Mike Oldfield's career since 1979. I became more deeply involved in 1986, when I launched a small fan magazine in place of the official fan club run by Janet Arnold, which sadly closed in 1985. A late dear friend, Paul Beard, was heavily involved in the early days, and helped develop Shoes & Strings to a respectable magazine which exploded in size and switched to full colour printing after handing out free promotional postcards to fans queuing for the Edinburgh premiere of Tubular Bells II in 1992. Courtesy copies of the magazine sent to Mike's manager, Clive Banks, caught his attention and led to official accreditation as Dark Star in 1994.

The economies of scale from the jump in membership allowed us to grow further, gain support and join forces with Peter Evans' much-loved View from the Beacon and David Porter's informative Airborne fanzines. Many fans also know Paul Harris well, who joined us to significantly develop the service from 1998. It is a testament to Mike's long-lasting appeal that most of our early subscribers are still heavily

involved with Dark Star today, including Michael Kuleczko who has been key to our success throughout.

How Mike Oldfield came to be who he is, his drive to become a musician and his personal motivations about his distinguished career are covered in detail in his own excellent autobiography, *Changeling*, published by Virgin books in 2007. *A Life Dedicated to Music* deliberately takes a different approach, documenting the events of Mike's career through the information gathered in interviews during 27 years of producing Mike Oldfield fan magazines. The views of the musicians, music industry professionals, assistants and fans closest to Mike have been assembled in chronological order for the first time, with the addition of some new interviews and my own personal views, resulting in the first comprehensive record of his 45-year career to 2013.

Special thanks go to all who have contributed to those magazines over the years to build the wealth of knowledge and resources published in them.

Mike Oldfield took the time to read and approve this book before publication. I was particularly pleased to hear that he is comfortable with me publishing it, as I have set out to make the content as accurate and valid a representation of his career as I can.

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childhood

The children of Doctor Raymond Henry Oldfield and his Irish wife, nurse, Maureen Bernadine Liston all grew up to become world-renowned musicians: Sally (b 8th April, 1947), Terence (b 12th August, 1949) and Michael (b 15th May, 1953). Michael (Mike), the youngest of the three, was born in Battle hospital in Reading, Berkshire, UK and has become the best known of his siblings.

Mike spent his first years at a house in Monks Way before the family moved to Western Elms Avenue in 1956. A seemingly introverted boy who preferred to play alone, building models, taking radios and televisions apart and reassembling them, he believes he is a 'mutant, or an experiment of nature, somehow incapable of normal social relationships... I didn't like other children and they didn't like me' (Changeling).

His first experience of school as a five year old at St Joseph's Convent was bewildering, but only lasted six months before he moved to Highlands Junior, where he gained his 'most useful education' (Changeling).

A childhood friend, Peter Cardani, remembers how he used to walk about a mile with Mike after school to catch the trolleybus home into Reading, where there was a playing field near the bus stop. A few friends used to mess about having mock fights there. Reluctantly, the boys conformed to strict rules from the headmistress of Highlands Junior School, Mrs Peach, to stay smartly dressed and even wear caps outside of school.

The Oldfields had a fourth child, born with Down's syndrome in 1961. Although David was not brought to live at home, he lived for about a year, during which time their mother would be absent for long periods, suffering from depression, for which she was prescribed addictive barbiturates. Unable to sleep, and emotionally disturbed by the birth, she took to alcohol and became remote from the family unit, culminating in her being sectioned for periods of time in an institution. Mike became more isolated, and his time spent alone in his room was increasingly dedicated to listening to music and learning to play his father's Eko guitar, acquired while serving in the Royal Air Force in Egypt during World War II. Music rapidly became Mike's sanctuary, and he progressed very quickly on guitar.

John Wicks attended St. Edward's Preparatory school with Mike when they were nine, and they became good friends. John lived about five minutes away on Connaught Road: 'I have fond memories of him from that time, and was in total awe of his obvious talent, even at such a young age. Although he probably doesn't know it, I learned how to play

guitar by watching him play. In fact I learned a whole lot of things from him!' John went on to play in The Records, signed to Virgin, which had considerable chart success in the USA, where he now resides.

As well as his musical ability, Peter Cardani recalls Mike was brilliant at fast bowling in cricket. He was not alone in being terrified when Mike would start his long fast run up to the crease and release the ball from his long arm at phenomenal speed. His long arms were also put to great use in boxing matches, which were organised after school by Mr Pike, one of the younger, more popular teachers. Mike's arm reach was so great that on one occasion he took a huge swipe and succeeded in breaking one of Peter's front teeth, as there was no such thing as a mouth-guard or other protection in those days!

Mr Peach, the headmaster of St Edwards, dished out regular 'rabbit' punches to the neck and Chinese burns on the wrists for getting things wrong in Latin, but he must have had a soft spot for Mike as he always selected him at Christmas to stand at the front of the assembly hall and sing the part of the Page to his King in the annual rendition of the Christmas Carol Good King Wenceslas. Mike did get into trouble trying instant fake suntan lotion though. He arrived at school one morning having turned a nasty shade of yellow, maybe intended to try and impress the girls after school or to cover up his incredibly nicotine-stained fingers. Every week during school assembly, announcements were made as to which boys were being punished with the writing of 'lines' or the cane. 'When the dreaded time came you would follow the headmaster up an old steep staircase into

the attic of the school-house where you would be told to touch your toes. The headmaster would then slowly lift up the tail of your school blazer ensuring maximum impact from the cane after first taking considerable time with his aim, causing you to tremble in your shoes. After your caning you were obliged to shake hands with him and say, "Thank you, Sir!"

It was Mike who introduced Peter to Players No 6 cigarettes, which they would smoke behind the school garden bonfire. The cigarettes were bought from a vending machine close to the railway cutting where they played. One day, the French teacher caught them buying cigarettes whilst passing by on the bus. She reprimanded them, but kept it to herself and the boys got away with their misdemeanour.

Mike's father Raymond flew model aeroplanes in Prospect Park, where the boys played, close to their home. On one occasion Raymond was struggling to get the plane's engine started and was furiously flicking the propeller when it finally fired, but he failed to get his hand out of the way fast enough and it struck him across the back of his fingers and drew blood. When he eventually managed to get the plane into flight, it flew off into the distance and was lost from sight. This was long before radio-controlled models and you just had to hope that some kind soul would find and return it to the address on the plane.

Possibly short of cigarette money, or maybe saving up to buy a motorbike, on one occasion Mike was offering certain items for sale at his home. Peter bought a chemistry set and

a fishing rod. After reading in the autobiography about his brother's interest in fishing, Peter thinks there's a good chance he bought stolen property, which he still has today and has used it to catch many a brown trout over the years!

Andy Lawson used to pass the Oldfield's house on the way to school and got to know Terry Oldfield during the holidays. When it emerged that Terry's younger brother was learning guitar, Andy suggested he may want to meet up with his friend Chris Braclik, who was also teaching himself to play. Mick, as he was known to Chris and Andy, would spend most of his spare time either at home or at their place, playing a wide variety of music. Although not particularly proficient at that stage, Chris still became a good friend, and they practised together regularly. Mike had a wide taste in music and was exploring that world and developing his skills as a musician and his technical capability soon improved through mimicking the songs of the leading folk guitarists of the time, such as David Graham, Bert Jansch, Leonard Cohen and John Renbourn. Chris swapped his six-string Harmony Sovereign with Mike's twelve-string Eko for a few weeks when he was twelve, after which his abilities suddenly went through the roof, so that he could almost play anything. During the following two years, Mike became extremely accomplished, although Andy says he lacked a sense of melody at the time and recalls sister Sally frequently complaining that he was playing too many notes.

Neighbour Andy Holland was returning from work as an engineering apprentice one day when Mike coasted up to his gate on his Gilera 175cc racing motorbike, asking for help as it had broken down. After fixing it, Andy was invited

in for a coffee and their friendship went from there. Andy also played the guitar and joined Mike and Chris Braclik to perform in the folk clubs in Reading, mostly playing traditional songs. The trio would play at The Blues Club in The Elephant pub run by Mike Cooper in the Butter Market and The Shades Coffee Bar, run by Sydney Luckington, which transformed into Reading's trendy music venue in the evening. The venue closed after a drugs bust in the sixties, but Syd then opened The White Horse, where the group became the resident act. Some of the songs they put together were written by Mike, including Mick's Song and Mell's Song, which went on to become the theme tune for Chris and Andy's duo, Melody Tickell, some of which have been recorded privately in excellent quality, but never released. Sally Oldfield later also gave the duo her then unused Song of the Healer, which also became part of their repertoire.

Patrick Ginnelly remembers Mike well from their time together at Presentation College in Reading during 1966, even though he did not stay long: 'His nickname was "Ape" because he was so much bigger than the rest of us, and he spent most of his free time at school with an older boy called Richard Rydel. He was also the class monitor and played for the football team'. Peter Cardani was particularly impressed by his chat up lines with girls. One weekend a few lads went back to his parents' house with a couple of girls, one of whom they all fancied. Mike was the one who was the most forward and asked if he could "climb up her ladder". He had spotted the snag in her tights and was making the most of it!

Although still only fourteen, Mike went on his first holiday without his parents that summer with Andy Holland and John Burgess to Blanes, Spain.

The family moved to Redden Court Road, Harold Wood in Essex in 1967, where Mike attended Hornchurch Grammar and started his first music lessons. The teacher's approach, which required text book answers, frustrated Mike, as he preferred a less conventional approach which allowed him to demonstrate his compositional flair and remarkable guitar-picking techniques.

Nicola, a fellow pupil, recalls: 'I remember him telling us he was going to be a famous musician and we were very sceptical. He was very well spoken and rather arrogant, but he did kiss me once for a dare. He used to refer to me as "a rather large young lady" and once had to play Romeo to my Juliet in a class play reading! I rather liked him and I always use him as my claim to fame at social gatherings' (Friends Reunited website, 3rd February, 2011).

Chris Braclik stayed in contact with Mike after the move to Essex and borrowed his father's Morris 1000 pickup in August 1967 to drive himself, Andy Lawson, Mike, and another friend known as 'The Rev' to the Edinburgh Festival, where they played gigs at the Fringe Club and busked to poetry at the Travis Theatre. Andy Lawson has clear memories of freezing in the open back of the pickup whilst travelling all the way from Wallingford to Edinburgh, where they set up camp late at night in an open field. The next morning, they woke to hear voices around the tent, and

emerged to find the Police outside, as they had pitched up on a golf course. With Mike still asleep in his sleeping bag, they quietly dismantled the tent and hid around the corner, to watch him wake in the open air, looking most bemused. After pitching their tent in the Catholic Chaplaincy in George Street for a few days, they ended up squatting in a house in Bristo Street for the rest of the trip. Returning home, they placed a tarpaulin over the back of the van for protection, and are grateful to this day that they didn't die of carbon monoxide poisoning. Many more gigs followed with the group at The Dolphin pub in Wallingford, close to where Chris lived with his parents.

Mike had made enough money by this stage to buy himself a fabulous sounding hand-crafted Dick Knight guitar from a shop on Denmark Street, but found the action to be too high, so was not able to play it fast enough for his liking. In an attempt to resolve this, he filed down the saddle and then the frets himself, but made it unplayable by leaving the frets uneven, so Andy Holland, now an apprentice engineer, took over and fixed it for him. After making these modifications and replacing the steel strings with ultra-light silk-wound strings, the Knight had an electric-like action, which was much softer to play. This guitar impressed many who saw it and Dick Knight subsequently sold many more guitars as a result.

The Oldfields' turbulent family life clearly affected Mike deeply, forcing him into isolation at home, where he took refuge in developing his musical talents. The challenges facing his Mother meant he was very independent at an early age, and used to spend a lot of time out of the house,

fixing and riding his motorbike, as well as going out on long motorbike trips with his friend George Offerdahl. Mike was probably not as socially isolated as he remembers though; although he saw himself as a fish out of water, many of those who have contributed their stories looked up to him, not only because of his physical presence, but also because of his confidence, cricket ability and guitar prowess.

Determination to master the guitar and relative confidence to approach strangers were later to be critical in starting his career. Mike left school as soon as he could, aged fifteen and with just one 'O' level to pursue a musical career.

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first success

Sister Sally was the driving force behind Mike's first commercial release, recording *Children of the Sun* together with him as The Sallyangie in just two days in 1968. Whilst studying at Bristol University, she was overwhelmed with the idea to make an album, and rushed straight to London to find a record company and secure a contract. The duo was signed immediately to Transatlantic, the first label Sally approached, with an advance of £50 each. The duo quickly became relatively successful, even appearing at the Cambridge Folk Festival in July 1968. Although Mike recalls: 'The feeling of satisfaction and prestige of having our own album was just magnificent' (Changeling), a Virgin press release from 1973 states he 'left because he could no longer stomach the syrupy sound of The Sallyangie'. The pair split on the eve of a Royal Albert Hall concert in March, 1969 and went their separate artistic ways.

Fan John F. De-Kisshazy shared his thoughts in the fan magazine *View from the Beacon*, later to be republished in the *Dark Star* highlights paperback book in 1994: 'It certainly can't be compared to any of his later output: Good heavens; he was only fifteen years old at the time. As long as you are broad-minded enough to be able to face forty

minutes of slushy stuff you will get pleasure from it. Just don't try and compare it to albums, by anyone, of the eighties or nineties. It was released in the sixties and it definitely is a sixties album. There are a lot of references to the influencing powers of the sun, moon, stars and water as seen through the eyes of children of the 'Love Revolution'. Whilst the musical content may not be considered state of the art 'pop' it is a very good example of the sort of music played by people huddled around a camp fire, or sitting on boulders beside a waterfall' (DSHC).

Mike moved on to form a band with his brother Terry in 1969, playing at colleges and clubs throughout the UK: 'we were still living at home then and formed a band called Barefoot' (interview with Terry Oldfield, DS22). Mike wrote long, complicated instrumentals with lyrics which he would sing. Until now, it was believed that nothing was recorded, but Chris Braclik booked Barefoot to play at Wallingford Grammar School and does in fact have a recording. Terry recorded a re-arranged version of a Barefoot track called Flight of the Eagle on his Journey into Space album in 2012. The band rehearsed at Tadworth Village Hall and did lots of gigs around the country for about six months, 'zooming around in our Transit van. We were quite a heavy band, playing pretty heavy stuff. We all had long hair, and the drummer was called Hairy Dave, who before he joined us had been the drummer for Long John Baldry... I remember we used to stay up all night to go to concerts at places like the Roundhouse where people like Sandy Denny would turn up and do a gig. I once saw Pink Floyd, The Who, Rod Stewart and Elton John play at the same gig. It was unbelievable. It was a very innocent time of feeling our way into the world of music and being open to things'.

The fact that all three siblings went on to develop major musical careers was explained by brother Terry in issue 22 of Dark Star: 'we were all part of the sixties thing when everyone played something or other. In those days we believed anything was possible. It was such an optimistic time, so full of promise'.

When asked the same question, sister Sally told us: 'We have a Celtic background on our mother's side and our paternal grandmother was an accomplished pianist. Our father has a great baritone singing voice as well as being a painter and our aunt is also a full-time painter, so I guess it's an artistic gene. We had a fairly disturbed childhood, so I suppose we, each in our different ways, sought refuge in creativity. I think we are all very different, though, despite our common roots' (DS23).

Mike, Chris Braclik and Andy Holland would still regularly meet and play at a flat in Ashburnham Mansions in Chelsea. The group would be invited to play at parties, effectively becoming a live jukebox, but also play sessions at the World's End pub on King's Road. Chris was very much in awe of Mike's talent by this time and drew an informal portrait of him sitting cross-legged with his guitar, labelling it "God". The mutual respect was clear, as Mike also valued the appreciation shown for his talent as they all learned and pushed musical boundaries together.

Barefoot's manager, Julia Creasy, joined Blackhill Enterprises, where Peter Jenner was a director. It was Peter who sent Mike to an audition as a bass player for Kevin Ayers and the Whole World. Kevin had left Soft Machine in 1968 and made a solo album, which he took on tour in March 1970. When he got the job, he and Terry disbanded Barefoot. On keyboards, David Bedford was an avant-garde classical musician who became good friends, and helped encourage him with composing his own work. Mike had to obtain a Magistrate's Licence from Bow Street in order to play with Kevin in Holland and had to agree to be in bed by a certain time each night, after reporting to the British Consul. Of course this was flouted several times with late night or all night gigs. Kevin once recalled what a lost soul Mike was when he joined them, but the band provided much needed stability and income for him whilst he was recording and touring with them. The album *Shooting at the Moon* featured Mike playing masterful solo guitar before the band split in August 1971, although another album, *Whatever she brings we sing* was subsequently released and also features him on guitar. Sadly, Mike is now the last surviving core member of the band, after the deaths of David Bedford in October 2011, Lol Coxhill in July 2012 and, most recently, Kevin Ayers, who died aged 68 at his home in France in February 2013.

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going solo

Early ideas for Tubular Bells had been developing for many years, but really started coming together whilst living in a flat in Tottenham. Mike spent months recording a rough demo tape of his ideas to play to the record companies. He recorded overdubs by masking the erase head with cardboard, so he could record multiple instruments, all of which he played himself. The demo was made on a tape recorder borrowed from Kevin Ayers, a Bang & Olufsen Beocord.

Mike's passion and belief in himself helped him to brush aside the persistent rejections and continue searching for the record company which would share his vision. After countless failed attempts to gain their attention, he was becoming increasingly desperate.

In order to live, he took what work he could, such as working in the band on Hair, the tribal love-rock musical. Being penniless, he had pawned everything and could not afford to eat. Andy Lawson recalled that he often rejected their offers of food, most likely as his stomach had shrunk whilst

on his typical diet of thin roll-ups, coffee and aspirin. Chris Braclik remembers Mike turning up one morning when everyone was hungover, asking to borrow his guitar for a booking to record at the Manor with soul singer Arthur Louis. The Arthur Louis band was the first to record in the manor house, being prepared as a recording studio in Shipton on Cherwell. They recorded on equipment originally intended to be used in the Manor Recording Studios, which were being built for Virgin, near Oxford, by a team of friends including Tom Newman and Simon Heyworth, supported by a small community of girlfriends, cooks, cleaners and gardeners.

Richard Branson, the founder of Virgin Records, remembers: 'we knew we had to sell more records, through the shops, overseas and by mail order; attract important artists like Cat Stevens or Paul McCartney to come and record at the Manor, and set up a record label. What we didn't know was that, even as we set out to do this, our first fortune was quietly making its way up the gravelled drive to the Manor in the form of another van. This time it was not carrying illegal records, but bringing a young composer and his folk-singing sister from London to act as backing musicians for a band. At the back of their minds was the hope that they might be able to record some esoteric instrumental music when the rest of the band wasn't using the studio. Their names were Mike and Sally Oldfield' (Losing My Virginity).

Ron Nairn and the recently deceased Duncan Barker arranged for a group of fans to visit the Manor in 1993: 'When I asked the manageress, Nyx Darke, if we could visit, adding it was a small group of Mike Oldfield fans, she laughed and said that she would have to check, as Paul

Weller was booked to record in the studio and it would only be the second ever visit of that nature! Twenty five fans from all around the country were welcomed at the side gate and ushered into the main studio and mixing room. The Manor's unique studio has a very dead sound, mainly due to its Cotswold stone walls which are excellent for different acoustic and amplified sounds. Much of Paul Weller's equipment was present, although he was having a break playing football on the lawn at the time. It was an incredible feeling being inside the building where it all began! After fifteen minutes in the studio, we were shown around the house. This included a mural featuring Mike holding out a miniature model of The Manor in front of him, with Boy George and Feargal Sharkey standing alongside. We wandered freely through the dining, games and music rooms. We then said our farewells and headed back, stopping briefly at the Jolly Boatman pub, also frequented by Mike and Tom Newman in 1973' (DS8). Although the recording studio visited was in the same building, it was not the same room that Tubular Bells was recorded in. The old studio was gutted and rebuilt the other way around in mid-1975 and did not re-open until August. The rooms in which Tubular Bells was recorded were acoustically very different to the new studio.

The atmosphere at Shipton Manor and the attitude of Tom and Simon soon gave Mike the opportunity to play the rough tape of his musical ideas to a receptive audience, with Tom in particular finding the demo inspirational. As Mike was later to recall, 'the whole thing felt like some sort of great big family'.

Philip Newell was engineer at the Manor and agreed: 'Trampolines, parties, in fact I also built a 500m go-cart track. Outwardly it would appear very frivolous, but the staff were all very professional and although they could enjoy themselves in a big way, they were very serious about running a very special studio' (DS24).

Although highly impressed with Mike, Virgin were not ready to launch a record company until a year later, by which time he had become thoroughly disillusioned and was on the verge of defecting to Russia to become a state employed musician! Richard called to offer him a contract and suggested he move in at the Manor, so he could record in the studio with Tom Newman. Being new to the business, Richard knew very little about contracts, so took the easy route of copying Sandy Denny's contract with Island Records. As a result, he was committed to ten albums with Virgin on a low royalty rate.

Sally Oldfield remembers it being 'a very exciting time. I remember going down there and Michael signing this sort of twenty page contract with one hand, not reading it, and eating a bowl of cornflakes with the other' (Airborne).

The recording was technically complex, made up of lots of layers. The process is well documented in Richard Newman's definitive book *The Making of Mike Oldfield's Tubular Bells*, but Tom Newman disputes that there were over two thousand overdubs: 'The way it was constructed was with the kind of riffy part played live on a glockenspiel, then on a Farfisa organ and then guitar parts. It was

impossible to do in one go, so we did drop in and out of that to get it right all the way through. Arriving at the right bit and it sounding right might take ten or twelve drop-ins. Then you try and get the part all the way through, so for each part there may have been up to twenty drop-ins, so that's 320, over sixteen tracks. If you add that to the other side, which was slightly more complex when it came to the drum parts, we might have done a thousand, but that was par for the course for practically any album.' The co-producer Simon Heyworth later told us: 'We did pretty well for the time; with no click tracks to play to, no automation, and no digital reverbs' (DS22).

The use of the tubular bells was actually something of an afterthought, as they were borrowed when they were seen being wheeled out from the previous session with John Cale. As the Manor was being rented out to make much needed money, Mike was forced to work in between the paying guests, which meant he was often recording for short periods and at unsocial hours, but he did get the studio time for free.

Philip Newell's role was 'more a case of making the recording easier for him so that he could get on with the playing and not need to concentrate so much on the technicalities. I did lend Mike some instruments. I had some quite nice bass guitars including an unusual Fender Precision with a maple neck and slab sided body, which was cream, like a Telecaster from around 1967. Mike was penniless at the time'.

When he first heard the final recording, Philip said ‘Wow! It’s either going to sell less than five thousand or more than five million, but nothing in between. It is either going to bomb totally for being too far out of the mainstream, or it’s going to be enormous. I was clearly impressed. They were trying to make something very different, and trying to do a lot of tricks to make it interesting. But some of this was due to pressure from Virgin Records who were a little nervous about launching the record company with such an unusual release. The working title was Opus One. I remember being in the control room when Viv Stanshall had put on the vocals right at the end of Part One “plus Tuuuubular Bellssss” and someone suggested that might be great title for the album. I cannot recall who first made the suggestion, but whoever it was, immediately everyone agreed that it would be a great title for an album. It seemed that the idea was almost obvious to all concerned’ (DS24).

I spoke with Tom Newman recently in an interview specifically for this book and he told me: ‘no one believed seriously that Tubular Bells would be the monster hit it became. The truth is everyone involved just hoped, and Richard, to his eternal credit, having his mother Eve’s genes and her Churchillian upbringing in him, just went for it and saw nothing as insurmountable. This has been the general template for his life from then onwards. Not so for Mike though, who had to deal with things from his family that would have put normal people into the lunatic asylum. Most of his pain came out in Tubular Bells, and my feeling at the time was that he had probably done his masterwork too early. One is supposed to work towards it over a whole career, the Beethoven’s Ninth theory. All of Tubular Bells was played by hand, with no sequencers, which is why it is immediately engaging’.

The cover was photographed by Trevor Key, the background taken at Brighton beach, but Mike did have an input into the bell design: 'I just said I'd like it to look as if there was a tubular bell that an enormous ape-like creature had picked up and bent in half. In the end he bent it in three' (DS17).

On 25th May, 1973, Virgin released its first four albums: Flying Teapot by Gong, The Faust Tapes by German group Faust, Manor Live Sessions featuring Elkie Brooks and, of course, V2001: Mike Oldfield's Tubular Bells. History is clear that it was Tubular Bells which became the most memorable and successful of those releases, although it did not happen overnight.

Radio One DJ John Peel takes a deserved credit for boosting Tubular Bells' exposure and popularity. Whilst still obscure, Peel played the whole of Part One on his programme on 29th May, 1973, adding: 'I've been introducing Top Gear for nearly six years now, but I think that is certainly one of the most impressive LP's I've ever had the chance to play on the radio. Really a remarkable record from Mike Oldfield and one of the first releases on the new Virgin label, an incredible start for them, certainly'. Peter Cardani was staying at his girlfriend's house when he heard the DJ introduce a brilliant new piece of music by Mike Oldfield. It was a while before he realised that it must have been the same Mike Oldfield that he had shared so much of his early life with. John's review in The Listener magazine also made it very clear that he believed Tubular Bells was a work of great lasting importance.

Richard took a risky decision for Virgin to promote Tubular Bells itself, rather than pay for the services of an established label, but it paid off, resulting in a far greater profit. Virgin's direct sales of Tubular Bells were stunning, accelerating rapidly and going on to sell over eighteen million copies, making a huge amount of money with which to build the company.

During a German press conference in 1993, Mike told journalists why he thought it had become so popular, 'it's not trying to copy anybody else. In a way it takes its influences from all kinds of music, classical, rock, folk, world music, but it's not trying to follow any fashion; for some reason I make music like that and it sounds different to anything else I've ever heard, and I think it's the uniqueness that makes people want to carry on listening to it and keep buying it'.

The album was particularly challenging to promote, as he found the positive reactions to Tubular Bells overwhelming and despite having craved the success, could not face live appearances or interviews, finding his first interview with Karl Dallas intrusive. Karl remembers it slightly differently, insisting Mike was only reluctant to talk about his own music, but being amicable, very eloquent and forthcoming on other subjects. Karl was to interview him many more times during the early stages of his career, but was not an immediate convert to his music, which may have been a source of some friction in those early encounters.

Seizing an opportunity to promote Tubular Bells to a wider audience, Virgin organised a concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, which Mike nearly pulled out of due to nerves, only persuaded at the last minute by Richard offering him his Bentley!

Phil Becque recalled to David Porter in an as yet unpublished interview that during the rehearsal 'the techie guy came over to me and he was very agitated, he was really worried about the multi-track machine and I couldn't really focus on what he wanted as I had plenty on my plate. I suggested that he got on with it and did the best he could, as it was going to be a difficult day for everyone. We stumbled somewhat unconvincingly through the rehearsal and there were a lot of issues to sort out. Again the techie came back, pleading with me to take a look, as he wasn't happy with the Ampex and again I sent him back to do the best he could'.

At the premiere, there were six or seven guitarists, who could not all have their own amp, so the technical setup was quite an undertaking, not ever attempted before. Phil Becque added: 'As I'm sure you can imagine, there were lots of difficulties but we overcame them. I rewired DI (direct injection) boxes and added more speakers to the sound system, mostly under Tom's direction. The rich and famous settled into the front rows just behind the mixing console, where Tom and Simon were readying themselves, checking and double-checking. The musicians took to the stage, the audience settled down, then Mike came on and plugged into his DI box, plucked a muted note to test he was on, but nothing came out of the monitors! He looked at me and I

jumped up onto the stage and Tom checked the console. There was an audible groan from audience. The guitar jack was not fully in the DI box; a click and a thump from the monitors and we could all relax'. It is no wonder he hated the experience.

'When it was all over, we went back to the Ampex machine to see how the recording had gone. The techie was completely gutted. "What's up?" we enquired; "well" he explained "I plugged it into the mains, then switched it on, the VU meter lights came on very brightly and then it went off". Tom looked at me. "Oh no, not that, he couldn't have!" He had plugged the £30,000 110 volt recorder into a 240 volt power supply and blown up the machine, so we had no recording of the performance!'

A film recording was then made at BBC Wood Lane for the Second House television programme. Phil Becque recalled: 'After the rehearsals, we were ready to record side one of Tubular Bells. It was kind of a blur, but overall it wasn't too bad, even though we had a few glitches. The camera men had fared much worse and there was an immediate decision to do another take. Off we went again, this time the musicians had settled down a bit and everything went well. Tom and I worked well together and we ended up with a respectable mix'.

With no prospect of another live performance or even an interview to promote Tubular Bells in America, the head of Atlantic Records, Ahmet Ertegun, sold it as the theme to The Exorcist film, boosting its success, but Mike's resistance to

interviews undoubtedly affected his subsequent level of success by reducing the amount of media coverage he received.

Richard Branson confirms this: 'had Mike spent the next ten years touring, like Pink Floyd, I am sure that he would have become one of the biggest rock stars in the world and John Peel's prediction would have come true. As it was, Tubular Bells became more famous than Mike Oldfield, and, although he recorded many other beautiful albums, such as Ommadawn, my own favourite, none of them matched the success of Tubular Bells' (Losing My Virginity).

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a tough act to follow

The pressure to tour and undertake promotional work was the last thing Mike needed when being asked to write a sequel, so he retreated to a small house in rural Herefordshire and shut himself off from the world. With the phone frequently off the hook, Branson was forced to drive to the Beacon in Kington just to talk to him.

By this time, Mike had become increasingly withdrawn, was suffering panic attacks and drinking heavily to try and numb the flashbacks of difficult times with his family and deal with the increased pressures from the record company.

Terry was employed by Richard for a while to look after his brother: 'I was his big brother looking after him, driving him around. It was so bad that we literally had to stop so that he could steady himself with a drink. He wasn't an alcoholic, but he could just not face the world. Driving into London, he would put his headphones on and put his head down. It was terrible to see. I tried to get him to do things such as travelling. I went with him to Crete, but it didn't seem to help at all. Mike bought a brand new Alfa Romeo Montreal

and I drove with him down to Italy, but that did not help, particularly since when it was parked in one of the multi-storey car parks in Milan, the car was broken into and his bouzouki and guitars in the boot were taken. It was a very difficult time' (DS22).

Often found enjoying the panoramic views and open spaces where he would fly his model glider, it was the spectacular path along one of the finest parts of the Offa's Dyke which inspired the follow-up album, Hergest Ridge. Trevor Key photographed Bootleg, the Manor's dog, on the ridge for the cover, but Mike never particularly liked it, so it was replaced on the Mercury reissue in 2010 with a Google Earth image.

Mike continued developing his skills operating the studio equipment himself, nurturing ideas and recording demos at home. Using the character of various instruments as personalities to colour the musical landscape, he built layer upon layer of melody and rhythm to meld into two beautiful musical reflections of the English countryside. The level of detail and the perfectionism to get the sound just the way he wanted it have been trademarks of his work ever since. It is often comparable to classical music in structure, but generally performed using a much wider selection of instruments and sounds, far greater than those available in a typical orchestra.

Richard Branson clearly understood the classical roots, as he proposed orchestral versions of both Tubular Bells and Hergest Ridge and enlisted David Bedford to orchestrate them. As Mike would not entertain the thought of touring at

that time, one of Richard's intentions was presumably to have a performance of the albums which could be taken on tour without him.

Leslie Penning was a local musician interested in medieval music, who regularly played at the Penrhos Court hotel and restaurant near Mike's home in Kington. The pair would often play impromptu recorder and guitar duets to the astonished diners, often including early versions of pieces later to be recorded. As Leslie recalls, 'We both went into a whirling dervish, I was hyperventilating high when playing. We used to play these tunes, Portsmouth and the other ones, round and round, one of them might last twenty minutes, and every time changed the guitar style, changed the recorder style so it was florid or straight. Honestly, people just stopped eating, couldn't believe their ears, it was wonderful' (Airborne).

The singles they recorded were pieces they first played together at Penrhos Court, as Les told me recently: 'I played In Dulci Jubilo to him on our very first meeting and the first recording was a very relaxed affair at the Beacon. The label says For Maureen (his mother) because she was with us in the room at the time. This version did not work well, as it was too quiet at the start. The second version for the following year's Christmas release was recorded at the Manor. I was at Thorougham on the day when Michael received the twelve-inch acetate. He put it on cassette for me and I played it repeatedly on my way home to Radnor at about one in the morning'.

Tubular Bells continued to sell very well and Mike was awarded Best Instrumental Composition for The Exorcist soundtrack at the Grammy Awards in New York on 1st March, 1974.

Although media reviews of Hergest Ridge were far less favourable, it still sold well and entered at the top of the UK album chart on 14th September, 1974, only to be knocked from the top spot by Tubular Bells on 5th October. The first two albums spent four weeks sharing the top two chart positions, which meant that pressure to keep recording and producing more successful music was greater than ever.

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burn out

It was partly the negative reactions to Hergest Ridge that motivated Mike to do something spectacular which would prove that he was not just a one hit wonder. Work began on the first of multiple frustrated attempts to record what was then known by the working title Pickles on My Glockenspiel, but later became one of his most loved albums, Ommadawn.

A professional recording studio was installed for him at the Beacon so he could record at home: 'quite a task given the awkward steep hill location. All vehicles had to park at the golf course car park above the house and the equipment gingerly manoeuvred down to the studio at the front of the house. The golf club used to get annoyed as he left his sporty cars parked there. The mixing desk had been used for the Orchestral Tubular Bells concert at The Royal Albert Hall. Phil Becque spent two weeks installing and testing the desk and the tape machine until Mike was happy to use them himself' (Philip Newell, DS22).

Although the musical ideas flowed, the technology of the day could not keep up: 'The tape wore out, and a copy was made, and then that copy was worn out and another copy was made. Some of the later things were overdubbed, but there were still some things that had come from the original tape' (Philip Newell, DS24).

Brother Terry added: 'he had bought these two brand new tape decks from Ampex. He was at that point doing so many fast rewinds with the tapes, because they had not really got it together with the tape recording machines; they were not used to just one man doing multi-instrumental all day for three months. It wears them out. The machine was sent back to the factory, and they dropped it from one of the hoists and the whole thing was damaged. They gave him a new one of course, which was OK, but it was partly because of Mike's way of using the machine that caused them to re-design it' (DS22).

The emotional upset of splitting up with his then girlfriend Maggie contributed to a troubled retreat into the studio, releasing his frustrations through music, displaying further signs of a pattern of being at his most creative when at his most emotionally fragile. In January 1975, devastating news arrived of the death of Mike's mother, Maureen, which was to affect him very deeply, and contributed further to him using music as an escape from the panic attacks, emotional challenges and the pressures around him. 'Ommadawn was when he was feeling very angry, established as a musician, but not entering into the world, because he'd yet to really do that' (Terry Oldfield, DS22).

The intensity of Mike's dedication to music increased, as recalled by Philip Newell in an interview for Dark Star: he 'had been trying for ages to get a guitar solo on the end of side one. I was staying upstairs at The Beacon, and I remember waking up one morning and hearing this phenomenal guitar playing. I was half asleep, thinking: "what is this? This sounds fantastic." I got up and dressed and there was Mike playing frantically. When we were mixing the stereo version when we came to the end of side one we had the whole mixing desk covered in magazines, we could not even see the levels on the meters, only the fader and a few switches we knew we would need were visible. The last six or seven minutes were mixed without being able to see the levels! I was telling Mike that we needed to see them, but he did not want to know. He just wanted to do the whole thing by feel. I felt like Scotty in Star Trek, saying "but the crystals will never take the strain Captain", to which Captain Kirk (Mike) would reply "full power, Mr Scott, that is an order!"' (DS24).

Soon after this, Phil Becque remembers helping Mike change his Mercedes car for a Ferrari 365 GTC4: 'He had a Mercedes 4.2 litre SL two-seater sports car, which was a very nice car. He asked me if I wanted to come along and said I could drive the Mercedes part of the way back. He was very excited by the Ferrari. I don't remember the exact model; I just remember that on the way back he wanted to get the engine oil temperature gauge off the low mark, so he was really trying to push it to get it hot. After several sustained bursts over 120 mph it popped up briefly, only to go back down again. We figured you'd have to be thrashing this car around some race track to make it read something. Jolly

good fun though!’ (from a previously unpublished interview with David Porter).

There were some elements of luck along the way, too. In part two, ‘Mike had left a gap on the tape, not just a gap, but complete silence. He decided that he wanted a pipe to bridge the gap, and he had asked Paddy Moloney to come to the Beacon. He played the piece a couple of times to Paddy and after a couple of drinks, mic’d Paddy up in the studio in the same room as the mixing desk. There was no timing or click track, the tape started rolling and when the tape came to the right place, Paddy started playing. When he came to the final note and it was dying away, the music came back in again, to the absolute millisecond on the tape, done in one take, a totally unrepeatable event!’ (Philip Newell, DS24).

The album cover was photographed at The Beacon by David Bailey, who visited with his wife, Marie Helvin. William Murray, who lived with Mike at the time, recalled ‘[He] arrived at the front door looking like some bum that had been sleeping in the garbage for about a month. I said “Who are you?” When he said “David Bailey”, I thought “David Bailey?!” He had egg on his shirt and he didn’t just look unkempt he looked unhygienic. Then this indescribable beauty willowed in behind him. He had his cameras in a Sainsbury’s carrier bag and I thought this was brilliant. This guy’s the greatest fashion photographer in England and he looks like a vagrant’ (Airborne).

Tom Newman recalls going to visit Mike at Kington: 'he was in the middle of Ommadawn and needed a confidence boost. Willy [William Murray] was living with him, and helping out, with Clodagh [Simmonds]. We all went down the pub and drank too much Guinness! Willy had an awful little Citroën Ami, and I had an equally awful Jaguar 420. Willy came back in my car and fell in love with it. Two days later he had persuaded me that I needed a small economical runabout, and we swapped cars; my girlfriend Alison wasn't impressed! Going to Hereford in a Jag and returning in a Citroën Ami wasn't groovy at all! Willy never let me live it down' (DS19).

Meanwhile, Philip Newell was re-mixing Tubular Bells for the four album Boxed set in the newly rebuilt studio at Shipton Manor in a quadrophonic, a four speaker system now known as 4.0 surround sound. Philip recalls, 'there were a few different quadrophonic systems. QS had much better surround stability, but not good compatibility to stereo. SQ had better compatibility to stereo, but the surround was not good. We were trying these things to see what would happen, what they would sound like, in real life use' (DS24).

Working long hours recording Ommadawn, often well into the night, the windows were always left open to let cool air in during the uncharacteristically hot summer, which upset the neighbours because of the inevitable noise. The hunt for a larger and more suitable home and studio began and spread as far as Ireland, but resulted in a move to Througham Slad Manor in Gloucestershire in the autumn of 1975.

Physically and emotionally drained, Mike took some time to unwind, consider his future and worked on building a new studio in the barn. The change from an almost complete focus on making music meant he had time to engage more in other activities and with other people, often to collaborate on their projects, rather than work on his own.

Philip Newell recalls a lion being kept at the house for a short while: 'he was called Clyde, born in captivity at Edinburgh zoo. He was about one year old when they were going to release him to the wild in Africa. Between the zoo and his trip to Africa he stayed at the house'.

'Sometimes he was in the house when there was a keeper with him; otherwise he was in the enclosed courtyard. On one occasion, I was in the kitchen, Clyde was across the other side of the courtyard and I opened the kitchen window. Before I knew it he was across the courtyard and through the window and on top of me. There was no one to help me, but the keeper had previously said the best way to handle this situation was to punch the lion on the nose and scream at it. That is easier said than done, but somehow I managed to keep my presence of mind, and luckily he backed off a little, and then some people came in including the keeper. For about five years I had big scratches across my shoulder and chest. We'd had Irish wolfhounds at the Manor, so I thought that I knew a little about biggish animals, and how they can knock you about a bit. I remember once I was sitting on a seat next to Clyde and he decided to move me. He put his paw on me and moved me

and it was like being pushed by a JCB [mechanical digger]! Absolutely no possibility of resisting it; I never realised an animal could be so powerful. Compared to him the big dogs were like mice' (DS22).

My own earliest memory of Mike Oldfield's music comes from 1976, as my grandfather had family roots in Portsmouth and he liked the song Portsmouth enough to buy the single. When I visited as a carefree seven year old, I remember being grasped by the prettiness and unashamed joy of the song, and finding myself dancing, probably even prancing with delight, quite an amusing vision for those who know me today!

During this period, Mike found it far easier to contribute to other people's projects. This was the most prolific part of his career in terms of collaborations, recording with and appearing on a wide variety of albums by Henry Cow, Edgar Broughton, Tom Newman, David Bedford, Pekka Pohjola and Kevin Ayers.

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re-birth

After a longer wait between new solo albums, Mike Oldfield re-emerged, but this time almost as a different person, openly conducting press interviews, keen to go on tour and even posing naked on the cover of Sounds magazine, with only a copy of the Incantations vinyl to protect his modesty. The transformation was down to an alternative therapy programme run by Robert D'Aubigny in London. Exegesis was a controversial paid-for seminar offering enlightenment and personal transformation. How Mike was forced to confront and overcome his worst fears and problems through a re-birthing experience is covered in great detail in his own autobiography, but the resulting change was clear for all to see.

Mike emerged confident and eager to try new experiences, even briefly marrying D'Aubigny's sister, Diane Fuller. Karl Dallas recounted in Melody Maker, 'I hardly recognised this clean-shaven, fresh-faced young extrovert who flung his arms around me as I got into his Rolls, who sat with his arm draped protectively round my shoulders as he told me how he had been posing for photographs meant to look like the statues of Auguste Rodin, how he was thinking of buying himself a Lear Jet'.

'The Exegesis seminar really did give him a lot of confidence, and he decided that if he needed to come to terms with the world he would have to do these things. He moved from The Beacon to Thorougham Slad, near Stroud, and then moved closer to London, listening to BBC Radio One, getting involved in interviews and generally opening up' (Terry Oldfield, DS22).

Tom Newman found the effect destructive, as he told me very recently, 'for me at any rate the s**t hit the fan, and Exegesis raised its ugly but modern head, destroying in one weekend or so all the potential heart-rending melancholy and romance of a tortured soul, and replacing it with a highly talented virtuoso musician, whose real muse had been discarded, so there was nothing left to say, or at least nothing as soul-stirringly powerful as what might have happened had he still been in permanent acute spiritual pain. Look what culture and music we may have lost thanks to a bunch of ruthless American do-gooders! He's become kind of nearly human! Who needs that in art? Don't get me too wrong, I love Michael dearly, and have many wonderful memories of us in the early days, but I feel he got lost by becoming normal!'

The metamorphosis happened midway through the recording of Incantations, and the sudden change of pace is clear in the music itself, transitioning from his earlier style to something more determined, eager and lively. Sally Oldfield was 'living part of the time at Thorougham when Michael was doing Incantations, it's one of his albums I love

the most, I got very involved in that. He didn't at that time aim consciously for any particular market. I kind of witnessed its growth and how it changed, that was lovely' (Airborne).

One of my key memories was watching the re-working and recording of the Blue Peter television theme tune, Barnacle Bill, on 1st March, 1979. The presenter, Simon Groom, visited the studio in Gloucestershire and was visibly in awe of Mike and very nervous trying to get his opening drum roll just right for him. The track was subsequently remade and released as a single to support the Blue Peter Appeal for Cambodia, but had to be remade a third time after DJ's were repeatedly caught out by the sudden ending.

Mike then finally decided to go on his first tour: 'I knew I had to go on the road and face the people. Because I'd become used to success I wanted everything to be big, so I employed a cast of a hundred, orchestra, choir, rock group, the lot' (Derek Jewell, Sunday Times). He already knew before setting off that it would lose money, as he told Tune In magazine: 'I'm thinking about the money I need for the tour. It's going to cost a fortune and there's no way we can make anything but losses'. Mike rejected Virgin's suggestion of using a backing track, insisting on live musicians, because he wanted the performance to be memorable and just the way he wanted.

Musician Phil Beer joined the tour in 1979 and remembers: 'he was trying to enlist a lot of friends initially; he wanted people he knew around him'. During rehearsals, 'he kept on

going through keyboard players, deciding that they weren't what he wanted'. The new confidence in Mike affected how he dealt with the musicians and crew on tour, and contributed to difficult personal and professional relationships from the start, described by Pierre Moerlen as 'tricky to start with, but mostly rich and excellent' (DS22). Engineer Richard Barrie first met Mike at rehearsals in Bremen on 14th March and said, 'we hated each other at first sight', but after the frosty start, their friendship developed and they worked together for many years.

Mike was said to have hired the prettiest girls for the choir and rejected a tour manager because he looked too much like a student! Richard Branson asked the 25 year old Richard Ames to meet Mike for a pint in the pub around the corner from Virgin's offices to discuss the European tour, but was never hired. He was told later that same week that he looked too young! Interestingly, Richard did later manage the Music of the Spheres premiere at the Guggenheim museum in 2008. Sally Arnold of Tours Unlimited was subsequently appointed and her first task was to sack those whose voices did not match their looks!

Tom Newman told me recently that he and Philip Newell were asked to organise the PA system, but struggled to meet Mike's demands: 'he insisted they should be Quad electrostatic speakers, hi-fi speakers with beautiful sound but which were incapable of projection. We told him this, but a by-product of the brainwashing was that if one says it is possible then it is possible! At Mike's insistence, I designed an aluminium framework to take four speakers each and we added to it interminably until it was loud enough for him,

costing goodness knows how much! The problem was we were still in a rehearsal space, with low ambient noise and acoustically reasonable. Philip and I still maintained that it would not be loud enough on the road in very large auditoria and wanted to augment it with a standard rock PA. The rows were continuous and eventually I left. Philip carried on, but after a gig or two the truth was apparent and Mike agreed to get a PA, using the Quads just for strings. Not a word was said about it ever again'.

Phil Beer shared his recollections of the tour with David Porter: 'It was a kind of reflective tour, it was a bit of a community thing, we generally had a very good time. I think Michael enjoyed himself; he's a very nervous performer, but he delivered' (Airborne).

Recordings from nine of the concerts were heavily edited and then released on the only fully live album, Exposed. The best of the audience reactions were also mixed in with the music.

Shortly after this, ten years after the first moon landings, Virgin put out a press release announcing: 'on 20th July 1979 at 7.30pm, ITV acknowledges the tenth anniversary of that achievement with The Space Movie, a film by Tony Palmer, produced by Virgin Films with music by Mike Oldfield'. Tony recalls: 'I went to Washington and met [NASA] and was amazed to discover they had all this footage. I really hadn't a clue how to put this thing together and absolutely out of the blue Richard Branson rang up saying that Mike doesn't know what to do and is really

suicidal, “have you got anything that you think might suit him?” So down we went and he said, “oh, that does sound interesting”, and he practically started work there and then. One thing we hadn’t taken into account was that if it was going to be the tenth anniversary it really was July 1979. We got round to way past Easter, but I couldn’t give him the material to work with because I hadn’t got it all from Washington and I had to edit it together, so he had an excuse for not doing much. Anyway, when I finally got him the film we realised that with only about six weeks to go he had only done three minutes and I needed ninety. Then desperation set in, and with Richard’s help we sold him the idea of using everything he had written so far including Incantations and Orchestral Hergest Ridge, which I think had never been released. I promised I would let him hear the result, which I did, and luckily he thought I’d done a very good job. With less than a week to go, he gave us the go ahead and out it went. I think he realised that I took him and his music seriously. I was interested in how he did it and what his ambition was musically and I was to treat the end result with a degree of seriousness’ (DS27).

Terry believes that around this time, shortly after the first tour, Mike ‘went into a totally different phase, which was not totally him, he started writing stuff which was not truly him in the deepest sense’ (DS22). Developments in the music industry and Mike’s changing relationship with Virgin were to have a significant impact on his work from this point on.

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end of prog rock

Tastes in music were changing; punk rock and disco were becoming popular, and both Mike and Virgin realised that the further commercial success needed to recoup some of the cash lost on the tour would mean moving away from his natural style and seeking new influences.

Leaving the seclusion of his home studio behind, Mike travelled to New York in December 1978, where he worked more spontaneously with studio musicians in New York's famous Electric Lady Studios. The early recordings are more like a disco version of Tubular Bells, which developed over time into what became Platinum. There was even a short up-tempo disco track; Guilty heralded the start of an entirely new direction, where the focus moved from long compositions to shorter tracks, which resulted in greater success in the singles charts.

Guilty entered the British charts and featured on the UK television show Top of the Pops, where Mike was joined by drummer David Humphrey: 'This unique version was recorded in about an hour at Olympic Studios in Barnes the

day before the actual BBC recording of the show. Some of the equipment including the drums would have been hired from Maurice Plaquet. For the television performance the band members were handed blue T-shirts and dark jackets by Sally Cooper. Mike wore a white T-shirt with Sally's face on the front. I still have the actual T-shirt that I wore on the show and the jacket somewhere; no chance of getting in it now! The original BBC contract states the recording date was 2nd May 1979. The session had gone so well that they were allowed by the Musicians' Union to use that tape, instead of the original single mix. The actual performance was mimed, rather hysterically, by Mike and his entourage' (David Humphrey, DS25).

Shortly after this, a dispute with Virgin resulted in the first 30,000 copies of Platinum becoming highly collectable. Mike met partner Sally Cooper in the Virgin press office and wrote the track Sally for her, but Richard Branson did not feel it was suitable for release, so it was replaced with Into Wonderland. The decision was made after covers and labels had already been printed and the first vinyl copies had been pressed, so collectors can only tell the discs apart by looking carefully at the matrix number. Finding V2141-B-1 or V2141-B-2 scratched on the record surface means you have found a copy including Mike's preferred track, worth several hundred pounds in mint condition, whilst V2141-B-3 onwards and CD versions feature the re-worked song, Into Wonderland, but are still titled as Sally and are worth far less.

When my German aunt and uncle came to visit in the summer of 1979, they bought me a copy of Tubular Bells as

a gift, as I had always been drawn to Mike's earlier music when they played it at home on their Marantz hi-fi. I raced upstairs and carefully placed the vinyl on the spindle of my record player and spent a little while trying to shift the needle on because I thought it was stuck in a groove at the beginning. As the sleeve warned, Tubular Bells didn't quite sound the same on my old tin box, so my grandparents bought me something much better that Christmas, complete with all-important headphone socket. Suddenly, the album came to life, and my fascination with it developed as I immersed myself in its soundscapes, detail and moods. Pocket money was tight, so I got a temporary recording of Platinum on tape until I could afford my own disc. The ritual of selecting the cassette, plugging in the headphones, inserting the tape and rewinding to the start was always worth the effort for the sensational aural reward. I found Platinum very melodic and the audio production quite different in a way which almost seemed to tickle my ears, but the composition was structurally much simpler with fewer layers than I was used to. I still find the result pleasing, but I know many fans lost interest after this change of direction.

I do a lot of long-haul air travel in my work as an IT consultant and have my whole collection digitised on my iPhone. Coupled up with a tiny headphone amplifier and my noise-cancelling headphones, the simplicity and quality of the experience is better than ever. I often pause for thought at how less than a decade ago I would have had to have a separate carry-on bag for all those CD's and how back in 1979, I needed mains electricity, a record player and a complete absence of turbulence to have the full collection at my fingertips. Although music is so much more portable these days and I can listen wherever I am, my life is also

very much busier, so I have far less time to sit down to listen to music than I used to. On a business trip to Mongolia in February 2013, I realised that solo travel is now one of the few times I have to escape into that world, and the relaxing effect the music still has on me really does go a long way to improve the experience. I do listen to a wide variety of other music as well, but have yet to find anything else which resonates so well with me as Mike Oldfield's.

Mike and partner Sally moved into Little Halings in Denham before the birth of their first child, Molly, but it wasn't long before he was ready to go on the road again; this time on a much more economical scale. On 5th January, 1980 he told SuperPop magazine, 'I'm very frightened of making a big mistake like that again. So I'll be much more careful this time. I might even get someone to sponsor me. Guinness perhaps. I like Guinness'. Mike took Sally and Molly with him on the next tour, promoted by Andrew Miller. The tour visited many smaller venues and I had no idea that Mike played in Poole, just ten miles from home, until I read it later in the tour schedules. The original intention may have been to take it further afield, as explained in a press release from Tony Brainsby Publicity in March: 'Mike also plans a coast-to-coast tour of America in July and August; another part of his worldwide touring plans. Despite the fact that he has never toured the States he held the number one single and album slots simultaneously with Tubular Bells'. It appears that the information may have been a little premature, as it also noted that 'Mike is currently negotiating a major US movie score following the success of his work on The Exorcist', which did not materialise.

Five animations were created by Ian Emes to be used as a backdrop on the tour, in addition to the promotional video for the Guilty single, which he remembers being hand-drawn just before the digital animation revolution: 'I remember making a ridiculously poor video for Mike Oldfield with blue screen and it was terrible, the images were shuddering. Everything was heavy and chunky; it was all mechanical up until the late seventies' (Vice website).

The tour included an appearance at the open-air Knebworth Festival, which was recorded and released on video cassette as The Essential. Wendy Roberts was one of the singers and arrived by helicopter: 'you could see this tiny field crammed with thousands of people which got larger and larger. My daughter and I were sharing the helicopter with Richard Branson, which was really good fun. It had been quite bad weather early in the afternoon and when we came out and I did my lead thing in the show, people were singing along and a big rainbow came out' (Airborne).

Rick Fenn also toured with Mike and was interviewed in 2010 for the 10cc fan club and shared that 'Mike is a unique man. I suppose we all are, but in the tradition of geniuses generally, he would do everything differently from anyone else. I think this isolated him. And he could swing pendulously from one extreme to another. When he first toured, he segregated himself from the other musicians with a musical director as the single point of contact and later went back to that format, but when he called me in, he had swung completely the other way. He wanted to be a band, share the risks and the profits, while he managed and tour-managed himself. The ensemble that I started with was I

think the smallest he's ever used. Mike, Tim Cross, Maggie Reilly, Mike Frye, Morris Pert and myself and we probably got to know him better than most musicians who have passed through his bands'.

Right at the end of the tour, a terrifying flight in a tiny hired Piper Navajo through a storm from Barcelona to San Sebastian ended better than was feared, by inspiring Five Miles Out rather than injuring anyone. Rick Fenn remembers it clearly: 'after only our second take off, we flew straight through the eye of a hurricane; the Mike Oldfield band came within a whisker of joining the Buddy Holly, Jim Reeves and Stevie Ray Vaughan club. Definitely a journey none of us will forget. Total sensory overload. Jesus, the noise! All you could see was white, stricken faces under the strobe flashing of lightning, and all you could smell was vomit, while your backside was thrown around inside a tin can that was dropping and rising hundreds of feet every couple of seconds. It was miraculous the thing held together. The young pilot stayed impressively calm. It was only his second flight as a captain, though he confessed later he thought it was his last. It's the hairiest switchback ride I've been on; that is, till I went wing-walking a decade later!'

QE2 was recorded quickly after the tour in an effort to placate Virgin with shorter, more commercial tracks aimed at getting more radio plays and included the first recorded and released cover versions of music by other artists. The album is possibly less characteristic than others as it had a much greater contribution from the producer, David Hentschel, who also played a significant amount of keyboards on the album. It was released on 31st October,

but was not marketed in a way which satisfied Mike, which caused some resentment towards Virgin at a time when they were heavily promoting punk.

I have a particular fondness for QE2, as my interest in music was developing quickly at the time. The songs are very pretty, but I felt were marred by a muddy-sounding production, where it was difficult to distinguish layers of instruments in the mix. Fortunately, this was greatly improved in the 2010 Mercury re-master.

Late in 1980. Mike visited New York again and arrived on the 8th December, the night when John Lennon was shot. It has been suggested that these events were later to be the inspiration for Moonlight Shadow.

Mike and Sally then had a second child, Dougal. Dougal was later to cut the promos for Bruce Parry's Songs For Survival album whilst working at Envy. The charity album was put together by his sister Molly and featured one track recorded by their father.

Mike took QE2 to his fans on the European Adventure Tour in spring 1981, being very mindful of giving the audience something worthwhile: 'For me it's got to have some point, some purpose. Why else go through the mindlessness of being on the road day after day. I want people to go home after seeing my concerts thinking, yeah, I'll be a better person for that' (Melody Maker, April 1981). There were

twenty five dates in Germany alone, confirming him as one of the biggest rock acts in the country. It was in Finland that Mike first got to know Jeremy Parker. Jeremy was the General Manager for Graham Baldwin Ltd and was selling merchandise on the tour. The two got to know each other and went on to become long-term friends. Jeremy went on to become personal assistant and also his manager for a short while.

Rick Fenn was on this tour as well: 'We went on to have a couple of great helicopter moments during the summer of '81 tour. Mike could fly one himself and once hired a chopper to fly into Cologne and land on the top of our skyscraper hotel. But the best was when we were in Athens with a few days off. We drew straws and I got to go by helicopter to the island Hydra, where we partied hard for a couple of days before flying back for the Athens gig. Seriously rock and roll. That was an eventful tour. We drove much of it ourselves in two Mercs. I usually drove one, often following the tour manager at 130mph plus; oh, the headaches I used to get! It was the time of no speed limits in most of Germany and Italy, but we didn't always time it right and it was in the days before satnavs. Somehow, coming into Rome, my car had fallen behind, and half of the band literally ran out of the car onto the stage. Literally! Mike had been working out how to entertain 10,000 people without us. There were a few moments like that, but that was the hairiest. I seem to remember our drive through Paris was like something out of The Italian Job. Speaking of which, our first gig in Italy was at a football stadium in Milan. We parked the two cars inside the stadium and after sound check discovered them gone with all our bags. Yes, we'd arrived in Italy! Unquestionably an inside job. But I think one of the funniest touring moments I've ever known

was in Munich. The arena there is a big one and he thought it would be nice to include a couple of specials in the show. He arranged for a troupe of Bavarian lederhosen folk dancers and one of those muscle-bound, buxom, beer-flagon wielding wenches to come onto the stage during the hornpipe. The dancers came down to sound check intending to get the measure of the piece and choreograph something for the evening performance. Well it transpired that lederhosen dancing all happened in 3/4 (um pa pa!) and the hornpipe was in 4/4. After some shambolic attempts at dealing with this, they got very flustered. So Mike says "no problem, we'll do the hornpipe in 3/4". A rather bizarre idea, but it kind of worked. By then though, these poor guys had gotten their lederhosen in a right twist. Come the gig, as the dancers paraded onto the stage, we dutifully broke into a ludicrous, um-pa-pa rendition of the hornpipe and were treated to the spectacle of our stranded lederhosened chums' panicked expressions while their choreography disintegrated into something resembling five Pinocchios doing the Eric Morecambe dance at a fancy dress party. All the while, our ten ton Fraulein wobbled and weaved around the stage with about four gallons of beer in each arm trying to avoid a catastrophic collision. My heart went out to these poor folk who had probably never performed in front of more than a hundred or so people. It was all the band could do to keep um-pa-pa-ing. I was doubled in half with laughter. Thank God the hornpipe is instrumental. Singing would have been impossible. It took the rest of the show to recover. There were some real characters in that band and we used to laugh a lot. Maggie and I were great friends and we used to enjoy a theatrical squabble. It was sport and nearly always good-natured. In fact people used to try and sit next to us when we all sat down to eat somewhere, to enjoy the fiery banter'.

The tour continued successfully, delighting audiences across Europe. It was later that year when Mike joined a very select group who can herd their sheep across the river Thames and elect to be hanged with a silk rope if the death penalty should be imposed. He was granted the Freedom of the City of London in recognition of his charity work, worldwide album sales and free appearance on the 28th July at the Guildhall Yard, London, on the eve of the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana.

The unique awards were to keep coming when Mike was to become only the second contemporary musician to be included in Who's Who, the exclusive guide to Britain's noteworthy and influential people.

Mike had very successfully moved with the times, proving that far from being a one hit wonder, he had much greater diversity and was here to stay.

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touring the world

The early eighties were a very intense time. A gruelling pattern had begun to emerge where Mike would write and record an album, take it on tour, then return home to start work on the next.

Getting Five Miles Out just the way he wanted it took a huge amount of effort, but was designed to make touring with it easier: 'now I make records with live concerts in mind. My previous albums were difficult to reproduce live'. Asked to give a name to the kind of music he makes, he was somewhat at a loss: 'It's just me. It relates to hundreds of different sorts of music in different ways, every little bit of music that ever made me think, "Oh, I like that"; English blues, English hard rock, a bit of bluegrass, Irish music, synthesizer music, classical music, even nursery rhymes and children's music'. Five Miles Out brought so many influences together, but also included vocals with lyrics on songs for the first time. 'To write lyrics you've got to have something to write about. Well, this time I had something to write about: my airplane theme. That's what the album's all about. Every time I go up in a small plane something terrible happens. One engine stops, we go into a thunderstorm or

snowstorm, or we're surrounded by fog' (Stereo Review, July 1982).

Jeremy Parker was later interviewed by the then official fan club and was fascinated by the recording process: 'I wish people could actually realise how much work goes into making a record. It really is quite incredible and the one I'll always remember is watching Mike make the single, Five Miles Out. It took 600 hours and that is an awful long time for a single. A single normally takes about twenty to forty studio hours to do, so 600 hours is a very long time indeed. Some bands can record two albums in this time, so it just shows you the amount of effort he is prepared to put in to make it sound right. It's amazing because quite often he is not satisfied with the end result, yet I think it's a masterpiece'.

The single was originally produced by Tom Newman, although Mike subsequently created another mix of the second half himself, making the drums quieter.

Rick Fenn was one of the musicians who worked on and contributed to some of the songs, like Family Man: 'it was a riff of mine, and we were jamming on it; me, Mike, Tim Cross and Mike Frye on drums. There are only two chords in the song and we established a form around them. The lyrical theme did not exactly come from me, though the chorus lyrics were mine. I was that family man that the song was about, with all attendant weaknesses. I'd used the expression and it became a topic of amusement between us. Tim Cross wrote most of the verse lyrics. Maggie pitched

in some later and soon the formidable Oldfield stamp was all over the song. Curiously, the original verse melody, which I tried to sing, was the same, but seven semi-tones down. We experimented with an electronic harmonizer on my voice and a much better melody appeared which Maggie of course came in later and sang magnificently. Orabidoo was a strange one. I have no idea what it means, if it means anything. Only a week before the whole album was finished, Mike recorded me and Maggie playing a song that she and I had written together called Ireland's Eye. He then incorporated it into Orabidoo and it sort of lost its individual identity. And then, like Family Man, it was credited to the whole band'.

The World Tour of 1982 which followed was the largest he has ever undertaken, taking in 99 dates in Canada, USA, Japan, Australia and New Zealand as well as Europe.

Rick was invited to join: 'The Oldfield World Tour was due to start just days after this 10cc tour and was going to take me away for months. If I wanted my family, I had to give up the tour. It was too late to give up the 10cc tour; I was half way through it. But Oldfield was my living, and a damn good one that I was lucky to have. But on the 12th March 1982, from a hotel room in Poole near the end of the 10cc tour, I called and told Mike I couldn't do the tour and left him little over a week to replace me. I felt absolutely terrible, but I'd kept putting off the decision. It shocked me. That night I left the stage after the 10cc gig on a stretcher with a temperature of 103. Blowing him out was one of the hardest things I've ever done. I'd so wanted to do that tour. It is to his eternal credit that in late September, he called me and asked me to

re-join the tour a few days later in Oslo. At the time I was part of an attempt by Raff Ravenscroft to form a super group, which also included Mike Frye, Fashion singer Dee Harris, and Pink Floyd's Rick Wright. It wasn't feeling good to me and I jumped at the offer, flew to Oslo and played my first gig in Stockholm, staying with the tour till it ended on the 2nd November 1982'.

Mistake was released as a single late in 1982, but although I love the guitar solo, I have to confess to finding the lyrics slightly jarring when Maggie suggests we "Get lost..." before continuing "...in dreaming" a few moments later. Years later, I asked Mike if he struggled with writing lyrics: "Struggle? God, it's like a war. It's got to be something spontaneous that you feel" (DS18). At this time, it was common to release singles as picture discs, so Mistake also had a picture disc release. The track was not released on an album until The Complete Mike Oldfield compilation came out in 1985, which was welcomed by fans as it contained many of the rarer vinyl B-sides and singles in clean digital quality on compact disc for the first time.

Meanwhile, frustrations with royalty rates and the marketing approach had built to such a level that he threatened legal action against Virgin. Mike subsequently renegotiated and extended his contract, which committed him to an additional three albums, the next one to coincide with the celebration of ten years since Tubular Bells.

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ten years and counting

A decade into his solo career, it was very clear that Mike Oldfield could immerse himself in and excel at a wide variety of styles, and he continued to attract a huge audience. 1983 was to build even further on that foundation.

He was still unhappy with the low royalties from Virgin, so rather than the Tubular Bells sequel requested by Virgin, he began work on what suited him better. Crises began life much like Platinum, but with talented drummer Simon Phillips and others in the Denham studio between November 1982 and April 1983. Simon remembers: 'Mike contacted me and asked whether he could meet me to discuss some ideas he had. We met for dinner in an Indian restaurant, we both love Indian food, and he told me what he wanted to do. It interested me, and fortunately I had the time to do it'. Spontaneous jamming in the studio created some early ideas: 'We did Shadow on the Wall first. I did the drums on the sequencer with chord changes you know, there were no vocals at that stage, guitars or anything. However Mike had played me the main guitar riff, so that's how I got the ideas of what sounded right. When I came back later to co-produce the album we stripped it right down from what he

had already done with it and built it up again. It turned out a little different. I'm not sure how to describe the changes. More edge perhaps. Similarly, with Crises, the end bit with the drums building up was done entirely with a sequencer, no other instruments playing. That's what I like so much about Mike, he breaks all the rules' (DSHC).

Another of the ideas developed further into Moonlight Shadow. After a false start with Hazel O'Connor, Maggie Reilly, the girlfriend of one of the roadies, who had previously sung backing vocals on tour, was booked to sing. Something I had always appreciated without ever putting my finger on it was that Mike hates people singing in an American accent; maybe part of what makes his music particularly British. When recording Moonlight Shadow, the attention to detail to achieve absolute precision was astounding, with the words for the song recorded in individual syllables before being reassembled. Moonlight Shadow was written to a formula to ensure chart success, as he told The Sun newspaper in 1983: 'I just sat down and worked out exactly what it takes to have a hit record. You have to have a hook, which is a word, or group of words, which crops up regularly. And it has to have some sort of emotion that people will react to. It also has to have a sound which is familiar to people. So I put all those things into Moonlight Shadow, and here I am!'

Gareth Randall asked Mike whether the John Lennon shooting had indeed influenced Moonlight Shadow: 'Not really... well, perhaps, when I look back on it, maybe it was. I actually arrived in New York that awful evening when he was shot and I was staying at the Virgin Records house in Perry

Street, which was just a few blocks from the Dakota Building where it happened, so it probably sank into my subconscious. It was originally inspired by a film I loved; Houdini, starring Tony Curtis, which was about attempts to contact Houdini after he'd died, through spiritualism. It was originally a song influenced by that, but a lot of other things must have crept in there without me realising it' (DS8).

Moonlight Shadow has a special significance for many people, but probably none more than the young daughter of a firefighter who tragically lost his life in 2010. The song was played at her father's funeral because she loved the line 'See you in heaven one day' and fire service chaplain Reverend Derek Overfield told mourners: 'She has clung to the lyric, it has given her comfort' (The Mirror, 28th April, 2010). Moved by the connection, Andrew King, a fan of Mike's for the past forty years and a firefighter himself, made contact with Jeremy Parker, who having been told the story, met with him and offered a Danish platinum disc of Moonlight Shadow from his own collection to help the young girl remember her courageous father. The disc was later presented to her by the Fire Service's Chief Officer and now hangs proudly on her bedroom wall.

The now established pattern of working meant that there was a twenty-four date European tour to follow in Germany, France and Spain, which had audiences up to 40,000. According to Derek Jewell, 'Oldfield played to packed halls at a time when many tours were cancelled. Many other bands were on the road including Supertramp, Bowie, and Dire Straits'.

The tour culminated with the Tenth Anniversary Concert at Wembley on 22nd July, a very special day for me, as it was to be my very first chance to see Mike Oldfield in concert. My Dad had laid the Sunday Times out on the table a few months before and asked if I could see anything interesting... and there was the advert for the concert! Despite it being Mum and Dad's wedding anniversary, he took me all the way from Dorset.

I remember the sound being appalling, with delayed echoes bouncing off the walls, but it didn't dampen my excitement in the least. Even though I was right at the other end of the arena, I have vivid memories of the huge moon rising above the tower with lasers shining out from it, Mike and Ant bouncing off each other playing guitar and Roger Chapman appearing as special guest. Dad was more than a little disturbed that he came out temporarily deafened, though. As well as being a day for firsts, it was also the last time I've taken binoculars to a concert! It must have been clear how enthusiastic I was, as Dad later took me to Portsmouth for the fan convention at the Queen's Hotel as well!

The official fan club had been set up around this time by Janet Arnold and she vividly recalls visiting Sally Cooper, Jeremy Parker and Mike at home in Denham in November 1983: 'As soon as Sally opened the door, my eyes fell upon the Five Miles Out painting that was hanging directly opposite the front door. I was ushered into the lounge and everywhere I looked there were discs for various awards hanging everywhere, which would make the most devoted

fan break out in a sweat, trying to imagine these items in their collection. There were family photos hanging on the wall, the Grammy he was awarded for The Exorcist Theme standing on top of the TV, but apart from these items it was just like everyone else's lounge and not at all how I'd imagined it to be. We sat in the kitchen for a while, drinking tea and eating slices of Molly's birthday cake. Again, there were a lot of photos, discs and his boomerang collection hanging from the wall. In the corner of the room there was a large cage where Squawk the macaw was kept, but as he had his wings clipped he was roaming about in the garden with Flopsy the dog and Lola the blue Persian cat. Sally looked through the newsletter and checked the competition I would be running was correct and gave me some additional information, then she asked if I would like to come upstairs and see Mike working in the studio on The Killing Fields film score. As we entered, he shook my hand and spoke briefly about the fan club. I stood and watched some of the film from a huge screen in front of a large mixing desk and listened to the music that he was editing. Then I was shown a room attached to the studio where all the instruments were kept and I instantly recognised it as the same room shown in the Five Miles Out album sleeve. There was just enough time to ask Mike to write a short Christmas message for the newsletter before it was time for us all to leave, as he wanted to do some more recording. I spent about an hour in there, but it seemed like a few minutes. I could have watched him working all day; it was one of the most fascinating things I had ever seen'.

The Killing Fields is the only music which Mike has created specifically for a movie soundtrack, an experience which he found unrewarding and has not repeated. The film tells the harrowing story of two American journalists in Cambodia

during the Khmer Rouge reign. Composing directly to fit the scenes, the film was edited afterwards in such a way that the music wasn't put with the scenes it was intended for and was added too quietly for Mike's liking. When Étude was released as part of the Two Sides compilation of his personally selected favourites in 2012, he stated: 'It was very disappointing and it seemed they wanted clichéd film music instead of something special'. He had to edit the music a number of times and found the level of compromise frustrating. The soundtrack was completed in Munich at the end of the year and he resolved to make music to please himself in future rather than film directors or record companies. The music was nominated for the best score at the 38th British Academy Film Awards, but was beaten by Ennio Morricone's Once Upon a Time in America.

After hearing The Killing Fields soundtrack and being very impressed, an unexpected call came through about a possible collaboration. The phone was disconnected in the studio, so Mike was buzzed to say that Michael Jackson was going to be put through. The phone rang and he was sure it was Richard Branson playing a trick on him so it remained unanswered. Michael Jackson did get in touch eventually, but Mike was out for a curry with his portable telephone and the only available signal was in the upstairs toilet of the Cookham Tandoori. Mike intended to visit him later in the year, but could not find the time. They never did work together, but it's certainly curious to imagine how that might have turned out, considering how vastly different their styles were. Adding his guitar to someone else's recordings is relatively easy, but closer collaboration has had to be with people well matched to his working style and vision.

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tax exile

Continuing the collaboration with Simon Phillips, Mike moved within sight of Lake Geneva to 'le Caribou', a chalet in Villars-sur-Ollon, Switzerland. Discovery was the first of his albums to be fully digitally recorded and also made much greater use of the Fairlight Computerised Musical Instrument (Fairlight CMI), which was to provide the backing tracks for the Discovery Tour in 1984. Simon learned how to produce and engineer whilst working with Mike and took on some of the workload and mastering skills, which helped him develop his own career: 'the studio was actually a house full of top-rate equipment. I lived in a chalet and used to put on my skis, go down to the train, let it take me up the mountain and then ski down to Mike's house, where he lived with his family and had built a studio. That's when I learnt to ski. I hadn't skied before; we used to take one day a week, Mondays, off to ski. It was great!' (DSHC).

Although Discovery mainly comprises shorter songs, some share musical themes and all are linked with short musical connections, giving a symbolic nod to the continuous longer creations Mike is best known for. Although hugely successful in Europe, the British market was beginning to stagnate for him, a trend which was to continue, with astounding sales

shifting away from his home turf to Germany, Poland and Spain.

Dirk Hohmeyer from Virgin Germany introduced singer Barry Palmer, lead singer with Triumvirat, who recorded some tracks for the album and joined the tour. Recording Discovery was a great experience for Barry, as he told me recently: 'there was a terrific atmosphere, we were down the pub every night, very relaxed, we had a right old laugh me, Simon and Mike. I had already worked on Crime of Passion in his studio in Buckinghamshire, so we knew each other fairly well by then. I was booked for ten days after Mike and Simon had recorded the backing tracks and Mike was fairly clear what he wanted. I don't know whether it was the change of atmosphere, but I developed a rather unpleasant sore throat, so my voice was slightly croaky. Luckily, he quite liked it, so when you listen carefully to Discovery, it's a real straining croaky vocal. I did my vocals that week and the day I flew out was the same day that Maggie Reilly was flying in. For our duet, Tricks of the Light, he had me sing it all, all the verses and all the choruses, then did the same with Maggie. He decided later which way round to duet it. Maggie and I never met until we were rehearsing for the Discovery tour. I think Maggie's first comment to me was "you sing too loud". That's difficult to deal with, because I'm a singer and that's as loud as I sing. It went downhill between us after that'.

Barry's favourite track was Poison Arrows, 'because the one song contains all the elements I like to show as a singer. It has quiet verses and big choruses. Someone at Virgin Records sent an early version just as it was to Yorkshire

Television, with no guitar solos, very little in the way of drums, just some light percussion, which I wish I'd kept a copy of. There had been a television series called Harry's Game, a thriller about the Irish Republican Army with theme music by Clannad. They were working on the follow up series and the director loved the sparse Poison Arrows and wanted it to be the new theme tune. When Mike finished recording Poison Arrows, they didn't like it any more, because they said it was overproduced. They couldn't come to an agreement, which was a real blow, because both versions were good in their own right. Admittedly, he was very engrossed with the final edits for The Killing Fields at the time. They would send him a clip of a film back and he would have to change it by 3/4 of a second. I know he found that time very stressful, because I was hanging out with him a lot!'

To France was the first single released from the album, featuring Maggie Reilly on vocals. A video was shot in a film studio in Munich. The underwater city of Atlantis was created by flooding it with 150,000 gallons of water, but the volume of water used meant that the local water supply for local residents had to be turned off so that the tank could be filled in time to finish filming.

Following the commercially successful pattern of the previous few years, the album was followed by a tour, but one which did not include Britain for the first time. Living outside of the UK for a whole year meant Mike was not subject to what he felt were extortionate tax levels at the time. The fan club offered a couple of coach trips at

excellent prices, one to Brussels and one to Frankfurt, but they were completely out of my reach as a fifteen year old.

I do remember being very frustrated hearing great reports from the two-hour concerts my German aunt and uncle had visited. Looking back, I wish I had joined them! There was some criticism from fans though; as many were disappointed the set did not include any of his earlier long instrumentals.

Nothing had prepared Barry for the level that Mike operated on: 'I'll always remember coming off stage one night with my slightly sore throat and I think there were two nurses and a doctor waiting behind the stage with blankets and medication because my sore throat had become worse throughout the evening. I realised there's so much money riding on these kind of tours that the singer can't get ill. The sponsorship was amazing, the hotels were amazing, the way we were cared for and looked after was on a level I'd never experienced before. It was of the highest order. There were other artists touring at the time like Queen, The Police and Michael Jackson, but they told us that the Discovery tour was doing better business. I knew this was probably going to be an experience I would have once in my life. It was massive, you would turn up at airports and the song was playing over the airport speakers. It was a tour unlike anything I've experienced before, or since'.

The routine of working constantly over the last few years and the Discovery tour in particular had exhausted Mike, almost to the point of a nervous breakdown, and led him to

consider changing direction: 'I'd like to do a musical or an acoustic set... I've spent the past few years doing an album, touring, doing an album, touring... I'd just like to break away from the treadmill' (Kerrang, summer 1984).

Mike started exploring new ideas and was keen to do a musical. Although that never quite happened, he was later to help Rick Fenn and Pete Howarth in 1991 on: 'a stage musical called Robin Prince of Sherwood and he came in one day and helped us finish the last big ballad in the show. It was on stage for about a year including time in London's West End'. The concept of adding music to visual cues was to develop significantly from this point into his pioneering work in music video.

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video pioneer

Over the next two years, Mike spent more time with his friends, took on a handful of mini projects and had a £2 million cutting-edge video studio installed in his home, where he experimented with Pete Claridge of CAL video graphics and then perfected his production techniques.

Rick Fenn was one of the friends who spent time with Mike and Jeremy while not working: 'Some of the most remarkable times we spent together were while not on tour. In March 1985, he organised a reunion in Switzerland. This was the first time I met Mickey Simmonds and Ant, and was the beginning of a series of sport-based social gatherings hosted by Mike. He could be a very generous man and he took his friends on several ski holidays. On one of the long skiing weekends, he had booked himself a tandem hang glide from the top of the mountain. We all came up to watch the take-off. The instructor was all set up and ready to go when Mike bottled out. "Anyone want to take my place?" he says. I, apparently, was the only one sufficiently lacking in a sense of self-preservation, and within seconds was launched into the alpine skies. I survived! We would also get together to play cricket, and even archery and clay pigeon shooting. Mike assembled a cricket team to play another motley crew

put together by Richard Branson. I am terrible at cricket, but it remains a feather in my cap that I caught Richard out!' A report from the 1985 official fan club magazine gives us a bit more detail on this: 'There was a friendly cricket match held on the 23rd June, between the Mike Oldfield XI and the Richard Branson XI. Playing for Mike's team were: Jeremy Parker, who was the coach and vice-captain, Phil Spalding, who was the wicket keeper, Dave Longmuir, coach driver from last year's European tour, Max, a singer in a new band, David Bedford, Mickey Simmonds, Simon Shaw and Claude, who are a couple of equipment suppliers, Simon Phillips, Paddy Grafton-Green, who is one of Mike's lawyers and Mike, who was the captain, of course. Rick Fenn was twelfth man, Joel, who is half of Toyah's band, was reserve and Ant, who can't bat or field, was first reserve, because he'd turned up for all the training. The Mike Oldfield XI were all out for 161 in fifty overs. David Bedford scored 83, Jeremy Parker scored eighteen, Mike scored fifteen and Simon Phillips scored twelve. The Richard Branson XI then came into bat and were all out for 52. Simon Phillips took four wickets, Mike, Jeremy and Max took two wickets each. For members who don't understand cricket, the above scores show that Mike's team won'.

In 1985, Mike was commissioned to write the theme and incidental music for a BBC television documentary broadcast that summer about archaeology at Sutton Hoo. Sutton Hoo is one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of all time. The site in the English county of Suffolk is home to ancient burial mounds and an undisturbed ship burial of an Anglo-Saxon king and his treasured possessions. The music is quiet and simple, but beautiful and evocative and very fitting to the programme's content. Janet Arnold reported in the fan club magazine that the opportunity to

write the music for the documentary transpired after he met Ray Sutcliffe, the BBC producer for the Chronicle TV programme at a Danish hotel during the Discovery tour.

Sadly, the fan club run by Janet Arnold later closed, but as an eager sixteen year old, I decided to give something similar a go. I started a tiny fanzine with my great friend Paul Beard. Little did we know at the time how it would grow and eventually become The Official Mike Oldfield Magazine. Janet was very helpful, sharing as much as she could with us, but the real catalyst for success was Jeremy Parker. I had written to Mike for help setting up the magazine, threatening (in jest) to set up a pop fanzine for Kylie Minogue instead if he wasn't prepared to help! Jeremy bent over backwards to supply us with news and information, and without him, Dark Star would never have thrived. At its peak there were around 1,250 subscribers to the printed magazine, but these days much of that interest has switched to the Internet, with the newswire mailing list having nearly 10,000 members.

Two memorable singles were released with home studio videos during the run-up to the next album: Pictures in the Dark featured Welsh vocalist Aled Jones and Norwegian singer Anita Hegerland. Anita has been a child star in Europe and her cousin had managed to get a tape of her singing to Mike whilst on tour in Oslo the year before.

Barry Palmer was asked for his professional opinion on Anita's voice: 'I think he was consciously looking for other female singers at that time, so I listened and I remember

the description that I gave him was that she's a good singer, along the lines of Abba, with a very good professional and slick pop voice. It was probably my recommendation that swung his opinion to try her out. In fact, it was me that went to pick her up from the airport when she landed at Heathrow a few months later. I took her to the Hilton hotel and she was very nervous. We then went to the studio at Denham to record parts for Pictures in the Dark. He did so many versions of it at the time that I knew I wouldn't be heavily featured in it, because I knew once he started changing, it meant he wasn't entirely happy with what he'd already done. He experimented and experimented, and finally ended up with Aled Jones singing the chorus and of course the rest with him and Anita is history. It was obvious the minute she walked in the room that he was besotted with her and that it was going to lead somewhere. It was painfully obvious, and of course, they later developed a relationship and had two children together, Greta and Noah'.

Shine, renamed from She Was She Was to avoid confusion with a Talking Heads song called And She Was, was recorded with Yes singer Jon Anderson, who was astounded at Mike's incredible range and dexterity on the guitar solo. Jon 'thought I [Mike] would get a Grammy for the guitar solo on Shine; they were his words!' (Sym-Info-Magazine No. 91). The shaped picture disc for the single has become one of the more valuable collector's items over the years. The uncut version of the same disc is even more sought after and is one of the rarest Mike Oldfield records.

There were a number of television performances to promote the singles. Rick Fenn did some German shows in January and another in Stockholm in March, which was also Anita Hegerland's first performance with Mike.

Personally, Mike and Sally were finding it increasingly tough to be together and split early in 1986, at which point he began hunting for a new house for himself, finally settling at Roughwood Croft next to Ozzie Osbourne and Noel Gallagher in Nightingale's Lane, Chalfont St Giles. Whilst house-hunting, he spent some time with Simon, Rick and Anita in Megève, France, recording and producing The Wind Chimes tracks for the Islands album, which featured a video lasting their entire length, believed to be the world's first for a long instrumental track. It's not well known, but Rick did collaborate with him again: 'Years later a group of us, I remember it included Phil Spalding, spent a few days in his studio writing and recording a big rock ballad. I thought it was really good, but it never surfaced. I've still got a copy of it somewhere'.

Barry Palmer was still socialising with Mike, but shared perhaps too brutal an opinion of the next album over a few cans of Guinness in the studio: 'he was using a live band at the time. It was almost like punk, very rough, with a live band feel. He'd gone back to his Kevin Ayers days and was trying to record everything live, kind of in your face and not too fussy. When he sat and played me the entire album, a rough mix, I said "it's good, but it's not Mike Oldfield", it was so unrecognisable. Mike would always be a perfectionist in every detail, but this was at the other end of the scale, the opposite to perfection, rough and sloppy. I can't claim it was

in any way down to me, but the album that came out was not what I listened to that night. Not only were the songs changed and gone, the whole production was much more like Mike Oldfield, careful, intricate, detailed and thoughtful. The things you associate with him were back. Basically that's what I said and he seemed to be OK with it, but that was one of the last times we ever spoke. I'm very aware of hurting people's feelings, but I think I probably did say more than I should have done. He's quite sensitive in that respect, but when you look back you can absorb those criticisms better and realise that perhaps people were trying to help you'.

During the sessions for what was to become the Islands album, Bonnie Tyler also visited to record vocals. Mike remembers, 'I spent ages working on the track Islands and was having trouble thinking of a good singer who could do justice to the song. I got in contact with Bonnie Tyler and asked her if she would sing on the track and to my delight, she agreed. She came to the studio with her husband and as soon as she sang the first few notes of the song I got a huge lump in my throat and the whole song came to life. She was a lovely lady with a very special voice. Andy Mackay from Roxy Music played oboe on the track and I was very happy with it'. Another of Mike's favourite tracks from the album is Magic Touch, which he originally wrote for Steve Winwood: 'I presented him with my humble offering shortly after, but by that time he'd gone off into the stratosphere in terms of superstardom and didn't seem interested in recording the song I'd written. That was Magic Touch. I found a singer called Max Bacon to sing on it and he did a very good job. It's a great track, and Virgin made a great promotional video and I edited the video at my own studio' (Two Sides).

Simon remembers that 'Mike wanted The Wind Chimes to be lots of short pieces. I was inclined to do something more like the other albums I worked on. However we are both pleased with the result. We did the mixing in France on a new computerised system. You can hear all the little things going on in each channel, things swapping sides across the stereo sound-stage etc. It has more detail than other albums. I think the collaboration has been good for both of us. There's been this rock / folk swap in ideas. Mike introduced me to folk and all those instruments. I introduced jazz and rock sounds. Sometimes he will play me something and ask what I think. I go "hmmm", so he plays it again trying a little harder, so I say "yeah..." and he'll play it again even better than before. This way he strives for something better, whereas before he may never have come across it' (DSHC).

Plans for a European tour of ten then twenty huge video screen shows in March 1987 were postponed then cancelled completely. The Daily Mail said: 'An elaborate tour to promote Islands was scrapped when Oldfield realised it would cost him £1 million' and quoted him saying: 'I wanted to do a Pink Floyd-type presentation, but going bankrupt after that first tour has made me very wary'.

For me, as a seventeen year old at the time, Islands came out shortly after I had passed my driving test, so I would drive around my home town, Wareham, in my Dad's orange Ford Escort with my friends Chris Alty and Paul Beard with the windows open, thoughtfully sharing The Wind Chimes with the bemused local farmers.

Islands was very light on the characteristic Oldfield guitar, with much more synthesized, sampled and vocal content. The result sadly didn't resonate with the British public, making it the first Oldfield studio album not to make the UK album chart, which left Mike rather demotivated and Virgin less interested than ever in promoting him.

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end of virgin

A two-year break followed before the 1989 album *Earth Moving*, which broke new ground in that there were no instrumental tracks at all. Under pressure from Virgin, the format was a commercial album of nine songs intended to include more chart songs with six guest vocalists. Neither my cousin nor my friend Chris were great fans, but both loved the album, so I had high hopes that it would reach a whole new audience. Although the result did fit the brief well, promotion was limited and the sales were disappointing, which didn't do much to help relations with the increasingly distant record company.

The disillusionment with Virgin and poor sales of *Earth Moving* led Mike to produce an album which was to delight the fans, despite being a commercial flop. *Amarok* saw Mike returning to his musical roots, featuring Paddy Moloney on Uilleann pipes, Bridget St. John and Clodagh Simmonds on vocals and Tom Newman as co-producer. The title of the album, again a nonsense word, is said to have its roots in the Gaelic words for morning and happy and when spelt out in syllables, has been described by Mike to say '(I) am a rock', meaning that he doesn't want to change anything by following trends, or rehashing what others have already

done. Apart from the light-hearted part featuring Janet Brown as Maggie Thatcher, the album is a complete return to the extended instrumental format. It was whilst recording a session for BBC Radio One that helped inspire him to record Amarok. The session recorded for Nicky Campbell in 1989 comprised three songs and a seven-minute version of Tubular Bells, all played entirely by hand. The engineers at the BBC were very impressed when he arrived with all his instruments and played them all himself, which contributed to him deciding to make a whole album in this way.

Tom Newman co-produced the album and made the brass letters on the cover in his time off. Tom told David Porter: 'Amarok was nearly all hand played, not entirely, there were still sequenced bits which I disapproved of. But he's got a sequencer and he's going to use it, and that's why we don't work together much lately, we just disagree over that particular thing. I like to play things by hand and Michael doesn't... that's why my records aren't very good!' (Airborne).

Playing in the region of sixty instruments, including objects from the sphere of everyday life such as shoes, hoover, spoon, fingernails and a toy dog, Amarok was created with the CD format in mind, running at sixty minutes of completely unfiltered eccentric expression of idiosyncratic concepts, which confused the critics but was absolutely loved by the fans.

I studied in Kharkov for a few months in 1990 and lived with a wonderful young Ukrainian family. Mischa was their six

year old son, and thanks to Amarok, his first words of English were, "Hap-hap-happy", shouted ecstatically whilst running around the apartment, grinning to himself! I wonder if Mike really knows the deep effect his music has on people?

Amarok ranks amongst my favourite Mike Oldfield albums. It took me a few listens to appreciate it fully, as it initially shocks the listener with sudden noises and changes of direction, but it is one of the few albums which were not influenced significantly by anyone else, so is full of raw and distinctively characteristic Mike Oldfield at his absolute best. This is an album I cannot have playing in the background, though. When I listen, it demands my devoted attention for a full hour to enjoy every detail. Getting spoilt rotten by British Airways when upgraded into an empty first class cabin on my return from Seoul, I had Amarok pumping full volume into my ears whilst being whisked home over the Siberian plains. The music matched the experience perfectly, the absolute joy captured in the music still managing to raise the hairs on the back of my neck and I'm not embarrassed to say, move me to tears. Absolutely first class!

Without a single, Virgin were not sure how to market it and Mike even put his own money into an advertising campaign. The British newsagent WHSmith gave away a three-inch promotional CD with their in-store magazine, Insight. As the disc with three extracts from Amarok was also a voucher which could be redeemed for a £1 discount off the purchase of the album, copies of AMACD 1 are extremely rare.

Mike himself regards Amarok as one his favourite albums: 'I approached the music by recording every idea that I thought of. I didn't spend time deliberating; I just put ideas down as I had them. I decided that I wouldn't use any sequencers or quantising, the album would just feature me playing real live instruments. I began recording with two bodhrans playing a pattern, I then added as I went on. I finished the process by recording fifty singers provided by the South African group Jabula at CTS Studios in Wembley. They translated my lyrics into the Xhosa language and it sounded magnificent. There were other touches such as having the sound of footsteps walking around an art exhibition. In my mind I could see the paintings. All these ideas came together. The whole piece was an improvisation. I think it's as good as Tubular Bells and will continue to stand alongside that album as one of my best for many years to come' (Two Sides).

Dick Speelpenning conducted a very revealing interview with Mike for Sym-Info-Magazine No. 91, which I remember translating back into English while studying in Germany that year: 'On the day of this interview, he is sitting in his studio, working hard on his next album, a record which he'd rather finish sooner than later, so that he can free himself from the yoke which has already bound him for thirteen albums: Virgin Records. "Luckily, I'm now working on my last for Virgin, which will appear in 1991. I can hardly wait till it's finished. I've never had time to do anything but fulfil my duties: recording albums and occasionally to go on tour. When this record is finished, my future will be open again at last. They're too big. I get the feeling that the people working there now don't value my talent. They see success

and commercialism as important. I don't see it like that; I'm more interested in the quality of the music. I've had enough of their attitude. Amarok was initially conceived as Ommadawn II, although it does have life of its own; it is an album of real handcrafted music, without computers.”

“I asked [Tom Newman] because my deepest inner feelings are important, and Tom has a very good influence on me: he's very laid back, knows lots of great jokes... we laugh a lot, which produces a positive atmosphere, very important when recording. I've been a complete individualist since school. I never mixed with other groups and was always the one who wanted to do something different. I can write rock, pop or folk; I simply write the music I want, and I try to be sincere. I'll do that more in the future; sheer music for music's sake, without worrying whether it'll be successful or people like it. That's what I do best.”

The Daily Mail pictured Mike sitting cross-legged in a tent in his back garden with his acoustic guitar in protest against the lack of real instruments in music, but despite the publicity and promotional effort, sales of Amarok were his worst for any of his albums. The fans have never been bothered by the low sales, and many rank it amongst their favourite pieces. If you ever hear a mobile phone punching out the fantastic syncopated guitar from about 51 minutes in, chances are I am nearby, as there aren't too many people with this as their ringtone, so please do come and say hello!

The rift between Mike and Virgin was clearly deepening, so he set to work on Heaven's Open, which would finally free him from his contract with Virgin. Mike's anger had showed itself in a hidden Morse code message to Richard Branson in Amarok, 'f**k off RB', for which he offered a £1000 reward for the first person to find this hidden code. Take a close listen, 48 minutes in, as Roy Rashbrook did when he was the first to discover it. This was further apparent on the track Make Make, where he criticised Virgin's ruthless greed for commercial success to the detriment of originality and musicianship. The conflict was further evident in Music from the Balcony, where harmonious passages were abruptly hijacked by discordant ones, showing how his displeasure with Virgin was constantly on his mind. This is the only instrumental track, a twenty-minute piece written on a balcony in Barbados with monkeys climbing around in the trees and someone below having an angry argument in the tropical paradise, which he worked into the piece.

After his own vocal efforts on 1974's Speak, Tho' You Only Say Farewell and 1984's Rite of Man, the news that he had taken singing lessons from Helena Shenel to record his own vocals did not fill those in the know with much enthusiasm, and Mike himself was later to say that it didn't work as he's not really a singer, but the result impressed the fans far more than anyone anticipated. Racing driver Jacques Villeneuve loves Mike's singing voice and has said that he uses the single Heaven's Open to fire him up and motivate himself before a race. Jacques lives in Villars and the two have now become friends. Jacques was later to be a guest at the Waterside Restaurant launch of Tubular Bells III in 1998.

Tom Newman nursed Mike through the time he was learning to sing, as he told me recently: 'he jumped from operatic to English public school and back overnight and was always fishing for info on whether it was working!'

Mike's social life continued to be much healthier, as he spent time with friends like Rick Fenn: 'People came and went from this boys' club, but I remained a pretty regular part of it and my social relationship with him took a fresh turn in 1991 when I introduced him to a girlfriend of my new partner, later to be wife, Heather. This was Rosa Suarez, who he stayed with for three years. Around that time he took a small group of us on some amazing trips. We had so much fun. Not many people get to fly to Paris for dinner in a Lear Jet! We were on holiday together in Portugal and it turned out that Virgin Records were having their annual convention just up the road. So Mike took an acoustic guitar and sat outside the door through which every Virgin employee had to walk, and unostentatiously played like he was busking. He was of course roundly ignored by one and all, until someone finally recognised him, after which a large, enthusiastic crowd gathered and regaled him with praise and adulation'.

Despite Mike leaving Virgin, Richard Branson's new airline later recognised the significance of Tubular Bells on the Virgin Empire by naming one of their first two Boeing 747 aircraft Tubular Belle.

With the Virgin contract finally fulfilled, he set about finding a new manager and choosing the most suitable record

company to embark on the next phase of his career.

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tubular sequel

The idea of recording a sequel to Tubular Bells had originally been sown around 1982, as Virgin had encouraged him to record a re-make to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the original, but became reality when he used it to help negotiate a new record deal with the assistance of new manager, Clive Banks. Clive was very well connected, and ensured that all the record companies came knocking on Mike's door this time around, no doubt helped by the fact that the marketing gift of Tubular Bells II was on offer. Clive's wife, Moira Bellas, was Managing Director of WEA, and Mike was very impressed by Warner UK chairman Rob Dickens, so a new contract was drawn up.

Mike spoke about the motivation for a sequel at a press conference in Frankfurt: 'Tubular Bells to me always had imperfections. It was mainly because it was rush recorded. I did most of it in a very short space of time because that's all I was given in the studio, and I always felt I could have done it better. I can't listen to Tubular Bells any more because it just sounds so out of tune and out of time and badly played, awkward. I suppose it's like some kind of strange Picasso painting where the nose is out of place, and you know where it's supposed to be. So now, when I listen to it, I feel there's

things that are wrong with it, and that's one reason I made Tubular Bells II, so I could rectify all those problems that existed in the first one'.

Mike's perfectionist approach to recording was made absolutely clear when he spoke with Thomas Rosenthal in an interview for Dark Star in Frankfurt in 1993: 'Funnily enough, you know, the worst instrument in the world to record is tubular bells! Trevor [Horn] told me this, after Tubular Bells was successful, he thought, "oh, these tubular bells must be really good, I'll get myself a set and try using them on a production", but there's so many different types and most of them you hit them and they go "duyng". They're meant to be big in an orchestra and they give a bell effect, it's because it's simpler than having a whole load of real church bells. I destroyed the one I used on Tubular Bells when I hit it, because I hit it with such a big hammer that it smashed and dented. Then for Tubular Bells II, we hired every single set of tubular bells in the world and found this little percussion shop somewhere in the back streets of London, and they had a tiny set, which sounded lovely, but they only had about six notes, and I said, "well, can we find out who made these and get them to make a complete one?" and he said, "no, they've gone out of business!" so all we had was these six notes of a really good sounding set, so I sampled them and in fact the tubular bells on Tubular Bells II are this tiny little set! They sound huge, but they're really just very small. I even went to a sound library in Los Angeles and listened to all the church bells in the world, like St. Paul's, the Santa Barbara mission bell, the Liberty bell... the trouble with most bells is they're in a minor key, you hit the note and it sounds like a minor chord, a minor harmonic, and because Tubular Bells II is in a major key, I needed to have one with a major harmonic. Just by accident, this little

set had a major harmonic, but even then, the harmonic was a bit flat, so I had to record just the attack of the bell, which was correct, but then the ring was a bit flat, so I had to quickly tune up the ring on a sample machine, and then it sounded in tune! I had to do every note individually, because they're all different, it was a nightmare! But it sounds pretty good in the end and people will never realise the work that goes into making a production. It's almost done second by second, note by note'.

Recorded during a six month stay in Beverly Hills and mixed back in the UK, Tubular Bells II was released on WEA in August. BBC Radio One's Steve Wright interviewed Mike on his show and played many excerpts from the album, which had me and many other fans gripped. Mike, assisted by Tom Newman and Trevor Horn, had kept the structure of the original Tubular Bells, used similar instrumentation and re-worked the melodies, to produce a perfectly timed recording which sounded incredible on my hi-fi.

Tom Newman co-produced the album and told David Porter: 'I don't like sequencers as a matter of principle and this was one of the problems with Tubular Bells II. Michael and I did the whole of side one as a kind of demo. I thought it was good, where he played quite a lot of it by hand. As soon as Trevor was introduced into the equation that became a no-no. Trevor just doesn't believe in anything that isn't absolutely perfectly in time. We agreed to differ about it. I like Trevor, we get on fine socially, we just can't work together as we are diametrically opposed. My idea of making music is to have an idea and play it by hand, and if you can't play it by hand use a sequencer or a sampler, but

at least play as much of it as you can by hand, because we're human beings. It's very easy to get a machine to make music, that's fine, but it's not human beings expressing themselves. And the great argument that Michael and I have constantly nowadays, the only argument really, is that I just don't like sequencers' (Airborne).

At the press conference, Mike expanded a little on this: 'I had two producers; Trevor Horn wanted it to be spot on mathematically in time and the other producer was Tom Newman who wanted it to be rock and roll, Rolling Stones, out of tune. So we were all fighting each other: "Aargh, do it on time!" Tom was saying, "Naa, it's alright as it is!" I was able to pick the best aspects of both kinds of approaches towards production and get something that sounded clean and beautiful and modern and very bright at the top end, but also something that was human and hand-played'.

The fans reacted very positively, as summarised by Adam Cohen: 'Tubular Bells II is yet another masterwork, a well-judged sequel for the nineties. There are of course similarities in melody, structure and format, but many exciting entirely new passages. Above all, the mood is so different. It is an undeniably joyous and uplifting record to listen to. I have read that Mike has been greatly influenced by Sibelius, saying back in the seventies that when making Tubular Bells he was trying to make music that was beautiful, but at the same time powerful, trying to be like Sibelius. In my opinion, if maybe he failed to achieve this to any small degree with the original, he has now without a doubt produced a work of supreme beauty and power, the equal of Sibelius' work. Hearing the climax of The Bell live

could be compared for its wholeheartedly uplifting quality to hearing a performance of Beethoven's Ode to Joy' (DSHC).

Adrian Thomas was chosen for a live performance of the album and shared insights into how the band was to prepare in an interview with Dark Star (issue 22): 'Robin Smith and I flew down to Nice where Mike had rented a villa for the summer. What happened that week set the way in which we have worked on subsequent concerts and tours. The first task is to listen to the album and tracks for the planned set list, with a view to what can be played and what needs to be put on a backing track. After deciding what needs to be played, Robin takes away tapes of individual tracks to assemble the score, while Mike and I concentrate on the backing track. Playing any of his music needs a huge amount of concentration as well as a reasonable amount of playing ability, so I have always tried to make the experience slightly easier by automating all of the keyboard and sound changes from the computer. This means that the musicians can concentrate on playing the music. The next job is to build the keyboard, computer and drum racks. These are the cases that hold all the equipment. By this time Robin will have finished the score, and it's time for rehearsals [in Acton, north London] with the whole band. I go through the score with each musician showing them where on keyboards and electronic percussion the sounds are, and how they should be played, and then it's time to start making some noise. The first rule is to make the live sound as good as that on the album; this is something that Mike is very keen to accomplish. Once this has been achieved, we start to discover ways in which we can make it better. He has always had an incredible ear for sounds and arrangements, so it is important to start from what he actually played. On occasion members of the band have

changed a chord, by one note, and been met with a steely stare. The dynamic of the music is incredibly important especially in the longer pieces, and we tend to spend a long time on preserving the ebb and flow. I have very seldom come across a piece of music in any genre that changes so smoothly from one mood to the next as Tubular Bells and Tubular Bells II do'.

A televised live performance in Seville was suggested by Clive, and then moved to Edinburgh castle, which was finally chosen for the premiere on 4th September, a few days after the album release. The venue sold out well in advance, with an audience of almost 8000, making £72,000 for the Prince's Trust in Scotland. Despite warnings of driving rain, the evening was cold but clear, not spoiling the concert, as had been feared. The master of ceremonies was not Alan Rickman as on the album, but the actor John Gordon Sinclair from the eighties film Gregory's Girl. He appeared in tails, announcing every instrument in turn. One of the highlights of the concert was the appearance of sixteen pipers from the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards playing Tattoo. John then re-emerged onto the stage, removing his jacket to become the Piltdown Man, miming the humorous grunts of Altered State before playing a quick guitar solo, which he thought put Mike to shame, until his fake guitar broke at the neck! The audience went wild and gave Mike a standing ovation, shouting for more and stamping their feet for, quite literally, ten minutes, obviously delighting him.

I visited the concert with a group of friends staying in a very old frame tent on the outskirts of the city. The fan magazine was still very small at that time, but I had five hundred

colour postcards printed up with subscription details on the back to hand to fans queuing to get in. I was seeing Mike live for just the second time, but others confirmed that the dynamic music, impressive backdrop and spectacular fireworks finale combined to make this the most outstanding concert of his career to date, as confirmed by some of the fans: 'From the moment he took the stage until the final note faded in a breath-taking climax of fireworks, I believe I have never been as captivated in my life. The whole experience was something that I will always treasure' (Elaine Thompson, Redditch).

'I was amongst those who braved the Edinburgh cold on 4th September and I must admit to having some difficulty in describing the experience; words are not enough. The inspired choice of venue, the superb music and sheer virtuosity with which it was performed all added up to what must rank as one of the classic concerts of all time. Tubular Bells II is Mike at his very best, a perfect follow-up to the original Tubular Bells, but still a brilliant piece of music in its own right' (Neil Cumming, Leicestershire).

Unfortunately, we lost one of the group after the concert and spent a couple of hours wandering round Edinburgh looking for him, then gave up and headed back to the campsite only to find Sean waiting rather embarrassed in the doorway. Mike later complained how cold he was playing for an hour, but I bet it was nothing compared to the cold night we shared in that tent!

I arrived home to find about three hundred cheques in the post, which was an enormous turning point for the magazine, as the economies of scale meant we could suddenly switch to a professionally printed and much more impressive colour magazine. The first four issues of Dark Star had actually been produced with self-adhesive colour photos carefully stuck onto the cover, which I remember took my wife and I many hours to complete, so it was a great relief to us when we could afford the first fully colour printed issues.

Tubular Bells II went straight to the top of the album charts, selling well over two million copies. The single Sentinel sold extremely well too, getting a very impressive promotional video, lots of airplay and an appearance on Top of the Pops. The staggering increase in the marketing budget and effort was clear for all to see. With such a high level of interest, all the ingredients were in place for a successful tour, starting with the first performance at Carnegie Hall in New York on 2nd March, 1993.

Eileen Burke played Tattoo on the bagpipes at the Carnegie Hall show: 'I was at the rehearsal studios twice before the actual concert. Mike spoke with us and explained how happy he was to have us as a part of his New York show. It was so exciting. I had to pinch myself a few times to be sure I was still breathing, since I was going to be [working with] such a talented musical mastermind and playing at Carnegie Hall! Standing backstage before our walk on, my throat felt like it was going to close. The fellows backstage were calling out the seconds before we were to go on and then we went. Actually, it was a few seconds too soon, but that didn't stop

the audience from screaming, cheering and clapping. It was unbelievable; everyone remained standing, clapping and cheering. The energy level was incredible and we sounded terrific; what a show! I had three minutes and 56 seconds in the performance of a lifetime. I will never forget that feeling. After we were finished and listening to the rest of the concert, I was standing talking to the actor, John Tesh; he was mesmerised and couldn't get enough of the music. I was just in awe' (DS25).

The Twentieth Anniversary European Tour culminated in four superb live shows at London's Albert Hall. On arrival, fans were greeted with a huge projection of the bell logo onto the Albert Memorial in Hyde Park. The shows were only criticised for their length, but the quality of Tubular Bells II and the encores, particularly an excellent live rendition of Orabidoo, dubbed Orgasmidoo by some of the fans, as well as the spectacular light show left the fans with a fantastic memory.

Dark Star Co-Editor Peter Evans captured it vividly in his review afterwards: 'The first thing that came to mind was the difference in sound from Edinburgh, with each note reaching the listener rather than being carried away on an icy cold wind! The lighting also made a huge impact and was certainly the best I have seen since Pink Floyd's in 1987. A fan shaped cover drew back to reveal Mike in front of the bells! As they were announced and the first note hit, the audience leapt to its feet to applaud. He turned, beaming like a Cheshire cat, waving the hammer in the air and completed his bell ringing. Even before the final note had been played, the audience had risen to their feet to show their appreciation for what had preceded. He stood

motionless with his hands behind his back and a wide smile crept across his face. For almost five minutes we all stood to show our unanimous appreciation as he thanked the group members for their support. One by one they left their places to great applause, and as he left the noise level rose to deafening heights. Mike waved and stuck his thumbs up before exiting the stage’.

Together with the rest of the Dark Star team, I had organised its first convention in the basement of a hotel on Cromwell Road, where fans assembled enthusiastically to meet each other and watch rare videos, including the stunning new The Bell promotional video, which WEA’s Head of Press, Barbara Charone had given us the day before. Carmen Allison played a beautiful rendition of Tubular Bells II on her flute and a special gold disc was on display to commemorate Tubular Bells II being voted Mike’s best album in the Dark Star reader poll. Before the concerts, subscriber Gabrielle Schrötter had proposed the special gift for him from the fans, mounted on blue felt with a plaque engraved: “To Mike Oldfield, for his best album yet, from the readers of Dark Star”

Once again, I had printed up some cards and handed these out to fans outside, but this time was accosted by the brusque Scotsman in charge of merchandising, demanding to know if we had direct permission to be giving away a free card. It seemed wise to check with Jeremy, who came straight out to help, being very apologetic for the inconvenience. Stretching our luck a bit, we asked Jeremy about meeting Mike to hand over the framed gold disc from all our readers, but he was busy that night meeting distant

relatives, discovered through tracing his Irish ancestry so we arranged to come back the next day: 'My mother was one of eight children, and I've spoken to three sisters and a brother who are still alive; they are all my great-aunts and great-uncles. I've spoken to my aunty and I've met my cousin, who looks a bit like me and is also a musician. They're all coming to see me at the Albert Hall. I don't know how many of them there are going to be. It's unbelievable, suddenly discovering your family' (DSHC).

At about 5pm on the Wednesday, Peter Evans, Michael Kuleczko and I popped in to check the arrangements with Jeremy and were amazed to find ourselves knocking on the dressing room door five minutes later! Mike was waiting, together with Rosa and a couple of friends. We were all surprised at him being much shorter than we had expected and also by how nervous he seemed. I then produced the gold disc and thanked him for *Tubular Bells II*, saying how we all felt it was amongst his very finest creations to date.

Mike appeared pleased by the compliment and wondered aloud where he might hang it before looking through the list of readers' names printed on the back, commenting how many there were. The first which caught his attention was Mike Oldfield, the fan from Oxford who changed his name by deed poll several years ago. This made him laugh out loud, already familiar with the story of Cyril Barker changing his name. Jeremy was good enough to shoot a good half dozen photos of us presenting him with the disc. Before leaving, I thanked Mike for giving us such wonderful concerts, adding how much we had enjoyed the first two nights. "Are you coming tonight", he asked, to which I had to admit we

couldn't afford all four nights. "Well, give them some free tickets, then!" Five minutes later, we were back outside, overwhelmed by our first meeting, hardly able to believe that we had at last met him! After the unexpected treat of an extra concert, we gave it our best shot at celebrating with a pint or two!

Mike's difficult childhood and resulting psychological burdens inspired him to want to help others with similar troubles. Early in 1993, he launched a Foundation called Tonic to promote the benefits of counselling and therapy throughout society and particularly to assist people on low income in getting support to resolve emotional difficulties.

The charity was co-ordinated in London by Nancy Everson Croft and Mike sat on the board of trustees at the British Medical Association, together with a professor of psychiatry from Guy's Hospital.

Dark Star launched a limited edition enamel badge to help raise money, with £1 from the sale of each going to Tonic. I have since been delighted to hear that the bright blue and yellow badges have become treasured possessions for many fans. As awareness of therapy increased, the work of the Foundation was done, so it closed in 1997.

Following the success of the tubular sequel, public interest was back at a high level and it prompted numerous authors to write about Mike, so 1993 was a bumper year for books,

with no less than three publications hitting the shelves. Richard Newman's *The Making of Mike Oldfield's Tubular Bells* is regarded as the definitive story of how *Tubular Bells* was recorded, including interviews and photographs from many of those involved at the time, and is well worth getting a copy of. Sean Moraghan's *A Man And His Music* paperback traced the history up to 1992 and Peter Evans' self-published *Music From the Darkness* went on to become legendary amongst the fans. I only wish I could replace mine, as the binding fell apart years ago from reading it over and over. One regret I have now is losing touch with Peter; he was a great part of the Dark Star team.

Twenty years into his solo career, Mike had not only delighted the fans again, but also repeated the commercial success that guaranteed the continued full support of the record company.

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out of this world

Rob Dickens was behind the idea of basing The Songs of Distant Earth loosely around the book of the same name. Mike briefly visited author Arthur C. Clarke at his home in Sri Lanka, 'which was a dream come true for me, as I had been a fan of his work for many years' (Two Sides). Arthur was sufficiently impressed with the finished album to write sleeve notes.

The album is believed to be the first to feature CD-Rom material for Mac, containing a short interactive journey and a game. A re-release of the album in 1995 also included the award winning video for Let There Be Light, which was shot in Los Angeles and directed by Howard Greenhalgh. The music was praised by many, including WEA's Barbara Charone who preferred it to Tubular Bells II, and after a period of believing Mike had moved away from what he did best, brother Terry was most impressed as well: 'I love his first four albums and recently The Songs Of Distant Earth, and Voyager' (DS22).

The album was launched in London at a high-profile event for the press and media at the London Planetarium, which I was also privileged to be invited to. Standing outside on Marylebone Road, a queue started to form before the doors opened, which included a few familiar faces such as comedian David Baddiel, who is apparently something of a fan too and mentioned Mike's music a few times in some of his shows. Around three hundred journalists filled the auditorium beneath the eighteen-metre dome, onto which video and images were projected while we sat back in reclining seats and enjoyed the premiere. I was very lucky to get the chance to meet Mike again afterwards where he wrote a personal message to the subscribers of the magazine.

By this stage, Clive Banks had offered us the opportunity to make Dark Star the official magazine, a change from the original plan. Music Merchandising Services were originally going to control it, and they even handed out fliers at the 1993 concerts, collecting about a thousand stamped addressed envelopes. Eventually, these were passed on to us and we had a direct means to heavily promote the magazine. The addition of my address on the album sleeve notes helped enormously, too, and triggered substantial growth to well over one thousand subscribers.

Another curious, but very relevant honour was bestowed on Mike in 1994 when minor planet 5656 was named after him. Discovered by W. Baade at Bergedorf on 8th October, 1920, not too much is known about it other than it is probably around four to eight miles in diameter.

Radio One DJ Annie Nightingale was commissioned to write a biography around this time and spent many weeks recording interviews. Discussions with a publisher were at an advanced stage, but faltered late in the day over financial issues. If the tapes do still exist, they would undoubtedly make fascinating listening, as Annie stated that he had revealed some remarkable stories!

In June 1995, Gareth Randall visited Mike at home in Chalfont St. Giles to interview him for Dark Star while he was in the very early stages of experimenting with computer games: 'The house is stunning; it was built in the last century. The studio and his offices are housed separately next to it. For some reason he has an old-fashioned red English telephone kiosk in his front garden! The studio area is brilliant; it's ultra-high-tech, but with a comfortable, rustic feel. Rather than have everything built in to consoles and work surfaces with the wiring kept out of sight, as I expected, lots of the equipment is housed in flight cases, with leads thrown all over the place. It's a very open, airy studio; there are no heavy soundproof doors, and the control room opens straight onto the back garden, with sliding glass patio doors! Just outside the control room is the recording space, which Mike explained had been designed specifically for Tubular Bells II to look like the old Manor studio, with the same cartoon cloud painting designs on the walls, an upper balcony and a huge cartwheel hanging from the ceiling. It's not that big; it's got a grand piano taking up a fair amount of the space, and an area in the corner with a Betacam-SP video camera pointing into it. The camera was actually pointing at a chair that looked suspiciously like the one in The Songs Of Distant Earth CD-Rom track; indeed,

Mike said that they shot all the video material there. Throughout the interview, he kept fiddling with his latest toy, his Silicon Graphics setup, and the virtual world he has created within it. Apparently it's still a year or so away from completion and here's a thing... at the moment there aren't any platforms, other than Silicon Graphics, that will handle it! However, he expects that in a year or two the end-user technology will have advanced enough to make PC/Mac platforms capable of running it. He's also looking at making it available on both dedicated home entertainment systems and home computer systems and he has some very exciting thoughts about an interactive virtual reality concert event. "This virtual reality project you'd be able to take on the road and I've been thinking about all kinds of ideas for allowing the audience to participate. Imagine if we hired the Roundhouse and every tenth seat had a box with two buttons and there were three thousand people, so there'd be three hundred boxes. The audience would control the picture, there'd be a musical backing track which would provide the skeleton of the music and the musicians would have to follow what the audience decided. I find that kind of thing really exciting! One of the problems with touring is that you need so many people! I could just have a backing track and a couple of musicians, but that would be kind of cheating. I must say that I got a bit bored doing tours. The Edinburgh concert was fantastic, and the first few after that were great, but doing the same thing night after night lost the element of unpredictability that I want to bring in. But we'll certainly play some old stuff, including songs, on the next tour, whenever that might be" (DS8).

In 1996, Mike headed to Ibiza in search of a peaceful holiday retreat, but couldn't find the home he was searching for, so had a seaside villa modelled on the temple of Knossos built

for him carved on a plateau from a cliff face. He moored his Sunseeker boat at the bottom of the garden, which looked out towards the island of Formentera. The magical and beautiful winter atmosphere on Ibiza was to influence the style of the next album.

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celtic flair

The Voyager album, released in 1996, is a collection of ten instrumental songs with a Celtic feel and completed his initial three-album contract with WEA. This album was a departure from previous Oldfield albums in that of the ten tracks, seven were cover versions based on traditional Scottish, Irish and Spanish folk songs re-worked into Oldfield's unmistakable style. The success of Michael Flatley's Riverdance had led the record company to propose the idea of a purely Celtic album, an idea which he found appealing due to his musical roots. The album is very reflective, calming and mellow and contains some fine pieces.

The bare-chested cover photo proposed by Mike's new personal assistant, Caroline Monk, was a big departure from his traditional image and she had to argue the case very strongly before it was accepted by WEA.

Mike was keen to premiere the new album with some concerts in London in late June, arranged for a smaller group of musicians to perform in more intimate venues. There was

talk of a free concert in Ibiza as well, but the local council was not supportive and there were also problems finding a sponsor. Spanish Radio station Cadena 100 interviewed him in August 1996 and he said, 'I would love to play [Voyager] live. We'll judge the reaction of the record when it comes out; if there's a big interest then we'll be back and do some concerts in Spain, I'd love to. We're trying to organise doing one here in Ibiza, but the problem is that there are no facilities here, no equipment and no lights, and we have to bring it all from either Spain or England and it will be very expensive, so we're waiting for a sponsor'. Regrettably, financial and logistical hurdles meant that there was to be no live performance.

The Dark Star team began a regular ritual with Voyager, going in to Clive Banks' London offices in Hammersmith, sitting in the listening room and absorbing every last detail of the new release in a preview session before it was issued as a promo to the record industry. Although we had been working well with Clive for a couple of years, the risk of sending out early copies to us as enthusiastic fans was significant. We never broke that trust, but it understandably took a very long time to be regarded as safe! The detailed preview was published in issue eleven of the magazine, well before the album came out. Once again, Mike had adopted and mastered a new style and he gained a whole new group of fans, such as my friend Carole, who says it's her favourite album to play whilst doing housework.

Many Irish and Scottish fans in particular were delighted with Voyager: 'Today, I bought Voyager. Today was the first time in years that I have cried. The Flowers of the Forest

song with the Mingulay Boat Song has a strong sentimental link for me. I never thought I would hear such a version that would have such an effect on me. Mike truly is a musician sent from God. His music really is completely beyond all bounds of comprehension, quite simply a class all to its own' (Russell W. Kidd, Dollar, Scotland).

Fans united in praising the beauty captured in this music: 'Mont St. Michel is an overwhelming piece, with so much beauty and power! I have the feeling that he captures the very essence of music itself with this finale. Many musicians have tried to make their music the most inspiring and memorable. To Mike, music just happens so naturally. I will always find myself in his music, which is such a different world, perhaps a world towards which we're aspiring; Voyager is sublime!' (Laura Burduhosu).

A copy of the album was sent to Michael Flatley, and he was apparently so impressed that he incorporated Women of Ireland into his stage show, and considered the possibility of working together in future.

Shortly after, Dark Star launched a search for the most knowledgeable reader with a special quiz posing forty teasers including:

Mike wore a very expensive piece of clothing around the time of the Exposed Tour and Platinum sessions. What was it, and what made it so expensive?

Mike and Babylon Zoo have something in common. What is it?

Describe the difference between Earth Moving Club Version and Earth Moving Disco Mix?

In spite of Mike's relationship with Virgin during the late eighties he was still asked to open something for them. What was it?

What is the name of the track and the punk / new wave group that Mike recorded with? What instrument did he play?

What is the song Holy about?

Svend Aage Petersen from Denmark won the competition with an astounding score and later went on to become the very knowledgeable webmaster for Dark Star for a few years.

The crown of Oldfield expert was passed to Gavin Fuller in 2010, when he appeared on the BBC television show Mastermind for a second time, with his specialist subject

being the life and music of Mike Oldfield. I was delighted to hear that he had used back issues of Dark Star to help him research!

In case you are wondering, Mike wore a black T-shirt with a sheet music design on the Exposed tour. The music on the T-shirt was reportedly made from Diamond dust! Mike and Babylon Zoo were both managed by Clive Banks of CBL. As to the difference between the Earth Moving Club Version and the Earth Moving Disco Mix? Well, a trick question this one, as they were identical! Mike, Anita and Compact Dog opened a CD pressing plant inside the Virgin Megastore with Richard Branson in London's Oxford Street. Despite his revulsion for punk, The Skids apparently did some recording in Mike's studio and he played the Fairlight CMI on the track Iona. The track is actually slow and quiet, maybe not what you would expect from a punk band! Holy is a song about Mike's relationship with his son Luke. Mike has remained close with all his children, who often visit. Luke was later to get the gig of his life because of his close relationship with his famous father.

I am confident that by the time you finish reading this book, you will know the answers to all the questions in both of those very tough quizzes!

Summer in Ibiza was a very different experience to winter; packed with holidaymakers in party mood. Mike joined in enthusiastically and this period was to have a marked influence on him, both emotionally and musically. Naturally

the island's culture and music provided the strongest influence to his next project, Tubular Bells III.

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man in the sun

The hedonistic spirit of Ibiza influenced Mike heavily during his time living in Europe's party capital during the late nineties, possibly freeing the latent teenager in him. Drinking heavily, stories emerged of him stumbling out of nightclubs screaming and crashing his car whilst over the limit, leaving him aggressive and depressed and wanting to change his image. He emerged looking younger with dyed blonde hair and wanted to change the fan magazine to appeal more to a younger audience.

Inspiration for the early version of the Source Of Secrets track on The Essential compilation album came from a tape of German techno-dance music given to him by a friend, but the Tubular Bells III album showcases a wealth of Oldfield talent and styles and only actually features two tracks that could be classed as club music.

The songs on the album generally reflected the different moods and experiences whilst living on the island, but the single Man in the Rain was a song which Mike had been trying to get right for many years. It dealt with the painful

split from Sally Cooper and his first three children in the eighties, and in it, over a decade later, he had finally found himself able to capture these feelings in music: 'I've been trying to record that song for ages. I hired the best session men I could find and booked the best studio in Munich, the best engineer, Mac, who did a lot of the bigger hits for Queen and ELO and tried to record it, but just couldn't do it. I could never get it right and then thought, well it's supposed to be a Moonlight Shadow kind of song and had the idea of sampling the original drums from Moonlight Shadow and making a drum loop out of them. I used them as the basis for Man in the Rain and that did the trick. It had to have something from Moonlight Shadow which just made it click and work. I asked Warners for a vocalist and they found me this girl Cara [Dillon]. It's similar chords, but in a different order, and a different melody. I wanted to get the same rhythmic feel and the same atmosphere as Moonlight Shadow' (DS17). Although some concerns were raised about reusing the Tubular Bells name, it was clear that there was real passion in the music, the screaming guitars, frenzied rhythms and hammering drums contrasted with beautiful serene melodic sections, delivering one of the most distinctive albums of his career.

Clive Banks was in early negotiations with the artist Damien Hirst to create the album cover, and also considered a design with a serpent in the familiar bell shape, but in the end, the final design was created by photographing a new bell model. Once again, the Dark Star team visited the CBL offices for an early preview of the new album, hearing additional tracks later cut from the final release, including one called Russian Playground. The level of trust had built by this stage and we were subsequently sent an advance CD-R reference copy of early masters to review, and we also

received promotional photographs and press releases directly from the WEA press department as well. What wasn't quite so expected was the call out of the blue from Mike's new assistant, whom he had met while in Ibiza. Caroline Monk was to help us take the magazine and website to a whole different level with her support, enthusiasm and direct access, probably the highpoint of Dark Star, and also the point at which subscriptions to the magazine peaked.

Promotion for the album was very intense, with many varied campaigns ranging from billboard posters, flyers on traffic lights, the usual press paraphernalia, and even an airborne poster attached to a light aircraft flown over London. This promotional campaign spawned a clutch of unusual releases for collectors. The launch party for the album was held at the expensive Waterside Inn restaurant on 6th August, attended by everyone connected with the production of the album, managers, press and industry representatives. A special edition in a cardboard sleeve with Waterside Inn 6-8-98 printed on it was given to all who attended. Subsequent promotional editions have the same CD, but without the Waterside Inn text. Around fifty copies were issued in a plain white glossy paper bag, with a Tubular Bells III luggage tag attached to the cord handles.

The album was premiered with a live performance at Horse Guards Parade in London. There is speculation that newly elected British Prime Minister Tony Blair was to introduce the concert but had to cancel due to last-minute urgent events needing his attention.

On the day of the concert, Dark Star arranged a second convention at Westminster Central Hall, just a few minutes' walk from Horse Guards Parade. We opened the doors to a huge queue of fans; the turnout was superb. We had hoped for about two hundred visitors, but quickly reached the hall's capacity of three hundred. Fans from all around the world gathered to meet, share stories, watch videos and buy and sell rarities. Tom Newman came along and stayed most of the day, signing autographs and enjoying talking to many of the fans. A limited edition mug sold well, and we auctioned a T-Shirt of Mike's for Tom's charity project. It was a wonderful chance to meet other fans, and even led to the marriage of two subscribers who met through the magazine.

After the convention, we ventured out into the rain and joined the merchandise queue to buy raincoats. I did feel sorry for subscriber Jeremy who had his mug confiscated by security. Either they thought he was a hooligan who had prepared himself thoroughly for throwing an anniversary mug at the stage, or they were desperate for a cup of tea to warm themselves up!

In a press conference the following day, 5th September, Mike said: 'I was so busy banging the bells, I hit the bell myself and synchronised the flame explosions. When we finished, I asked "did you like it?" and the crowd stood up and all started cheering. That was the part I liked the best. After that it was a lovely concert! I especially enjoyed seeing Richard Branson soaked to the skin. Most of [the musicians] were recommended by either musicians or the record

company, Pepsi in particular. The singer who sings on the album was for one reason or another not able to sing at the concert. So I asked the rhythm guitarist “do you know any really good singers?” – “I’ll think about it” and he came back with her name the next day. When I met her she was able to perform all the songs, she’s a good performer and a friendly happy person, a real professional’.

Fan Tim Woodward considered it ‘the most amazing spectacle. I would have said it was impossible, but the performance improved on the album. I still can’t believe how such a sound could be produced. The encore had to be Far Above The Clouds. Then it was all over and I realised I was drenched. The rain had steadily got worse as the night wore on, but I had been so engrossed in the concert that I had forgotten about it. I’ve never been as wet before in my life, but it was worth it’.

Having had tickets in the front row, I was lucky enough to be right under Mike’s nose. At the end, standing against the barriers, I was hollering my appreciation to him as much as anyone else around me as he soaked it in, so was surprised that a couple of seconds after shouting out “a-ma-z-ing” to him, he echoed back: “amazing”. Of course, it could have been just a coincidence, but it felt as if Mike had heard and agreed and it felt very special to me!

Mike Atkinson echoes this in his account of the night: ‘When the flames went up behind the giant chrome tubes and the finale erupted from the stage the crowd responded in kind. A huge cheer went up. Everyone was animated and the

grins got bigger. The end came as a disappointment, not because the music was bad, far from it, but because it had to end at all. We all rushed forward. Mr Oldfield seemed a little amazed by the reception and we were treated with fabulous renditions of Moonlight Shadow and Family Man, and the encore of Moonwatch / Far Above The Clouds. This time the little girl had help from the crowd, on their feet and shouting “tubular bells” as loud and hard as they could. This rain-soaked fan had the time of his life’.

‘This is the most wonderfully emotive piece of work that Mike has done yet. He started off extremely nervous; he was actually white as a ghost. As soon as he got his teeth into his new material, he relaxed and after a couple of tracks was in his element. The whole crowd were in complete harmony in their appreciation for the best 45 minutes of music he has ever written. The standing ovation at the end said it all really and the fact that everybody remained standing for the closing numbers. I got the feeling that Mike himself didn’t quite know how the audience would feel about his new work as the thank you after the ovation was, to say the least, broken by emotion’ (Daryl Lines).

Hans Claesson from Sweden visited London for the concert whilst on his honeymoon: ‘I came back home to Sweden yesterday morning from a journey I’ll never forget... one of the greatest experiences of my life: Mike Oldfield live... wow! What a performance... and the rain didn’t make it less memorable’.

The sight of thousands of us having the time of our lives, completely oblivious to the torrential downpour was to be far more significant than any of us realised at the time, but more on that later!

After the excellent concert, we squelched our way along Whitehall to the Undercroft for the after-show party. The art exhibit of the newly-made bell used in the album sleeve and a huge mural of the new album cover welcomed all the guests, which many wanted to photograph. Mainly filled with the people involved on the marketing side of the album, including familiar WEA and CBL faces, there were also a lot of Mike's friends and family there, including sister Sally, Jacques Villeneuve, Richard Branson, Miriam Felber, Jeremy Parker and Mike's older children.

The venue was tastefully decorated, with white drapes hanging everywhere, a DJ playing dance music quietly in the background and very welcome long open comfy seats! We very much enjoyed being spoiled with delicious hors d'oeuvres and Champagne, which was constantly topped up. We made our way around the small venue, talking to some of the people that we knew, including subscriber Ann O'Brien, who casually asked Richard Branson at the concert how best to meet Mike, only to be invited to the party!

Mike celebrated his success with friends, so we didn't intrude, but heard from Clive's assistant Caroline Stewart that Mike had been extremely pleased with the concert, particularly that the crowd had responded so enthusiastically given the terrible weather. In a press

conference the next day, he said: 'Last night it was as good [an audience] as I ever had. They were wonderful'.

Soon after the show Mike announced that he had put his Ibiza home up for sale, but had great trouble selling it. He finally sold it to Noel Gallagher and returned to Buckinghamshire to continue recording his next album.

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then and now

Instead of taking time out, Mike launched straight into his next project, his last contracted album to Warners, inspired by his primary instrument. Guitars took him back to his roots.

All the instruments including the drums and percussion were sampled and triggered through various guitars. Unique, and proficient, this acoustic album has some fantastic guitar playing on it, but was crafted to be easy to take on tour. Even the drums were created from guitar samples, as Mike explains: 'There are samples made from bass guitar. I took a bass guitar and the bass drums are just like that. I put it in a sampler and tuned it, edited it and that became the bass drum. And then the snare drum was a harder slap, I put it into the sampler, tuned up, with a lot of very bright echo, short bright echo and ran it through a machine called a Finaliser which really squashes it together and put it into a sampler and tuned it and made a snare drum out of it' (DS19).

Immediately prior to the Guitars release, Mike and Clive Banks parted company on 12th May and Jeremy Parker temporarily took over as his manager followed by Jazz Summers for a short while. During Joel McIver's interviews for the sleeve notes of the Platinum Collection, he picked up a distinct negative vibe from Mike towards those working in the management role: 'it's clear that Mike's antipathy towards Branson is still keen after all these years, justifiably, and his distrust of management and record companies is profound, as you might expect' (DS26). Mike has spent considerable periods since then working without a manager, dealing with the administrative side of the business himself.

It was in the final stages of putting together the album that he embarked on planning the Then and Now tour of Europe during the summer of 1999, and simultaneously working on his project for the end of the second millennium.

During an interview with me in Dark Star issue 18, Mike said: 'I suppose when you're playing live you've gone through so much rehearsal that you get bored just playing the simple part; when you've got a whole live band it's always difficult to stop everybody playing all of the time and I've got to get used to that. In Tubular Bells III, there are long sections where I don't play anything, and it's a great temptation just to play along and play things that aren't necessary, and it's the same for all the musicians, although it's a lot better now we've started to write it down and we just say if it's not written, don't play it, whereas when I used to work with rock musicians they'd be banging away the whole time, you know, couldn't shut them up'.

Although Dark Star had been on the Internet since the early nineties, and had been the first website to provide a legal music download of the track Mike's Reel, the visitor numbers were relatively low until the summer of 1999, when Mike's PA Caroline bought an Olympus digital camera, and sent daily photos and updates which we posted to the website every evening. For the first time, fans got to see what Mike had been doing behind the scenes on the day it happened.

Old and new fans across Europe met, enjoyed the concerts and made friends, such as Klaus and Margit Zirkelbach: 'At the Vienna concert, there was a big family sitting behind us, dressed up in all kinds of Oldfield shirts. Talking to them, we found out that the whole family loves Mike's music and they celebrated their Dad's 48th birthday on that day. There they were, fourteen people from the age of eight to seventy-six and both the grandpa and his grandchildren were on their chairs during the encore! In Fürth, while waiting to go in, a Turkish lady in her fifties, dressed in her own ethnic style looking as if she were lost, holding her ticket to her chest and staring nervously at the gathering crowd, asked my wife what kind of concert this was going to be. We tried to explain what she could expect and found out that the only music she listened to was traditional Turkish music and the ticket was a birthday present from her kids. So there she was, standing in the crowd like a lost child. Later, we saw her again for a moment, in the middle of the crowd, dancing and with shining eyes and a smile on her face! We live in a part of Bavaria that is quite rural, so we didn't expect to meet other Dark Star members from our region. It was funny to discover that Hubert from the next village is also a

subscriber, as we were wearing our Oldfield and Dark Star T-Shirts! In Fürth, we sat next to some Dark Star members from Wunsiedel. Now I know that we are not the only Oldfield fans in our remote Bavarian region' (DS20).

With the Internet really beginning to grow in popularity, it provided a new immediate and direct means for fans to communicate with Mike. Following many requests during the early stages of the tour, he added the acoustic Muse to the set on the fifth night, Berlin. Within hours, the Tubular Net forums were full of posts from fans who were delighted at the direct influence their feedback had on Mike.

Once again, we organised for our great friend Thomas Rosenthal to get a press pass to take more of his wonderful photos. When you consider both how long Thomas has been capturing Mike at work, and the quality which he consistently achieves, I believe that makes him the prime photographer in Mike's career.

Solo was the UK ticket agent, and we arranged five hundred priority tickets for subscribers, who got prime tickets in a front centre block at Wembley and the NEC. It was great to be able to offer everyone a special subscriber benefit for their support of the service and I did end up feeling like a temporary celebrity myself when so many people came up to say hello! Even better was the invite to the after-show party at Wembley, where we all got to meet Mike again.

Fans appreciated the concerts and premium tickets: 'our seats were right in front of Mike! Although their eardrums were bleeding, my mum and dad loved every minute, they haven't shut up about it yet! He also got a standing ovation after Ommadawn; very well received. And, he did it again; I had tears in my eyes throughout most of the gig! If I got hit by a bus tomorrow, I would die a happy man, absolutely outstanding!' (Sean Allison).

'I cried all the way through Summit Day. Pepsi was brilliant; she really got the crowd going! I was soon dancing and clapping again! To hear Mike playing so many of my favourites was heaven on earth. And what a finale; everyone was jumping up and down and going crazy' (June Leece).

'Nothing could have prepared me for the buzz I received from hearing Ommadawn performed live in front of me by the genius who created it. Experiencing this simply reinforced the already immeasurable respect and admiration I have for Mike Oldfield; both his musical creativity and his spectacular musicianship. He inspired me to take up the guitar myself ten years ago and I have adopted a similar style, using my nails instead of a plectrum, but the things he did on stage simply illustrated to me how far behind him I am. Looking back at the evening leaves me excited with anticipation for the future of his music' (Adam Lockett).

Mike had certainly gone all out to make the end of the decade very special indeed, but he had even greater plans

for the turn of the century.

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third millennium

Mike's first thoughts about the turn of the century surfaced during his Tubular Bells III concert at Horse Guards Parade, where he had synchronised the chiming of Big Ben with his music and the idea for The Millennium Bell was born. The more he contemplated his plans for New Year's Eve the more he found the idea of a millennium concept album increasingly irresistible.

Drawing on the vast rich legacy of the history of mankind, Mike travelled across the world from South America to Africa in the quest for inspiration. The end result is eleven tracks which are a musical celebration of the last two thousand years, providing individual snapshots of time that collectively take the listener on a fascinating journey through the ages. Recorded at Roughwood Studios, Mike wrote, produced, played guitar, and arranged all the tracks. All the orchestration was recorded live in just one day at Abbey Road Studios with conductor/arranger Robin Smith and The London Session Orchestra.

Bass player Carrie Melbourne shared her thoughts on the Bells albums in an interview in issue 21: 'The Tubular Bells albums certainly seem to have covered the corners of the earth like the four elements; Tubular Bells appeared as quietly as air, and suddenly was everywhere. Tubular Bells II, solid and earthy, made its timely appearance to mark the twentieth anniversary. Tubular Bells III flowed like water to complement the dance and ambient trends, very feminine-influenced, and is in many respects my favourite, and finally the fiery Millennium Bell marked the end of the last century with pomp and circumstance, light-show and fireworks. These works alone would be a significant achievement by anyone's standards, but taken as four corners of a much larger puzzle, they complement and echo and play around one another with an unqualified richness, beauty and diversity that I think will only be fully appreciated in the centuries to come'.

Mike shared his thoughts on the future in issue 19: 'I'm convinced that the next stage of human evolution has got to be some kind of spiritual way. We can learn all the science we can, we can probably clone human beings, but a real step in evolution has got to be in a spiritual way. If you think that since the sixties with the birth of the New Age movement, the first step towards it is understanding the psychology of yourself. Most people live in a kind of trance, blaming their parents, their childhood, their school or the government for something. They don't take any responsibility for themselves, so I can change something if I don't like it. I don't have to blame someone for it. That's the first step, and I think certainly in the last ten, twenty years, the whole movement toward self-awareness has become the centre page of every single newspaper. I think this is a very positive thing. In one thousand years from now when there's

another millennium change, we will be very different creatures to what we are now and I will do my little part to make them good creatures and not bad horrible ones, I hope' (DS19).

The choral sections of the album were provided by the London Handel Choir and the Grant Gospel Choir. Subscriber Roy Rashbrook had a lifelong dream fulfilled in that he not only got to meet Mike Oldfield, but also got to sing on the album, both within a choir and as a soloist, as he described in issue 20: 'Mike's current engineer, Ben Darlow, is the son of Denys Darlow, very well known amongst classical musicians as director of music at Saint George's Church, Hanover Square. For several years I had sung first tenor in the professional choir that sing there every Sunday, so when Ben approached his Dad to see if he could get a choir together for a recording session at about a week's notice, Denys immediately thought of me, not knowing that I was an Oldfield nut. We travelled to the house in Buckinghamshire, where we were met by Robin Smith, who had done all the choral arrangements and was to conduct the choir. Scores were handed out and we assembled in a medium sized room with a high, vaulted ceiling from which was suspended a large, horizontal coach wheel and a model aeroplane. Mike came in from the back door with a cup of coffee, did a huge double take when he saw us, said "hi" in a rather embarrassed way and went through to the control room. We went straight into recording the first of our tracks: Peace on Earth, a carol, the tune to which had been previously recorded by Ben's younger sister Camilla. In The Doge's Palace, a solo tenor (me) sings the names of two of the doges, Giovanni Delfino and Francesca Donato, joined by the rest of the choir in the next two. After that we sang a few extra bits to be stuck into the final chord and at various

other places through the album. It was only when Mike walked into the room that I allowed myself to believe that my impossible childhood dream had actually more than come true. What impressed me most was how nice he was to everyone, not minding at all if people wanted to look in while he mucked about in the control room. He was in excellent humour with the choir. On one occasion he tried several times to sing to us from the control room over our headphones what he wanted us to do. He couldn't quite get the notes out and ended up degenerating into garbled spluttering and quacking noises down our headphones. We all laughed and he poked his head round the door, smiling sheepishly, saying "it's been a long day". He was also very concerned that everyone had a good time, and made sure there was enough ventilation in the rather hot recording room. The control room itself was simply a vast mixing desk and two large computers, and a couple of master control keyboards. The Sony digital tape machine was out in the hallway. Oh yes, and guitars, on stands, lying on the floor, but mostly hanging from the walls; a good thirty or so of them. I also met Robin Smith, who basically turns what Mike says or sings into usable vocabulary, i.e. notes on paper for session musicians. We also met and played with CD, Compact Dog, his extremely well behaved studio mutt'.

During the recording of The Millennium Bell, Caroline Monk offered the magazine readers a rare insight into how Mike works in a short article where she shared how he approaches everything that he gets involved in with tremendous energy and enthusiasm. 'It's fair to say that Mike is a creature of habit. He starts the day with a healthy breakfast, before heading out for a jog. He places great emphasis on being in a healthy and relaxed state of mind and thus every morning he goes out into his garden,

weather permitting of course, places a chair by a tree and meditates for twenty minutes. He uses this transcendental meditation to clear his mind. The bulk of each weekday is spent in the studio, typically from 12 pm through 7 pm, though this does of course vary and can involve anything from recording to rehearsing or working with session and guest musicians. He is also very actively involved in most of the day-to-day activities of liaising with his management, record company, publisher and the people involved in running Oldfield Music, with whom he has daily meetings. He generally works with just an engineer in the studio. At the time this was Ben Darlow, who worked on Guitars, and who then provided the engineering for The Millennium Bell. If pushed, Mike will also occasionally give an interview, although it's one of his least favourite pastimes. After a day that would tax most of us, Mike sometimes plays squash before finally slowing down, maybe to read or watch something to do with Star Trek; he has watched every film so far, or maybe heading off to relax in the evening at one of the many local watering holes with a pint of black Irish genius' (DS19).

A concert to showcase the album was organised by Art in Heaven and took place at the Siegessäule in Berlin on 31st December, 1999, accompanied by a spectacular lightshow. Carrie Melbourne recounts how rehearsals began: 'at our top secret location in merry old London town, we began and dispensed with rehearsals in seven days, rather a lot of music to get through. It was great to see everyone again, Pepsi [Demacque], Claire [Nicolson], Adrian [Thomas], Fergus [Gerrand], and also musical director Robin [Smith] and Jody [Linscott] from the Horse Guards concert, as well as many of the same techs from Horse Guards and the tour. It felt very much like family, with the new guys who

recorded the album with Mike, Miriam [Stockley], Nicola [Emmanuelle] and David [Serame], fitting into our home environment very easily. We're a friendly bunch, us lot. It's only when you take music live that you see how much work has gone into the detail: the different musical lines and harmonies, and the dove-tailing of modern technology (synths, modules, drum patterns and computer technology) with old-fashioned instruments: guitars, bass and stick, orchestra and grand piano. Sometimes he would be there before everyone else and go through each detail with minute exactness, other days he'd come in clutching a Burger King bag of fries, make a few highly uncharacteristic strangulated squeaks and squawks on his guitar, and go away again. But don't be fooled, everything's under control. And it is interesting that, for a formula that he has been working for a long time now, he always brings freshness and variety to it, without sounding stale or "heard it all before". It is all in perfect working order' (DS21).

Despite being offered VIP tickets, I was unable to make it to Berlin for the concert, so arranged for our new website administrator, Carole Martin, to have the ticket instead. 'I was allowed to spend the entire concert right at the foot of the stage. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I was going to be that close! Mike joined the hosts on stage dressed in a green velour suit with purple lining, a purple shirt, and purple suede boots, went off stage, but came back a few minutes later, lit a cigarette, sat on a stool and looked out at the crowd. He kept checking his watch and looking for the band. They didn't come out, so he laughingly gestured to the crowd and went to get them. When they came on stage and started Tubular Bells, everyone cheered! It was incredible! There was electricity in the air, and even

though the temperature was zero, no one seemed to notice' (DS21).

Carrie Melbourne remembered: 'the view of all those people and the victory column illuminated from the stage was something I will never forget. I loved the fireworks going off in principle, but not at all in practice! Robin laughed while playing the Tubular Bells theme at the piano, because I jumped about four feet in the air after a firecracker went off near the stage. I loved the four incandescent balloons hovering like moons over the applauding crowds. I liked the way that Mike would turn round to watch the orchestra playing and the choir singing. I liked my Snow & Rock thermals which kept my hands and body Seychelles warm in temperatures between minus two to minus seven, depending on which direction the fireworks were travelling' (DS21).

Carole Martin added: 'fireworks were going off all around us. The crowd was cheering and dancing throughout. Everyone was enjoying being part of the moment. People were joining arms, swaying to the music, and singing along. There was a feeling amongst us that we were all part of something very special; something we might never feel again, but we had it that night. The look and smile on his face told us that he was pleased with how it had gone. He was beaming! Thirty seconds before the year 2000 was to begin, he started the countdown. The entire crowd joined in, and at the moment he got to zero, cheers went up, fireworks exploded, champagne corks popped, and over half a million people were hugging each other. It didn't matter if you knew the person next to you or not. We were all there for whatever

reasons we had for being there, and we all rejoiced together. It was a wonderful experience! People were laughing and crying and there was an incredible sense of oneness amongst us all. It was an amazing sight that I will never, ever forget; an ocean of people! They said that the area had to be closed off as there were over half a million people there. At one point as the light canons were sending their beams miles into the sky, four huge white orbs started to rise above the crowd. It was absolutely awesome! And just when I thought it couldn't possibly get any better, Mike started playing Beethoven's Ode to Joy! I have always loved Ode to Joy, and to hear Mike playing it was so moving for me! It was at that point that the tears started, and I didn't care who saw me. I was having the best time of my life! The after-show party was sensational! Everyone was in the mood to have a good time, and we did. We danced and drank champagne until 6am' (DS21).

Emotions were clearly stirred by the power of the music, the crowd reacting ecstatically to the once in a lifetime event, which Carrie summed up by saying: 'I loved being a part of so major a show, a part of history that will be recorded forever. I loved playing The Millennium Bell tracks, and especially the Berlin 2000 closing number, which was so large and loud, and so fitting to welcome in the new century, a really monumental piece of music. It was without a doubt the show of all shows to end the millennium on'.

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chill zone

After such a busy four years, Mike spent some time resting in the early part of 2000 before restarting work on the virtual reality project which he had originally begun in 1995. The project is an experience based around a world that he and his team have designed and created using Silicon Graphics computers. Home computers were not powerful enough to run the software at that time, indeed no software even existed to support the idea of seamlessly interlocking graphics, music and flight simulation, so Mike embarked on designing this himself with his team of experts. The intention is to experience images and music which are determined by the choices made in navigating through the world. It is not like a normal computer game, it is more about listening to the music whilst exploring an imaginative world. There are decisions to make that will determine where you travel and the music that you hear, and because it is virtual, your path is not exclusive and you can decide at any time to change your direction.

Mike enjoyed working on it immensely: 'Yes, it's a lovely thing to work on, I just love it! One of the most difficult things was getting an interface, a really beautiful one. A mouse is a very primitive thing, so I tried a space mouse.

Not only does the music draw you in certain directions in the virtual landscape, it can also change the tempo of the music. We just started to get the thing to respond to midi, to have little samples in it. I don't know technically how it will end up, probably something ridiculous, maybe when the Internet speeds up with fibre-optic cables or something. It's certainly not impossible. It will happen somehow' (DS19).

Mike was involved in every aspect of the project-management, conception, design and graphical modelling, apart from the writing of the software. MusicVR fuses real-time virtual reality with his music. It offers complete freedom to go wherever you wish in the MusicVR world. The path that one takes determines the nature of the experience through dynamically changing visual and aural stimuli.

In spring 1998, we ran a recruitment campaign for volunteers to help fill the enormous gap left when Peter Evans moved on to other projects. Peter's enthusiasm was sucked out of him after receiving a far from charitable response to his request to sign a CD outside the Royal Albert Hall. Paul Harris was recruited and has been an integral part of the Dark Star team since then. Living only just over half an hour away from Mike's home, it was far easier for Paul to pop in for updates and previews than for me in the depths of rural Dorset. One of Paul's most memorable visits was in the weeks before Christmas 2000, when Mike invited us to his studio for a sneak preview of what was then called Sonic Virtual Reality.

Paul spent a few hours with Mike and shared his impressions in issue 22: 'Scattered throughout are a number of musical, aural or visual hints, which if acted upon will change your course either visually or musically. For example, a butterfly might suggest freedom and beauty, a scorpion something dangerous, and therefore to be avoided. In addition there are a number of different levels that according to Mike can be set according to the player's age, taste and inventiveness. The SVR experience has a respect for life, and creates a sense of relaxation and calm. The imagery and music combine in a stunning manner, in an encapsulating, almost hypnotic experience. The different zones evoke different moods, but the overall effect is one of escapism, that is almost like a detox and de-stress from daily life. The idea is to experience the atmosphere that is created by the music and the visual imagery, to discover various hidden characters or objects, and to visualise the evolution of the virtual landscape as a result of the individual player's choices. I was hooked in a short space of time. I felt that I was drawn into the world as an experience, almost like it was consuming all my visual and physical stimuli'.

'It was only after reading something on a previous version of the SVR website about lucid dreaming that I understood that I was in a sort of state in which the dreamer awakens within the dream to realise they are dreaming and can thus influence the outcome of events... powerful stuff indeed... The personal choices that I made saw the world evolve in a positive, nurturing way, and in other cases into something dark and negative, but in a non-aggressive way'.

Sally Oldfield was living in an apartment adjacent to Mike's studio at the time: 'I couldn't believe the breadth and scope of this virtual world that is not only visually and musically stunning, but draws you so strongly into its benign force field that nothing else seems to exist for that period of time. Although it's very different from the experience of spiritual meditation it seems to have a similarly calming and energising effect... The blend of interactive visual-soundscapes, carrying you like a glider on the rising thermal of Mike's music is truly awesome, yet the technology only enhances and honours all living things rather than abuses and destroys them. It also, most importantly, creates the sense of our intimate connection with the universe on a real physical level because of the flight simulation aspect. This is so important for us to discover as a race because if you are connected to the world how can you possibly want to destroy anything in it? Or abuse it for your own selfish ends? This is, of course, the common basis for all the divergent spiritual teachings which our so-called civilisation has all but lost touch with' (DS23).

The interactive MusicVR game was first released as a second CD on the Tres Lunas album in 2002, the first of a new three-album contract with Warner Spain.

There is reasonable consensus that Ommadawn, Amarok and Tubular Bells III are the ultimate Mike Oldfield recordings, featuring regularly in fans' top five album lists, whereas others, like Tres Lunas, get included far less often, despite clearly being the favourite of some. So what is it that makes a Mike Oldfield album a great one? It's quite clear that those most favoured have a common magical

quality. It's no secret that his creativity is drawn from the very depths of his soul, reflecting his emotional state at the time of composing. Tubular Bells famously being the musical emotional outpouring that he couldn't express with words, and Amarok displaying his frustration with the world around him. They have a message to convey, which he struggled to articulate in any other way. Mike's best albums all contain that huge contrast between lighter and darker moods, the passionate expression of ultimate joy then plunging into deepest despair. Mike described Tubular Bells II as an emotional roller-coaster, which perfectly reveals his most incredible skill as a composer and musician, turning those deepest feelings into vastly expressive and wonderful music. At the other end of the scale, albums like Tres Lunas were recorded whilst he was settled and content in his life, with no major issues desperate to find expression in music. Understandably, this produced music reflecting that, very pleasant and immaculately produced.

David Porter echoed my own feelings when reviewing the album: 'Great stuff, but no real climax to the album as we have come to expect. Also if you are expecting some anger in his playing it isn't there this time, the nature of the game dictates calmness and pleasure'.

Mike can be quoted a number of times saying that he is merely the messenger by which his music is delivered. In an interview with me in 1999, he said: 'My music feels to me that it's not really mine. It's obviously a gift I was born with; it's generated off a lot of things. It's still totally unique, there's nobody to touch it, to come close to copying it and I'm very very proud of that and obviously I really enjoy

people appreciating that, but I don't want to be personally idolised for it. I've got no problem with people saying "that's a wonderful piece of music, what a fine piece of work", I think that's great, but if somebody says "Oh you know you're a star or a genius, I go, ah, come on."'

Mike's next project was to address the constant mains hum, the rushed recording at anti-social hours, instruments out of tune and primitive technology, which were all factors that led him to feeling frustrated that the original Tubular Bells had not been completed as perfectly as he wanted. The burning desire to re-record it from scratch had to be suppressed for twenty-five years due to a clause in his Virgin contract, but it got the better of him in 2003, and this time round he ensured it was technically perfect; well, almost!

Before hearing the CD, Philip Newell doubted that Mike could have re-captured the feeling of Tubular Bells in a new recording, because the original circumstances did not exist, so he was surprised how well he managed it: 'In 1972 Mike was a shy and introverted teenager, but he had a dream. The Manor Studio was an exceptionally creative environment, which was also sheltered from the outside world. The team of people there, at the time, was very special, including some stunning-looking ladies who also had brains and initiatives to match. One of them, who was there to principally make the beds and wash the dishes, found herself a director in the EMI organisation twenty years later. Such was the calibre of the staff all the way through. Tom Newman was also on a mission to make something

special of Mike's music'. In many ways they were ideal circumstances to cocoon Mike.

Compare these circumstances to those existing in 2003. Philip explains: 'Mike was rich, famous, and much more sure of himself, and his music was already widely accepted and recognised. He was recording in his own studio with no pressures of time or money, and there were also no doubts about the composition, arrangement or how to fit the sections together. I could fully understand how, in the original version, the errors of timing, tuning and the recording limitations of the original had always bugged him, and I am sure that there was also the frustration of knowing that the whole thing had been recorded on an extremely small budget. Considering what it turned out to be, it had been ludicrously under-financed. As a composer he would want to hear his composition at its maximum potential, as a musician he must also have felt that he could now play in a much more accomplished manner, and modern recording technology makes things relatively simple that were almost impossible to achieve thirty years ago. However, the burning question was whether he could get back into the frame of mind that created Tubular Bells'.

Philip continued: 'In fact, it is incredible how Mike has captured the same rhythm and feeling of the playing; I really don't know how he has managed to do this. Clearly this is much more to him than just a piece of music. He must have pulled something out from deep within himself to have been able to re-record it so well. Some of the nuances in the new version are a little different to the original, but even so, I cannot say that one version is better than the

other. Mike has decided how he wanted this new recording to sound, and this is the way in which he intended and wanted Tubular Bells to be presented. Whilst I was listening to the 2003 version, I could not think of any part of the original that I wanted to return to. In my view there is no part of the original version that has not been captured. I am amazed at what he has managed to do with this re-recording, and I cannot think of any other artist who has achieved what he has achieved with a re-recording such as this' (DS25).

Rather than Part One and Part Two, the tracks were split into individual tracks for more convenient CD navigation, using the working titles from the original. Gerry Van Huizen from Vancouver 'loved the alterations to the various parts, especially the guitar fingerpicking sections. I loved the many track splits, making it so much easier to find that favourite part. I thought John Cleese did a marvellous job. I pictured him standing there, ready to begin the introductions to the instruments, starting with "Gr-r-r-and Piano!"'

The caveman section was a particular challenge, as Mike didn't want to repeat the damage he did to his vocal cords the first time around: 'I had two choices. Either I drink a bottle of whisky and I go for it, in which case I won't be able to speak for the next two weeks, or I do it every day, I'll do one little part of it and build up a collection of caveman screams and sounds. So that's what I did; every day or two I'd put on the microphone and scream for thirty seconds, and then over a period of a couple of months I had a big collection of sounds, which I then edited together on the

computer. Did you know that the second voice was me as a woman? There are excellent software plug-ins for programs on the Macintosh now to change the sound to do all kind of strange things to it. I used one of these plug-ins on there' (Martin Glatz, Hiawatha II magazine, reprinted in DS25).

As for not being perfect, if you listen carefully when John Cleese introduces the mandolin, it is repeated very quietly in the background shortly afterwards; maybe this is just a Monty Pythonesque trick? Additionally, about eleven seconds into Ghost Bells, as the guitar chord fades away, there are a couple of extraneous sounds. The first sounds like Mike resting his guitar and the second sounds very much like him sniffing! All very insignificant, but I would bet it irritated him afterwards!

I have a suspicion I may have irritated Mike at this time myself, as although I understood his motivation to record it again, I didn't hold back in sharing my rather hastily-penned thoughts on the website: 'Every note is in perfect time and tune, and the production quality is astounding compared to the original. Technically perfect it may be, but the new recording bounces along happily and misses much of the unique atmosphere of the original, lacking the raw anger that he expressed in his music all those years ago. Mike is well aware that the name does sell, and he's managed to pull it off so far, Tubular Bells II being truly inspired, Tubular Bells III one of his best albums yet, and The Millennium Bell very special indeed, but now another Tubular Bells? I can guarantee that the few critics that do spend the time to listen to it will be outnumbered by the many who will review it without even hearing it and say that Mike has run out of

ideas and can do little more than try to recycle the golden success of his launch. As fans who know every note, breath and imperfection backwards, we will all listen and point out the subtle differences in melody, timing, tuning and rhythm, but put it on when friends come round and they'll probably just say, "Ah, yes, isn't that Tubular Bells!" We know that he is still capable of true genius, and he will deliver again, but the public image of Mike Oldfield will sadly take a downturn with the marketing suicide of yet another Tubular Bells'. Luckily, my predictions proved not to be true and I have to confess I do actually listen to the 2003 recording more than the original now, so I offer my apologies, even if Mike did later concede: 'in my local record shop they've had the original Tubular Bells there since I'd lived there, and they put the new one up, and after a month they took that down and put the old one back up. So you're absolutely right. The production, and even tuning doesn't matter, it's the force and energy, idiosyncrasies that give it its character' (George Shilling, Resolution Magazine, March 2007).

After Tubular Bells 2003, Mike released his second video game, Maestro, which allowed multiple players to connect online and find solutions to puzzles.

Mike was again free to negotiate his next contract, and chose a new tie-up with Universal Music, which is still in place today. For the first album with the Mercury division of Universal, he wanted to give them something both creatively and commercially successful, so the album Light and Shade was the last recording finished at Roughwood Studios before moving to his new home at Old Down Manor in Tockington, near Bristol in 2005.

Light and Shade used Yamaha's Vocaloid software to generate vocals. The Miriam plug-in used was derived from Miriam Stockley's voice, a singer who had performed live with Mike at the millennium concert in Berlin. As an experiment in music production, the synthesized voices were fascinating, but I find them disturbing to listen to. Despite this, there are some beautiful melodies and it received great reviews from many fans: 'the greatest album of electro music I ever heard' (Hellektro Dark) and Chris Simmons: 'I have to say the Shade CD is by far the strongest, and the track Ringscape is absolutely incredible. It's classic Oldfield. Soaring melody, wailing guitars. It's the best piece he has produced in a long while. Utterly incredible!' I'm hoping it's some way off yet, but I've told my wife that Sunset would make the perfect piece of music for my funeral, a stunningly beautiful piece capturing the sun setting gracefully at the end of the day.

Continuing the chill-out theme, Mike worked with Christopher von Deylen from the German electronic music band Schiller in 2005 and recorded the track Morgentau (morning dew) featuring Mike on guitar. The beautiful track was released on the Tag und Nacht album on 28th October.

2005 also saw the re-birth of a project originally started with Annie Nightingale back in the nineties. Working with author Jon Collins, Mike wrote and published his autobiography Changeling with very clear goals in mind, as summed up by Jon: 'a definitive guide to Mike, his life and music this book is not. Recent events are given almost scant attention

reflecting his opinion that these periods are not significant in shaping either his character or his music. Mike knew exactly what it was he wanted to say. I found him to be a highly articulate person verbally, and I was there to help him say what he wanted to say in writing. Conversation is different to prose, so my role was to ensure I rendered his story accurately on the printed page' (DS27).

David Porter added: 'It is not a complete history of Mike Oldfield from day one. He tries as best he can to remember events in the order in which they happen, but it is obvious that some of it is a blur. What we get is why he is like he is, what makes him tick, all his hang-ups, his triumph over adversity'. The book does reveal great insight into how Mike's younger years shaped him, and makes fascinating reading, but it was these comments which first sparked the idea for this book to lay down a more complete chronological history.

On 24th May, 2006 Mike announced via his website that he would be touring again, but this time as a guest in Dirk Hohmeyer's Nokia Night of the Proms, a mix of classical and pop music including OMD, John Miles, Chico and the Gypsies and Mike: 'I am very pleased to announce that I have just agreed to join the Nokia Night of The Proms tour of Germany for 2006 in December. The quality of the show is outstanding, not only in terms of performance, sound, lights and production, but also in atmosphere and sheer joy. It will indeed be a privilege to work with the musicians, crew and management of this show. Nearly seven years now since I have been on stage! Hope you will be able to attend. All good wishes! Mike'. The twenty-five minute section

featuring Mike included excerpts from Tubular Bells, Ommadawn, Moonlight Shadow, To France and Shadow on the Wall with Mike accompanying on guitar. The success was repeated with some additional dates in Spain early in 2007.

Later that same year, the rights to the Virgin albums were due to pass from EMI back to Mike. Shortly before this, the Mail on Sunday stirred an angry response from Mike by offering a free copy of the Tubular Bells CD with the newspaper on 22nd April. Mike was not made aware of the promotion in advance and was furious, openly criticising EMI in a piece in Music Week.

Also in 2007, Mike contributed to his daughter Molly's Amazon Tribe project. Molly worked with documentarian Bruce Parry to co-ordinate an album. Sound samples were taken from all the groups visited in the BBC documentary Tribe and sent to the musicians involved on the project. Each artist chose their favourite sample and wrote a track based on it. Mike recorded Song for Survival using samples from the islanders of Anuta singing in church. Around £45,000 has been raised for Survival International through album purchases.

Getting stuck on the M5 in Gloucestershire was to be a major turning point for Mike, after weeks of torrential rain caused the motorway to flood in July 2007. Tired of the bad weather, the newly-imposed smoking ban and an over-zealous health and safety culture, he decided to finally pack his bags, leave the UK and head to Bunyola on Mallorca, where he lived for a couple of years before making his way

to his current home at Nassau in the Bahamas. At times also living aboard his 68ft boat, the Sea Dragon, he has continued to work, but enjoyed slowing the pace and taking more time with his young family.

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classical debut

After thirty five years, many would consider it inconceivable that an artist could still have the originality to achieve another first, but Mike's next work, *Music of the Spheres*, was to be his first classical album, also featuring the well-known Chinese pianist Lang Lang and New Zealand soprano Hayley Westenra. The concept is the relative movements of objects in space creating mathematical relationships which can be expressed as music and harmonies. Still a great motorcycle fan, Mike was interviewed about his collection of bikes at this time and said that music would come to him whilst riding in the woods, joking that *Music of the Spheres* was possibly the first symphony written on a motorcycle!

Mike is renowned for his pursuit of perfection, and has been known to spend weeks looking for exactly the right sound to use in a recording. Without electronic sampling, and limited to less than fifty distinct instruments and choir, I wondered if he might have unnaturally limited his creativity by not using the full sound palette he is used to, but my fears were soon put to rest. The opening bars of *Music of the Spheres* sound familiar, being clearly derivative of the *Tubular Bells* introduction, but the detail and intricacy rapidly reveal this to be an absolutely distinct piece of music with its own

character and soul. Right from the start, new themes begin and develop to a full and dynamic sound with the full encompassing power of a whole orchestra of musicians. Mike's signature is unmistakable, from the layered and intertwined themes, to his own classical guitar, added to create a very natural and underused combination of guitar, choir and orchestra.

Haunting flutes, thundering timpani and wonderfully crisp classical guitar all combine to create something familiar, yet different. What Music of the Spheres shares with some of Mike's most stunning albums is a full range of contrast between beautiful quiet serenity and overwhelming intensity, held together with that unmistakable signature of layered and interwoven themes. I had been wondering for a few years if music just couldn't move me in the way it did when I was younger, but this restored my faith, sent shivers down my spine and had me close to tears again.

Creating the album was an interesting process, as Mike has always found writing out musical scores to be tedious, so he recorded his ideas using electronic instruments and handed the recordings to Karl Jenkins to orchestrate. There was a fascinating digital only single, Spheres, one of the early recordings from the album sessions before Karl Jenkins or other musicians were involved in the project. Fans found it very revealing how the process and input from others had led the music to evolve, just as they had done sixteen years before when hearing the track Early Stages from the Tubular Bells II project. The curiosity surrounding demos and early recordings is such that any forthcoming re-masters with

such snippets included will undoubtedly be purchased enthusiastically by every fan.

Many others agreed that Music of the Spheres showcased the pinnacle of his ability. Michael Kuleczko hailed it as 'Mike Oldfield's finest work since Amarok, recommended to everyone who yearns a fresh approach in music. You will experience a truly breath-taking innovative album which is sure to change many trends in music for decades to come'.

Chris Simmons felt it was 'so beautiful it will not fail to make the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. There is no-one quite as diverse, quite as creative, and quite as unmistakable in style'.

'I haven't been so instantly impressed on first listening to any of his albums since Amarok! This is certainly the Mike Oldfield album I have been waiting for' (Andy Blakemore).

Delayed significantly, leaked copies became freely available for illegal download, which caused great concern for the record company, but when finally released and heavily promoted online, Music of the Spheres sold incredibly well and topped the UK classical charts and entered the top ten general album charts. Significant press and media interest resulted in a whole raft of newspaper, magazine and television appearances, including a live performance on the Alan Titchmarsh Show, which further boosted the album's success. A television advert was produced, the disc was

album of the week in Morrisons, and was also on prominent in-store displays at major supermarkets and high street shops. On ClassicFM, Simon Bates made the album his album of the week, playing pieces from it daily. A much sought after special promotional film can was manufactured for distribution to journalists and included video interviews, shaped inserts and a heat sensitive mug mat which revealed the Spheres graphics when heated. The album was even nominated for the NS&I (National Savings & Investments) Best Album of 2009 Classical Brit Award.

An exclusive launch event was organised by Universal and took place on Friday, 7th March at the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, with rehearsals taking place in San Sebastián a few days before. The world premiere of the entire album featured a full orchestra, choir and Hayley Westenra singing On My Heart. The audio from the premiere was recorded and subsequently released along with the studio recording as a limited edition double CD.

Although the event was guest list only, primarily for the international press and the music industry, Dark Star managed to secure a small number of tickets with restricted view, due to the space limitations. These were given away as competition prizes via the website and newswire service. The atmosphere when fans met in Bilbao was wonderful, everyone excited about what was to come that evening, delighted to meet up with old friends again, and ecstatic that Mike had proved he could still make such deeply moving music. Writing about it makes me think we should organise another fan convention sometime very soon...

The Universal Classics and Jazz executives were very keen to repeat the success with another classical album, and did discuss this at length with Mike, but he had different ideas and switched his attention to his wife Fanny and two sons Jake and Eugene. Apart from a number of re-masters of older albums as they were prepared for re-release with Mercury, Mike remained professionally quiet for a few years, deservedly enjoying semi-retirement and great quality of life in the Bahamas, until he literally took the world by surprise in 2012.

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olympic feat

Kept under wraps for a whole year, the opening riff of Tubular Bells caught the attention of fans around the world thirty minutes into the London Olympics Opening Ceremony on 27th July, performing to a global audience of around one billion.

Mike had created a clever new composition which included elements of Tubular Bells, Tubular Bells II, Tubular Bells III and In Dulci Jubilo, but also included new material such as a completely rewritten swing version of Tubular Bells, Swingular Bells. I was left speechless that after nearly forty years, he was able to inject such inspirational change into what is ultimately his trademark piece, creating a wonderfully fresh interpretation of Tubular Bells. The world, it seems, agreed; chatting to my driver in Mongolia, I realised he'd never heard of Mike Oldfield, but when I mentioned the section with the nurses at the Olympics, his face lit up and he beamed: "ah, the crazy bells, yes, very nice".

Accompanied by Robin Smith, Jamie Talbot, Ash Soan, Alasdair Malloy and son Luke on guitar, under the world's largest harmonically tuned bell, Mike added enormously to the success of the spectacle. The enormous bell is the largest he has ever been associated with, supplied by the Whitechapel Bell Foundry. It could be heard from the Westfield shopping centre and Stratford station, several miles away. Later in the ceremony, Mike himself was surprised when one of his musical themes was then played on a bugle as the Queen declared the Olympic Games open.

I'd been itching to share the news that he would be playing, but it had to be kept secret, so it was no surprise that my phone went crazy that evening with friends, relatives and fellow fans all desperately trying to let me know I should switch the television on! It was literally the gig of a lifetime and a feat to be proud of. I often feel that Mike is underrated, so it was very special to see him being recognised and rewarded for his talent.

This clear highlight of Mike's career was down to artistic director Danny Boyle, who flew out to Nassau for just an afternoon to share his vision. Having seen our very British stoical reaction to the downpour at the Horse Guard's Parade concert, Danny had seen how Mike's professionalism and unique creativity could lead to a very special audience reaction. Danny explained how the section of the ceremony with the National Health Service came about in the director's cut of the London 2012 Olympic Games Blu-Ray disc: 'this sequence started with Mike Oldfield, asking him to rewrite one of his great pieces of work, Tubular Bells. I went out there and talked to him about doing this. We thought

how wonderful to put it together with these illuminated beds and with these volunteers, drawn from the National Health Service. Mike and his band did a brilliant job'. Mike himself was a little dubious at first, but soon came round to the idea: 'Danny suggested a swing version of Tubular Bells... he sent me a Benny Goodman track... At first I thought, you can't, no. Then I started playing around with the sequences and mocking something up and thought, it really does work, yes. It just flowed from start to finish... It's just a tremendous honour. I'm proud to be there, part of the Olympics. Very proud' (The Telegraph, 29th July, 2012).

Writer of the opening ceremony, Frank Cottrell Boyce enthused: 'When [Danny] said we were going to get Tubular Bells, I thought "that will be great", but I wasn't expecting [Mike] to arrange it to create something so fresh from something that was so familiar' (Director's cut, Olympics 2012 Blu-Ray).

Musical Director Robin Smith agreed on his website that the event was a clear career highlight: 'to be performing on stage at the 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony was indeed a lifetime moment, one that I will hold in my memory forever. Not only as a performance, but also to be present in the midst of the most amazing spirit of joy was humbling'.

Percussionist Alasdair Malloy shared his thoughts about the ceremony on his website: 'After all the hype of how things couldn't match up to Beijing on a significantly smaller budget, I have to say that what we've seen is sensational and a truly joyous celebration of all sorts of things British,

brilliantly conceived and stunningly executed. A privilege and a pleasure to be part of!'

The track was released on the official Isles Of Wonder CD, but more memorably on a limited edition of five hundred coloured vinyl copies from Universal, which are already hugely collectable and fetching over ten times their original price on Internet auction sites. If, like me, you found the television commentary distracting, a very welcome DVD and Blu-ray release includes the option to switch the commentary off!

Of all the performers at the ceremony, Mike's music sales got the greatest boost, particularly for the Two Sides compilation and Tubular Bells album, for which sales rose by a staggering 757%. The experience gave Mike a significant boost personally, and started him thinking again about the future and new projects, the next of which was to be with the German electronic music duo, York, founded by brothers Torsten and Jörg Stenzel. Mike features on their 2012 album Islanders.

Mike began spending a lot more time in the studio at the bottom of his garden towards the end of 2012, effectively coming out of semi-retirement, instilling a sense of excited expectation for new material in 2013.

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a great forecast

An unexpected bonus in writing this book has been forcing myself to listen to every one of Mike's recordings, nearly five hundred of them. Although there are a few blunders amongst them, such as Speak, Tho' You Only Say Farewell, the affected Janet Brown voiceover on Amarok, the awful synthesized saxophone on Tres Lunas and the alien sounding vocals on Light and Shade, they are few and far between. In forty years of recording solo, Mike Oldfield has delivered an enormous range of styles. The uniquely detailed combination of great diversity of instruments, astounding musicianship, particularly his distinctive guitar playing, wonderfully melodic tunes, captivating rhythms and unusual, but pleasing harmonies means it is almost always immediately apparent that you are listening to Mike Oldfield.

In a world which often follows established and unchallenging musical formulae, Mike Oldfield's musical ideas have frequently been ground-breaking, to the point where a growing audience herald him as a genius. Like most musicians, Mike thrives on moving forward, focusing on the next project and will continue to set himself new musical challenges, each project revealing more of his unique

musical gift. With a large back catalogue and more yet to come, I completely agree with Carrie Melbourne that his skill and creativity will only continue to gain recognition as time passes.

Other collaborators and friends have made many wonderful statements about what Mike has meant to them, including:

Tom Newman: 'I've been in a peculiarly privileged position over the years watching his progress, being the one responsible for introducing him to the rigours of life with Richard Branson and the fledgling Virgins. I've enjoyed it all. He did a wonderful thing for me when he re-negotiated his Virgin deal; he gave me 1%, which at the time kept my head above water' (in an interview with me for this book, 2013).

Richard Branson: 'the makings of Tubular Bells... was captivating. Obviously Tubular Bells made an enormous difference and it really kicked off our record company' (When Albums Ruled The World, BBC television, February, 2013).

Tony Blair: Tubular Bells is 'one of my all-time favourites' (in a letter mounted on the wall in the corridor to Mike's studio).

Danny Boyle: Tubular Bells is 'a key piece of music in my lifetime, in our lifetimes, really, a key moment of British music' (Director's Cut, Olympics 2012 Blu-Ray disc).

Phil Becque: 'if Mike walked into a lively pub with an acoustic guitar and started playing quietly in the corner he would soon have an attentive audience. He has a fantastic facility and the lightest, most expressive touch; words can't really do it justice' (From an unpublished interview with David Porter).

Sally Oldfield: 'Michael is just passionate about music. When he's writing an album he lives and breathes the music' (Airborne).

Barry Palmer: 'He's a brave and adventurous musician, ground-breaking, risk-taking, and not just following a pattern, because the last album was successful. Tubular Bells is a masterpiece and even when he has revisited it, he has been inventive, adding new things to it. He has that great attitude of living in the moment, focusing on what he is doing right now and puts all his energy and skill into that process and that's all that matters. That's a typical artist, immersed in what he is doing. He chooses what he wants and he makes it happen. Personally, he has been inspiring, supportive, and very kind' (in an interview with me for this book, 2013).

As to what comes next, asking Mike for a prediction of what he is planning for the future is a bit like expecting the five-day weather forecast to be reliable. What we do know is that the Mercury re-mastering of the back catalogue will continue, which at current rates, could span ten years or more. The Tubular Beats remix album was released earlier this year containing new interpretations of familiar material and one new track featuring the former Nightwish singer Tarja Turunen. Plus, the real news is the promise of an album of new material, the first since 2008, a “rock album” as he said in a recent interview, featuring both well-known and up-and-coming vocalists. Caroline Monk was an enthusiastic colleague and inspiring motivator in the nineties and she is now back working as his PA again. Caroline has heard the demos and says there are great things in store for us. The last time she said that, we were rewarded with The Millennium Bell!

With Caroline’s encouragement, Mike delighted many fans by joining the Facebook generation late in 2012. Regular updates, photos, videos and even interaction with his followers have created the greatest sense of connection with him that fans have ever had and reignited their passion for new material.

Despite such a long and successful career, Mike is only just about to turn sixty. Although he has already spent over forty years satisfying both the fans and the record companies, performing at over four hundred concerts and conducting many thousands of interviews, he has recently experienced something of an epiphany, and finally found tranquillity in the Bahamas. No longer driven by the need to record, I am

certain he will continue to create new music for his own pleasure, when the mood takes him. I am convinced that inspired new albums are still possible, and these are of course what the music industry hinges on, but if I have one parting thought, it is that I hope Mike chooses to tour again one day. I realise it will take something very special to draw him away from his peaceful new surroundings, but my sons are part of the next generation which now enjoys his music too, although born after his last public performances. I'm keeping my fingers crossed that they will get the chance to join me in experiencing Mike Oldfield in concert one day too. If that never happens, at least we will always have the recordings of a true musical genius, resulting from a life dedicated to music.

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appendix i - discography

This brief summary of recordings and publications is an excerpt from the more detailed information available on the Dark Star website.

albums

date title cat no

04/11/68 Children of the Sun TRA 176

25/05/73 Tubular Bells V2001

28/08/74 Hergest Ridge V2013

17/01/75 The Orchestral Tubular Bells V2026

28/10/75 Ommadawn V2043

29/10/75 Boxed VBOX1

24/11/78 Incantations VDT101

17/07/79 Exposed VD2511

01/10/79 Impressions TELLY 4

23/11/79 Platinum V2141

04/02/80 Airborn VA2153/2

31/10/80 QE2 V2181

19/03/82 Five Miles Out V2222

27/05/83 Crises V2262

25/06/84 Discovery V2308

26/11/84 The Killing Fields V2328

26/11/84 The Complete Mike Oldfield MOC1

07/09/87 Islands V2466

10/07/89 Earth Moving V2610

14/06/90 Amarok V2640

18/02/91 Heaven's Open V2653

31/08/92 Tubular Bells II WX2002

13/09/93 Elements VT18

21/11/94 The Songs of Distant Earth 4509 9581 1

21/08/96 Voyager 0630 45896-2 YS

01/10/97 The Essential Mike Oldfield 3984-21218-2

31/08/98 Tubular Bells III 3984-24349-2

24/05/99 Guitars 3984-27401-2

26/11/99 The Millennium Bell 8573-80885-2

04/06/01 The Best Of Tubular Bells CDV 2936

26/02/02 The Mike Oldfield Collection CDVIR 172

03/06/02 Tres Lunas 0927-45892-2

26/05/03 Tubular Bells 2003 0927-49921-2

26/05/03 The Complete Tubular Bells 2564-60205-2

26/09/05 Light and Shade 9873642

17/03/08 Music of the Spheres 4766206

01/02/13 Tubular Beats ER203052

singles

1974 Mike Oldfield's Single / Froggy Went a Courting

1975 Don Alfonso / In Dulci Jubilo (For Maureen)

1975 In Dulci Jubilo / On Horseback

1976 Portsmouth / Speak (Tho' You Only Say Farewell)

1977 William Tell Overture / Argiers

1977 Cuckoo Song / Pipe Tune

1979 Guilty / Excerpt from Incantations

1979 Blue Peter / Woodhenge

1980 Arrival / Polka

1980 Sheba / Wonderful Land

1982 Five Miles Out / Live Punkadiddle

1982 Family Man / Mount Teide

1982 Mistake / Waldberg (The Peak)

1983 Moonlight Shadow / Rite Of Man

1983 Shadow on the Wall / Taurus 3

1984 Crime of Passion / Jungle Gardenia

1984 To France / In the Pool

1984 Tricks of the Light / Afghan

1984 Étude / Evacuation

1985 Pictures in the Dark / Legends

1986 Shine / The Path

1987 In High Places / Poison Arrows

1987 Islands / The Wind Chimes (Part One)

1987 The Time Has Come / final extract from The Wind Chimes

1987 Magic Touch / Music for the Video Wall

1988 Flying Start / The Wind Chimes (Part Two, Edit)

1989 Earth Moving / Bridge to Paradise

1989 Innocent / Earth Moving (Club Version)

1989 (One Glance is) Holy / 4 different mixes

1990 Étude (Nurofen Advert) / Gakkaen (not Mike)

1991 Heaven's Open / Excerpt I from Amarok

1991 Gimme Back / Excerpt II and III from Amarok

1992 Sentinel / Early Stages

1992 Tattoo / Live Premiere Excerpts / Silent Night

1993 The Bell / various different MC's

1993 Moonlight Shadow / extended / In the Pool / Bones

1993 In Dulci Jubilo / Wonderful Land / Portsmouth / Vivaldi Concerto in C

1994 Hibernaculum / Moonshine / The Spectral Army / The Song of the Boat Men

1995 Let There Be Light / Indian Lake / various re-mixes

1997 Women of Ireland / Mike's Reel / various re-mixes

1998 Tubular X / The Source of Secrets / X-Files Themes by other artists

1998 Man in the Rain / Serpent Dream / The Inner Child

1999 Far Above the Clouds / various re-mixes

2002 To Be Free / various re-mixes

2002 Thou Art in Heaven / various re-mixes Spanish, French and German language versions

2008 Spheres

2012 Music from the Olympics Opening Ceremony

videos / dvds

1973 The Exorcist (film theme, VHS/DVD)

1979 The Space Movie (soundtrack, VHS/DVD)

1980 The Essential (live at Knebworth in 1980, VHS)

1984 The Killing Fields (film soundtrack, VHS/DVD)

1987 The Wind Chimes (video album, VHS/DVD)

1992 Tubular Bells II Premiere (VHS/DVD)

1993 Elements (The Best of Mike Oldfield, VHS/DVD)

1998 Tubular Bells III Premiere (VHS/DVD)

2000 Art in Heaven Concert (VHS/DVD)

2005 Exposed (live in 1979, DVD)

2006 Live at Montreux (live in 1981, DVD)

books

1993 Music from the Darkness (by Peter Evans)

1993 A Man and His Music (by Sean Moraghan)

1993 The Making of Mike Oldfield's Tubular Bells (by Richard Newman)

1996 Mike Oldfield (by José Cantos)

2007 Changeling (by Mike Oldfield)

2013 A Life Dedicated to Music (by Chris Dewey)

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appendix ii - tourography

This tourography is a short summary from the more detailed information compiled by Mark Slattery, available on the Dark Star website.

1968

May, Sallyangie, Paris.

26 – 28 July, Sallyangie, Cambridge Folk Festival.

1969 - 1970

Barefoot, in folk clubs.

1970 - 1972

Kevin Ayers and the Whole World, many concerts and tours around the UK and Europe.

1973

25 June, Tubular Bells Premiere, Queen Elizabeth Hall, London. Featuring David Bedford, John Greaves, John Leig, Fred Frith, Tim Hodgkinson, Mick Taylor (of Rolling Stones on electric guitar), Steve Hillage, Pierre Moerlen, Steve Broughton, Jon Field, Terry Oldfield, Viv Stanshall, Tom Newman, Sally Oldfield, Mundy Ellis, Ted Speight, Kevin Ayers, Vulpy, Nick Haley, Ashley Mason, Simon Ingram Hill and Janet Townley.

1974

1 June, Kevin Ayers and the Whole World, Rainbow Theatre London.

8 September, Robert Wyatt, Theatre Royal Drury Lane London.

1977

25 January, David Bedford, Royal Albert Hall, The Odyssey.

1978

25 June, Mike with David Bedford & Queen's College Choir at open air concert on South Bank, London. Part of a Save the Whale / Friends of the Earth event.

1979

14 February, David Bedford, QE Hall, Rime of the Ancient Mariner.

11 March, Pierre Moerlen's Gong, The Venue Downwind for Pierre Moerlen's Gong.

31st March to 7 May, Exposed. Mike's first live tour, launched on such a grand scale that it nearly bankrupted Mike, featuring Phil Beer, Pekka Pohjola, Maddy Prior, Pierre Moerlen, Benoit Moerlen, Nico Ramsden, Ringo McDonough, Mike Frye, Tim Cross, Pete Lemer, the London Symphony

Orchestra and Queen's College Girls' Choir. Recorded and released as Exposed.

1980

9 April to 20 December. Platinum. The set included most of Platinum, most of Tubular Bells, part of Incantations, Portsmouth, Ommadawn, Blue Peter, Sheba and Taurus I, featuring Pierre Moerlen, Nico Ramsden, Benoit Moerlen, Hansford Rowe, Tim Cross, Pete Lemer, Pete Acock, Mike Frye, Wendy Roberts and Maggie Reilly.

21 June, Knebworth. Recorded and released as the Essential Mike Oldfield video.

December, Edinburgh Gateway Theatre, filmed for television.

1981

9 March to 9 August, European Adventure Tour featuring Mike Frye, Morris Pert, Tim Cross, Maggie Reilly, Rick Fenn, Brian McNeil and Duncan McGillivray.

28 July, London's Guildhall Yard where Mike played the Wedding Anthem for Charles and Diana's wedding the first and only time.

1982

8 April to 3 July, Five Miles Out Tour, featuring Tim Renwick, Maggie Reilly, Virginia Clee, Morris Pert, Pierre Moerlen, Rick Fenn and Devra Robitaille (see DS16, p21). The set was Platinum (parts 1 & 2), Conflict, Sheba, Mirage, Tubular Bells (part 2) Taurus II, Ommadawn (1) Mount Teide, Five Miles Out, Tubular Bells (1), Orabidoo (middle section) as encore.

8 September to 9 December, Who's Next Tour, featuring the musicians of the Five Miles Out tour and Tim Cross. The sets included all of Tubular Bells Part One, some of Ommadawn, Platinum, QE2 and most of the Five Miles Out album.

1983

26 May to 22 July, Crises Tour, featuring Simon Phillips, Maggie Reilly, Roger Chapman, Ant, Pierre Moerlen, Phil Spalding, Graeme Pleeth and Simon House.

22 July, tenth anniversary of Tubular Bells, Wembley Arena, London.

1984

19 August to 10 November, Discovery Tour, featuring Harald Zusrader, Mickey Simmonds, Barry Palmer, Maggie Reilly, Phil Spalding and Simon Phillips.

1986

2 & 6 February, Hammersmith Odeon, guest with Marillion at their anti-heroin concerts.

9 February, Mike with Maggie Reilly and Simon Phillips at Royal Albert Hall. Part of the Columbian Volcano Appeal Concert.

1992

4 September, Tubular Bells II Premiere, Edinburgh Castle, featuring Robin Smith, Jay Stapeley, Hugh Burns, Alan Limbrick, Craig Pruess, Richard Cottle, Dave Hartley, Adrian

Thomas, Yitkin Seow, Lawrence Cottle, Ian Thomas, Ben Hoffnung, Alasdair Malloy, Jerry McKenna, Pete Clarke, John Parricelli, Jackie Quinn, Linda Taylor, Edie Lehmann, Susannah Melvoin and John Gordon Sinclair.

1993

1 March to 8 October, 20th Anniversary Tour.

1998

4 September, Tubular Bells III Premiere, Horse Guards Parade, featuring Robin Smith, Adrian Thomas, Hugh Burns, Carrie Melbourne, Katherine Rockhill, Ian Thomas, Jody Linscott, Alasdair Malloy, Pepsi Demacque, Amar and Rosa Cedron.

1999

18 June to 31 July, Then and Now Tour, featuring Adrian Thomas, Pepsi Demacque, Claire Nicolson, Carrie Melbourne and Fergus Garrand. Set: In the Beginning, Supernova, Crystal Clear, Shadow on the Wall, Ommadawn Part 1, Embers, Summit Day, Muse, Cochise, Source of Secrets, Watchful Eye, Jewel in the Crown, Outcast, Serpent Dream,

Inner Child, Secrets, Far Above the Clouds, Moonlight Shadow and Family Man.

31 December, Millennium Concert, Siegessäule Square, Berlin. Set: Tubular Bells Part 1 (10 min), Portsmouth (modernised version), Moonlight Shadow (Miriam Stockley), The Source Of Secrets, Shadow On The Wall, Sunlight Shining Through Cloud, The Doge's Palace, Mastermind, Broad Sunlit Uplands, Liberation, Amber Light, The Millennium Bell and Berlin 2000.

2008

7 March, Live premiere of Music of the Spheres, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao featuring the Euskadiko Orkestra Sinfonikoa, the Bilbao Choral Society and Hayley Westenra. The event was press only, with just 30 restricted-view tickets made available to the public via fan websites.

2012

27 July, London Olympics Opening Ceremony, eleven minute performance comprising Tubular Bells (Part One Excerpt), Tubular Bells (Part One – Swing), Tubular Bells (Part Two Excerpt), Tubular Bells III (Far Above The Clouds), Mary Poppins Arrival, Fanfare For The Isles Of Wonder, In Dulci Jubilo, Olympic Tubular Bells Coda. The theme was also

repeated as a fanfare to the Queen's opening words. The band was Mike Oldfield, Robin Smith, Jamie Talbot, Luke Oldfield, Ash Soan and Alasdair Malloy.

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appendix iii - rare collectables

The allure of collecting records and memorabilia sends some pulses racing whilst it leaves others cold. With over forty years of material at which to target their disposable income, some Oldfield collectors own very impressive and huge collections!

Memorabilia collections including awards or instruments are clearly less common than record and CD collections, simply down to uniqueness, though Mike has publicly sold a large number of musical instruments and privately gifted and disposed of others. Some folks collect publications, tour programs, magazine articles and newspaper clippings and some simply collect anything with the Mike Oldfield name on it or even just associated with him.

This section focuses on some vinyl and CD collectables that have achieved legendary status amongst collectors. This status is usually conveyed for reasons of rarity, desirability and price, or simply because a lot of people doubt their existence. I have covered items here that are definitely

known to exist, although there is little or no information on the quantity of copies.

Most if not all vinyl releases by record companies are issued in acetate, white label test pressing and promotional form, most of which certainly fall into the categories of rare, difficult to locate and expensive. I have not listed all of these here, but I have included a small number of the most interesting or unique pressings. All releases are of UK origin, unless otherwise stated.

7" Hergest Ridge, one sided white label test pressing, VS112

The most infamous single to Oldfield collectors was released in 1974. It is odd that this single has been named Spanish Tune, as the only confirmed format is a one-sided white label test pressing containing an extract from Hergest Ridge Part Two. Also see the unreleased tracks appendix for more information.

7" Don Alfonso, German language, 13 927 AT, Germany

Mike is not always well disposed to some of his older material, such as Don Alfonso. A unique version with a

unique picture sleeve was released in German and had a strong Tangerine Dream connection, with vocals by roadie Paul and produced by band member Edgar Froese. Whilst there are more copies of this release than many others featured here, you can expect to pay a tidy sum for a mint condition copy.

LP Ommadawn, DBX encoded quadrophonic, white label test pressing, V2043DBX

This version remains unreleased, other than on this test pressing, as domestic DBX decoders did not take off commercially.

Double LP Space Movie Soundtrack, acetate

The rarest Mike Oldfield LP is the acetate of the soundtrack to Tony Palmer's film, which has never been offered for sale, (see also unreleased tracks appendix). Acetates or lacquers are heavy records made by pressing nitro cellulose onto a metal plate, which is then run through a special machine to cut the music onto the surface. A second spindle hole is used to hold the disc in position whilst it is being cut but is often obscured by a label. These records have a characteristic smell and a slight dark purplish hue.

Double LP Incantations, blue and red vinyl, VDT101, Finland

Few coloured vinyl records exist by Mike, other than the easily obtainable twelve-inch singles of Take Four and Guilty released on white and light blue vinyl respectively. Virgin were pressing many releases in coloured vinyl around 1978 and 1979, blue and red seemed to be popular colours and this is likely to have been the source of the vinyl for this unique edition. Reputed to have only been released in Finland, which is where most copies for sale seem to originate from, everything suggests that both the record and cover were manufactured in the UK. Record one is blue vinyl and record two is red vinyl and features a label sourced from the cover in keeping with the first pressings of the album. In all other respects the release is identical to standard UK releases.

12" Take Four, Red vinyl white label test pressing, VS238-12

One of the rarest, though not necessarily the most desirable of all Oldfield releases, is a twelve-inch white label red vinyl test pressing of the Take Four EP.

7" Take Four / Guilty, 100 439100, Germany

A mistake at a German pressing plant spawned a unique release with very few copies. A German edition of the seven-inch edition of Guilty was paired with a picture sleeve of Take Four with the catalogue number 100 439100. Most copies were withdrawn and destroyed once the mistake was discovered, but this gem is easily missed at a record fair if you do not look carefully.

10" Guilty / North Star - Platinum Finale, PR361, USA

To promote the release of the Airborne album in the USA, a ten-inch single catalogue number PR 361 and featuring the single version of Guilty backed with North Star / Platinum Finale was issued. This is the only ten-inch vinyl of a Mike Oldfield record that is currently known to exist, although ten-inch acetates of seven-inch single releases do exist, e.g. The Bell.

Double LP BBC Transcription Services, CN 3393/S

BBC Transcription Services record concerts, mix and master the sound, then press LPs and CDs and syndicate these pressings to radio stations. A recording of the Exposed tour on 2nd May, 1979 was released on a double album, catalogue number CN 3393/S, complete with DJ cue sheets. The quality is superb, and this album features an otherwise

unavailable recording, different to Exposed, as the tracks on that album were culled from a number of different concert performances on the tour.

Five Miles Out, different mix, acetate

There is an acetate in circulation which contains a different mix of the Five Miles Out single, often titled The First Mix. The existence of this version has recently been confirmed by Mike on his Facebook page as he prepared the mixes for the re-mastered edition of Five Miles Out.

12" Shine, uncut picture disc, VSS 863

Likely to exist in very small quantities is the Shine uncut picture disc. Formally, released as a shaped picture disc, there are copies in circulation which resemble a twelve-inch clear vinyl record with a picture in the middle. These are believed to have been test pressings. Most of these are in poor condition with either warping, surface noise or both.

12" The Wind Chimes Part Two / North Point / The Wind Chimes Part Two, P2181, USA

Released as a promo in the USA, this release is a rather odd one; the choice of tracks not particularly radio or promotion friendly. Very few copies of this have come up for sale.

CD Songs of Distant Earth, sampler, Sweden, WMSPROM 68

This album received heavy promotion and a few collectables. This five track promo CD featuring The Chamber, Hibernaculum, The Sunken Forest, Ascension and A New Beginning was issued in a cardboard folder with some release info.

CD Songs of Distant Earth, promo in film can, SAM 1477

This was given away at the launch party for the album, held at the London Planetarium. This comes in a metal film can, with the CD held in place by three metallic laminated pebbles on an astral background. There is also a circular information card, which contains the Arthur C. Clarke text.

CD-R Berlin 2000

Band members received copies of various tracks from the set list for the millennium concert for rehearsal purposes. One of which contained the studio version of the Berlin 2000 track.

CD Music of the Spheres, promo in film can, 4766206

The promotional release of Music of the Spheres was packaged in a laminated, logo-embossed film can and contains the album, a heat sensitive mug mat, shaped insert brochure, and an information disc featuring two video clips.

This article was originally published in Dark Star issue 19, but was fully updated in March 2013 by Paul Harris. Further rarities information can be found online at the Mike Oldfield MOWD and Argiers websites.

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appendix iv - unreleased tracks

For most recording artists, aficionados often speculate about what material has never seen the light of day and what gems might be languishing in the archives. The creative process by its very nature yields material and ideas that are either unsuitable for the then current project, are maybe of doubtful quality or just simply experiments; forays into creative territory that are never intended for public consumption.

I suspect Mike, like many artists, lays down ideas and material by jamming and hitting the record button to capture something that might develop into something more polished. It has been suggested that the vaults are all but empty, but Mike's use of previously written and recorded material on later releases has been evident throughout his career. Very little of the material described in this article has actually seen the light of day. Mike's penchant for working in his own studio, right from the recording of Hergest Ridge to the present day, has meant that the material discussed here and anything that we are not aware of, has largely stayed locked up in his vaults! I hope that when the time comes to produce the forthcoming re-releases or a rarities compilation, the compilers will consider some of the tracks

that have been included here, although I fear that many of the masters may have disappeared long ago.

Demos with Sally and Mick Jagger

As documented in Changeling, Mike and Sally recorded some demos at a studio called Sound Techniques with Mick Jagger in attendance. Mike is uncertain what happened to the tapes from these sessions, when he was aged fourteen. In my interview with Sally in 2002, she suggested however that nothing had actually been recorded with Mick or Marianne Faithfull.

Sallyangie session for John Peel

Mike and Sally recorded a session for John Peel which was aired on a BBC Radio show called Night Ride on 4th December, 1968. The following Children of the Sun tracks were played, Song of the Healer, Flee the Melancholy Flower, Lady Mary, and Midsummer Night's Happening.

Sallyangie, Children of the Sun

Two other unreleased recordings were apparently dropped from the CD reissue / re-master of Children of the Sun in

2002; these were Firebird and Wild Loving in the Sky.

‘Orrible Orange

Not strictly unreleased, as an acetate of this Kevin Ayers track from 1971/2 is in existence. Mike has a whole verse to himself.

Tubular Bells

The genesis of Tubular Bells has been well documented in Richard Newman's book *The Making of Tubular Bells* and has also been covered extensively by other authors. The infamous Tubular Bells demos have now been given a full release of course on the DVD-A (audio) version of *Tubular Bells* 2003 and again in 2009 as part of the on-going series of Universal re-masters.

Spanish Tune

Part of Oldfield collecting folklore since around the early 1980's, Spanish Tune has at some time been on every collector's wants list. It is surprising that no version of the track has ever appeared with that name on any form of release until Universal released the re-mastered version of

Hergest Ridge in 2010. Running at three minutes, Spanish Tune is an extract from Hergest Ridge Part Two. Originally released as a one-sided white label test pressing, with the catalogue number VS112, all versions in circulation either have plain white labels or Hergest Ridge written on the label. Some copies even have the root of the word Michael which has been overwritten with Mike.

The Orchestral Hergest Ridge

Following in the footsteps of The Orchestral Tubular Bells, this David Bedford arrangement of Hergest Ridge was premiered on 9th December, 1974 at the Royal Albert Hall, performed by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra with Steve Hillage on guitar. This performance was recorded by BBC television and apparently aired in the following year. A later performance by the Scottish National Orchestra at the Kelvin Hall in Glasgow on 5th May, 1976, also with Steve Hillage, used the same score and was recorded by Radio Clyde. Following Mike's reluctance to tour, Virgin acquired the rights to the recording and planned to release the performance. The release never materialised, however extracts from the recording were later used by Philip Newell when he compiled The Space Movie soundtrack. A bootleg CD of The Orchestral Hergest Ridge is in circulation and contains the performance from the Royal Albert Hall painstakingly put together from a number of sources.

Ommadawn Part Two Demo

If you listen to the DVD menu music on the Ommadawn disc, there is a beautiful rendition of the end of Ommadawn part two. It is not polished and may be a demo version of part two that did not make it onto the second disc. If you listen very carefully at the beginning of the track you can hear the previous segment ending, so there is clearly more than has been released! This is a great shame as there would have been space to add some additional tracks on disc two.

Ask Me No Questions

A track originally recorded by Bridget St. John in 1975, which was a favourite of Mike's. A new version was taped during the Ommadawn sessions, with him playing all the instruments and accompanied by Bridget on vocals.

Reflection

This was a documentary commissioned by the UK Arts Council in 1976 and is essentially about geometry, form in nature and man-made features, including stone circles, mazes etc. Mike was commissioned to write music for the TV film, produced by Keith Critchlow with Lawrence Moore. The soundtrack contains some very unique out-takes and re-workings of pieces from Hergest Ridge, Ommadawn and

Incantations. Also featured are The Path, which was later released as the B-side to Shine, Woodhenge, later released as a B-side to Blue Peter, and of course on the Platinum album and some short linking sections and tracks. The latter all remain unreleased and include a track played over the Chartres Maze sequence which includes Alan Hacker a clarinettist, horn and sax player, with Sally Oldfield and Alan's daughter Katy providing vocals. A track called Making Way, an early version of a segment of Incantations part four, which sounds like it features vocals from Mike which go something like "make way for the strange ones" is played at the end of the programme. The film was only available as a limited edition numbered video cassette from Concorde Video and Films Council, a non-profit making organisation affiliated to the UK Arts Council.

Various Tracks

Between the recording of Ommadawn in 1975 and the release of Incantations at the end of 1978, according to Philip Newell, Mike recorded a number of short tracks, including some Vivaldi pieces which are still unreleased. Vivaldi Concerto in C found its way onto the Elements 1973 – 1991 boxed set.

Collaborations with Les Penning

Following David Porter's interview with Les Penning published in Airborne magazine, Les revealed that in addition to Portsmouth and Argiers, several other recorder and guitar based tracks were recorded in Thorougham in January, 1976. The master tape is now sadly believed to have been lost or erased.

Collaborations with Lea Nicholson

Lea has mentioned a few tracks done with Mike at Thorougham Slad in late 1976 or early 1977. Probably comprising just concertina and guitar, tracks include Nancy, The Redesdale Hornpipe, The Boys of Bluehill and Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring. These are also missing, believed to have been wiped.

Sit You Down

Sit You Down is a track written by Steve Knightley, a friend and musical colleague of Phil Beer, who was one of the guitarists on the Exposed tour. This track was recorded with Mike in 1977 at the same time as the track Passed You By which later appeared on the 1986 Broadreach benefit album Where Would You Rather Be Tonight. Sit You Down is available on the Phil Beer Official Bootleg Volume One and Box Set One, available from Phil's web site.

Untitled / Tubular Bells Track

A short, very early version of an up-tempo re-working of Tubular Bells was recorded during the sessions for Guilty in December 1978 or the Platinum sessions in 1979. It is believed to be the early beginnings of a dance-based track in the style of Guilty, but based around the Tubular Bells theme. There have been rumours that a much longer version of this exists.

Alright Now

Mike recorded a cover of the well-known Free song at his studio with Pierre Moerlen on percussion and Wendy Roberts on vocals for a UK Tyne Tees television programme called Alright Now, which was presented by Paula Yates and Jools Holland for one season in 1979/1980. Mike appeared on the show on the 22nd August 1980. It has been suggested that this track was originally broadcast on The Tube but it was only re-broadcast on the Tube. It is rumoured that Virgin were contemplating the release of this track over Blue Peter. A dark blue vinyl flexi-disc of the recording with the catalogue number of TT 362 is another part of Oldfield collecting folklore. No photograph of this item is known; the flexi has never appeared for sale and in all likelihood probably doesn't exist. Contrary to popular opinion, it was not released or pressed by the UK Flexipop magazine.

The Space Movie soundtrack

The rarest LP is the soundtrack to Tony Palmer's The Space Movie film, which was funded by Virgin. There is an extract from Incantations part four which is very close to the released version, with vocals from the Spell of Creation by Katherine Raine over the section of music that appears before the Song for Diana, i.e. the section between the marimbas and glockenspiels and the Diana finale. This piece does not appear on the officially released Incantations album. There are also extracts from Tubular Bells and Hergest Ridge both the original and orchestral versions, Ommadawn and Portsmouth. Philip Newell has this recollection of the film and album: 'Virgin got the rights to material from the space launches from NASA, and they got Tony Palmer the film director to direct and assemble a film. Mike was asked to do a soundtrack, but for one reason or another, Richard finally asked me to put something together from existing material. I mixed speeches from Kennedy and Wernher von Braun in with the music, and it was really quite effective. Then I was asked to write the sleeve notes, so I conspired to get Virgin to pay for me to go to Cape Canaveral, which was an incredible experience. I wrote all those sleeve notes and then the project got cancelled'.

Incantations (quadrophonic mix)

Philip Newell has revealed that Incantations was delivered to the Townhouse in quadrophonic format and had to be mixed

down to stereo for release. The quadrophonic version is unreleased.

Ad-Lib Track

This piece has nothing to do with Mike even though it has been circulating on a number of tapes and CD's over the years. It is mentioned here to clear up the confusion surrounding its origin. Reputedly from a rehearsal in 1979, it is actually a composition from the Dutch composer Erik Visser. The original title is Variaties op een dame (Variations on a Lady). At the time Visser wrote this piece, he was a member of a Dutch band called Flairck. The track was released on an LP by Flairck with the same title.

Blue Peter Theme Tune

Mike was commissioned by the BBC to re-record the theme tune for this popular English children's TV program. The recording took place at the studio in Denham with presenter Simon Groom and was used at the beginning and the end of the programme until 1989. Never formally released, an unplayable version was downloadable from the BBC website for a time. A re-recorded single was later released in support of the BBC Blue Peter Cambodia appeal.

Acoustic Pieces / Ommadawn / 12 Bar Blues

Performed on Capital Radio's London Tonight programme in early 1981 with just Mike on guitar and interviewed by Sarah Ward, this contains a three minute unreleased section and an Ommadawn medley with some bits of Amarok for good measure.

Tour Pieces

On a number of his tours, Mike took to playing tracks that were associated with the town, city, region or even country that they were playing in. Here is a selection of some of these pieces:

Polka with The Radetzky March

Polka, the B-side from the Arrival single, was segued with The Radetzky March at the Vienna concert in the Stadthalle on 28th April, 1980.

Silent Night

Performed at the Westfalen Halle, Dortmund on the 20th December, 1980 with Maggie Reilly on vocals.

Blaydon Races

A short extract from a piece of music associated with Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the north east of England was played at the City Hall concert on 22nd May, 1981.

Blue Danube

This famous Austrian piece was played, albeit briefly, at the Vienna Stadthalle on 20th July, 1981.

Nellie the Elephant

A light-hearted stab at this children's song was sung by Maggie Reilly on the 1981 German tour.

O Sole Mio

Performed at Livorno, on 10th July, 1981 running on from Punkadiddle.

Freude Schöner Götterfunken

The opening line of the Ode to Joy in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was performed in Frankfurt on 27th September, 1984.

Le Marseillaise

At a concert in France towards the end of the Discovery tour in 1984, Mike added a rendition of the French national anthem to the encore of Shadow on the Wall.

Wedding Anthem

One of the most well-known pieces of Mike's unreleased music, due to its association with the marriage of Prince Charles and Lady Diana. This standalone track was only ever played once by Mike at the free concert at London's Guildhall Yard on 28th July, 1981. Very short extracts were broadcast on British television.

Pastosi

Performed by Mike accompanied by Diego Cortes, this piece was broadcast on Spanish TV on 9th July, 1981. This has at various times been mistaken for the infamous Spanish Tune track.

Planxty Fanny Power

This was a duet between Mike and Paddy Moloney and broadcast on German TV in 1982. A Planxty is a tune dedicated to a certain person. This piece is often titled Fanny Planxty Power, but the correct title is Planxty Fanny Power and was written by Turlough O'Carolan.

Guitars on 625

Part of a live duet between Mike and guitarist Paul Inder, which showcased elements of Taurus II and was broadcast on the UK Tyne Tees TV show Razzamatazz in 1982. Check out the YouTube website if you have not seen this.

Five Miles Out

There are several variations of this track in circulation including the version from a vinyl acetate, sometimes referred to as The First Mix. There was also a version on Tom Newman's Soundcloud page for a time. If you listen closely you can hear a variation of the Tubular Bells theme in the intro.

Ready Mix

This track was recorded with Carl Palmer, probably at the same time as Mount Teide. Ready Mix was finally given an official release on a Carl Palmer compilation album called One More Time in 2001.

In High Places / Étude

The original version of In High Places as played live on the 1982 tour was quite different from the version released on the Crises album. To start with the track was instrumental, and was introduced by Mike as “a song about little people” at the Hammersmith Odeon performance in September 1982. It was segued together with an early version of the track Étude.

Crises

Interviews with Mike at the time of the Crises issue stated that there were a number of recorded, but unused sections for main Crises track.

Midnight Passion

The original version of Moonlight Shadow was sung by Hazel O'Connor, and was titled Midnight Passion. Mike and Hazel first met on a television show in Newcastle which he revealed in an interview with Record Mirror, published in July 1983.

The Killing Fields unused soundtrack pieces

There is a small amount of additional music on the video release, in particular the sequence known as The Dark Room Sequence, which features just over a minute of music exclusive to the film and a section known as Pran's Last Night. According to Sean Moraghan's book, A Man and His Music, Mike recorded over four and a half hours of material.

Discovery sessions untitled tracks

The inner sleeve from the album reproduces some handwritten notes made by Simon Phillips from the recording sessions. Best viewed on the inner sleeve of the vinyl edition, the notes list Poison Arrows, To France, Saved by T' Bell, <illegible> T' Snow or The Sword, In the Pool, Tricks of the Light, <illegible> Thing (possibly Celtic Thing; which later became Afghan), <illegible> Heart. On another photo, you can see Poison Arrows, China, Tricks of the Light and In the Pool. These notes suggest that there are at least four tracks that were either shown with working titles and subsequently re-titled or have not yet seen the light of day.

In The Pool

There were at least two vocal versions, one sung by Barry Palmer and the other by Maggie Reilly which did not get released. Janet Arnold's Mike Oldfield fan club newsletter explained this was because the vocals did not fit the style of the music.

Pictures in the Dark

There is an unissued version with full vocals by Barry Palmer.

Sutton Hoo

Mike was commissioned to write the theme and incidental music for a UK television documentary about archaeology, aired in 1985.

Magic Touch

Two versions of Magic Touch were released, the UK version with vocals by Jim Price and the US version featuring Max Bacon. There are at least two other versions of this track, one with vocals by John Pain of the group Asia, which apparently was intended for issue right up until the release of Islands, but Mike had a change of heart at the last moment and another version with vocals by Fish (aka Derek Dick) of Marillion.

Man in the Rain

This track was recorded during the Islands sessions, with a German-based backing band and vocals by Barry Palmer. Mike was not happy with the resulting track and it remained in the vaults. Barry confirmed after listening to Heaven's Open that the version of the track that he had known as Man in the Rain had metamorphosed into the track Heavens Open. Man in the Rain was of course to make an appearance

on Tubular Bells III in a completely re-recorded form with drums sampled from Moonlight Shadow.

When the Nights on Fire

As appears to be customary for the time, Mike used a number of different vocalists for many of the songs that he recorded around this time. A number of versions of this track exist including a Rough Mix featuring Bonnie Tyler and a version with Barry Palmer on vocals.

Other takes from around this time

According to Barry Palmer ‘...the day you are doing a song for Mike you cannot be sure it will come out on the record until you see your name on it. I can say on Islands, especially on Islands, that he used many different singers and recorded lots of different versions’.

Signature theme for Mike Oldfield Productions

Although strictly speaking this piece is not unreleased, it is something of an oddity. The Wind Chimes film features a short instrumental Tubular Bells themed piece which is only available on the video.

Tubular Bells / Earth Moving / Innocent / Far Country

These four tracks were re-recorded in a BBC recording studio for Nicky Campbell's BBC Radio One show on 23rd August, 1989. All the tracks were recorded with all the instruments being played by hand. This apparently prompted the back to basics, hand played approach that Mike adopted with AmaroK. There are two versions of the Tubular Bells track; the broadcast version features John Peel as the Master of Ceremonies and can be heard on John Peel's archive page on Soundcloud. The second version, which is on the BBC master tape of the session, is simply an instrumental version of the broadcast track, which suggests that John added his vocals after the session was recorded.

Nothing But

An alternate version of this track from the Earth Moving album was recorded by the jazz singer Bertice Reading.

Irish Air

During the Amarok sessions, Mike wrote a short Irish Air, in Gaelic, which was sung by Bridget St John. According to Bridget, it was a very beautiful piece.

Fed Up

An early version of the Heaven's Open track Gimme Back with different lyrics appeared on the bootleg Amazing Great Stuff.

Unreleased Tracks

Anita Hegerland revealed in an interview in January 2005 that she had 'a tape at home with unreleased songs that he has done, and they are great. One of them is beautiful'.

Tomorrow's World Theme

Mike submitted a new theme for the British television programme Tomorrow's World, which was a re-working of a track culled from The Songs of Distant Earth. Only two of the four producers of the show wanted to use the track, and it was in fact never used.

Voyager

The original concept for Voyager was to create a Celtic flavoured acoustic only album and it was to be called Celtic Cross. Under the direction of WEA executive Rob Dickens, the album was circulated to a small circle of people for review. Rob's daughter in particular remarked that the album was lacking, and in response to these and presumably other comments, Mike added keyboards and other layers to the tracks.

Tubular Bells III - unused sections

In an interview with Dark Star, Mike revealed that he had recorded some seventy minutes of music for the album, leaving around 25 minutes of unreleased material. An early version of the track The Source of Secrets is on The Essential compilation album released in 1997 with the vocals delivered by a male vocalist. The version that Dark Star heard at a listening session at Clive Banks offices contained a track called Russian Playground, elements of which can be heard in The Inner Child. The track Tubular X was originally intended to be part of the album, but this was removed and later made available on The X-Files: The Album.

The Millennium Bell

An unfinished version of The Millennium Bell was put together on a CD-R in May 1999 and was a snapshot of what Mike had recorded at that time. In some cases, this revealed very early versions of some of the tracks, which were to undergo significant changes once he returned to the recording after the Then and Now tour in 1999. Some of the track names were different too; Nativity became Peace on Earth and Emancipation was re-titled Liberation. The King Arthur themed Excalibur, which appeared as track three of the twelve tracks was later dropped altogether, as Mike was not entirely happy with it. Around this time, my opinion was sought on two different versions of Sunlight Shining through Cloud. A two-track CD was produced and I was asked to listen to the two versions, both running close to six minutes each and provide feedback. The first track was by an unknown female vocalist and the second an early version of the finished track with vocals by Pepsi Demacque. My preference, for what it is worth, was the track by Pepsi which delivered a much more engaging experience. Caroline Monk mentioned that Maxi Jazz from Faithless was originally contacted to provide the vocals, but he was not available. The pre-production master of The Millennium Bell was pressed as a promo CD and given out to press and radio to promote the album. This edition featured five tracks which were different in a number of ways to those on the final release. Mastermind, Broad Sunlit Uplands, Liberation, Amber Light and The Millennium Bell contained samples which had not been cleared for inclusion and release. Mike returned to the studio, removed the samples and replaced many of them with different samples. The original Broad Sunlit Uplands features extracts from a famous Winston Churchill speech; Liberation included the BBC weatherman Michael Fish and Kenneth Wolstenholme with his famous quote from the 1966 World Cup Final. Amber Light Reprise

was incorporated into The Millennium Bell, very different from the early version, which saw a renaissance in part one of MusicVR, as the music to the bat cave, further evidence that Mike returns to his old Rizla packets for inspiration in subsequent projects.

Art In Heaven / Berlin 2000

There are two versions of this track. The original Art In Heaven from 7th December, 1999 runs at 15"35' and features In the Beginning, Let There Be Light and Supernova, segued into an upbeat rendition of Tubular Bells with drums and orchestral fills, elements that were later to become the track Thou Art In Heaven and concluded with an extract from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. My understanding is that the Art in Heaven team wanted the piece to be more anthemic and crowd-rousing. Armed with this brief; Mike went back to the studio and completely re-arranged the track to what became known as Berlin 2000, which is very close to the live version which appeared on the Art In Heaven video release and an extract of which was played on Steve Wright's BBC Radio Two show.

Thou Art In Heaven

Following the reaction to the millennium concert, Mike spent some time working on a re-recorded version of Berlin 2000 for a single release in early 2000. Several different versions

of the revised track were put to tape, but the release was shelved.

Music from MusicVR part one

Mike recorded around fifty minutes of music loops for the MusicVR game. Until one enterprising group got together to extract the music from the game to create the Return to the Origin bootleg (see also bootlegs appendix), the only way this could be heard was by playing the game. Segued together as one single track, much of this music is otherwise unreleased, although some of the pieces appear in a re-worked form on the album Tres Lunas and the double album Light and Shade.

Capoeira

I came across this track as I was leaving Mike's studio one day around 2001/2. On a music stand outside the studio control room, in the room where he kept his grand piano was some sheet music with the name Capoeira at the top. Capoeira is a Brazilian martial art that combines elements of dance and music. Is this a track by Mike or something else? I'm afraid that is all I know.

Van Gogh Track

In an interview with the Spanish newspaper El Periodico on 25th November, 1999, Mike referred to a piece which had been inspired by Van Gogh's painting. Described as 'simple, beautiful and violent at the same time', he remarked that 'perhaps I'll include it in a future record. It would be ideal for doomsday'.

Cook's Tune

A folk piece from the Light and Shade sessions, only released on the German Conrad website.

Nightshade

An early German promo only CD of the Light and Shade album contains an otherwise unreleased version of the track Nightshade.

Hallelujah

A further track from Light and Shade, called Hallelujah, and based on Handel's Hallelujah Chorus, was featured in a Mike Oldfield special on German radio. The reaction to this track

was less positive, with Mike apparently commenting on the radio show, 'no-one seemed to like it except for me'. It may just have been an experiment as the Cantor vocaloid software used on Light and Shade contained a demo track of Hallelujah.

Music of the Spheres

An oddity, rather than an unreleased track, worthy of mention is the download only version of the track Spheres. Mike recorded the entire Music of the Spheres album in demo form, without an orchestra and prior to the involvement of Karl Jenkins. Spheres was the initial piece that he recorded when putting together his ideas for the album.

This article was originally written for the Amarok mailing list in 1995 and subsequently updated for issue fifteen of Dark Star, published in July 1998. Now fully revised and updated for this book by Paul Harris in March 2013, an article of this kind is not possible without the input of many people. Much of the information has been gleaned from various discussions and interviews with Mike, Tom Newman, Bridget St. John, Barry Palmer and various musicians that Mike has worked with, but special thanks must go to David Porter, Joe Lamb, the members of the Amarok Mike Oldfield Mailing List, past and present, and The Mike Oldfield on Record Facebook group.

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appendix v - bootlegs

Despite being illegal, unofficial bootleg recordings are still swapped between fans to share unreleased recordings often of very poor quality. Although some artists such as Frank Zappa love the fact that material not available anywhere else appears on bootlegs, Mike has always attached very high importance to the quality of recording and production, so is unlikely to approve bootlegs and has never commented on them in interviews. The closest he has come was a humorous introduction to an embryonic *In High Places / Étude mix* played live in 1982: 'This hasn't been released on any album, so for those of you with tape recorders hidden under your seats, turn them on now!' Not condoned by the author, their mere existence nevertheless warrants a brief summary of some of the more popular bootlegs in circulation (DS24, updated for this book in March 2013 by Paul Harris).

live recordings

Mike Oldfield and Friends Tubular Bells Live from Queen Elizabeth hall June 25, 1973

The sound quality is variable in spite of this being broadcast on BBC Radio, but it is the only known recording of the first live performance of Tubular Bells.

Athens Roman Ruins

A relatively high-quality, but very short soundboard recording.

Mirage

Live in Vienna 20/7/81. Generally good, but with some variable sound quality. Interesting because Mike suddenly plays The Blue Danube at the end of Punkadiddle. This is the only known Mike Oldfield vinyl bootleg LP and has the catalogue number VDT 102. It is also available on CD-Rom.

Turbulent Weather

1982 Cologne soundboard recording with excellent quality.

Live in Viareggio 84 (Also known as Tracks of the Night)

Probably the best known Mike Oldfield bootleg, available with many different covers.

**Mike Oldfield Tubular Bells II Live at Edinburgh Castle
4th September 1992 (EPL - CD 1000-001)**

A nicely put together disc taken from the Radio One broadcast of the premier concert.

US Premier of Tubular Bells II (All of US AS 02)

A reasonable quality recording from the USA, with a stunning finale mix of Tubular Bells Part Two / Orabidoo / The Bell.

rare track collections

The Space Movie (Virgin VIRV 00164)

A two disc CD set apparently taken from the Space Movie LP acetates. Direct rips from the acetates, so they are a little crackly in places.

I Met A Sweet Señora in Barcelona / Balm for the Waking Dead

Both titles contain the same content. A collection of rare tracks, including the original version of Sally. Track listing:

1. Don Alfonso
2. I Know What I Like
3. Dance of the Daonhe Sidhe
4. Sally/Punkadiddle

5. Passed You By

6. Don Alfonso (German Version)

7. Tubular Bells (Demo extracts)

8. Polka/ Radetzky March (Live)

9. Fanny Planxty Power

10. Alright Now

11. Royal Wedding Anthem

12. Pastosi

13. Ommadawn – 12 Bar Blues

14. Tubular Bells Demo

15. Auld Lang Syne

Cow Jumps Over The Moon

Contains rare material including soundcheck recordings and the closing section of Tubular Bells from the Queen Elizabeth Hall concert in 1973. Track listing:

1. Two Ships (The Sallyangie)
2. Colours Of The World (The Sallyangie)
3. Soundcheck (Stuttgart 10/10/1984)
4. Theme From Ommadawn (Different mix from the American 7" single version)
5. Don Alfonso (Lol Coxhill)
6. Tubular Bells Part One (closing section from Queen Elizabeth Hall, 1973)

7. Thinking Of You (Edgar Broughton Band)

8. Innocent Unplugged: (BBC Radio One Session, the Nicky Campbell Show, 1989)

9. All You Need Is Love (demo extracts of Ommadawn from BBC TV Show & DVD)

10. In High Places/Étude (Early versions, live in Göteborg, 25/09/1982)

11. Reach For The Skies – Kevin Ayers: (England Film Soundtrack)

12. 'Orrible Orange – Kevin Ayers, David Bedford and Mike Oldfield

13. Verse Of Sad Sing – Tom Newman telephone interview

She Wore Hurt Surprise

Contains rare material including early live and acetate versions of recordings. Track listing:

1. Family Man (acetate version)
2. Mount Teide (acetate version)
3. Tubular Bells (medley/US promo)
4. Hergest Ridge (excerpt)
5. Mistake (UK TV 6:55 Special, live)
6. Aircraft Noise (alternate Tubular Bells ending from some picture disc pressings)
7. Kopya
8. Moonlight Shadow (The Shadows)
9. Punkadiddle (live)

10. Kevin Ayers: live in Hilversum (3 tracks)
11. Silent Night (live in Dortmund, 20/12/1980)
12. O Sole Mio (live in Livorno 10/07/1981)
13. Blaydon Races (live)
14. Shadow On The Wall (live)
15. Gong: Downwind (live)
16. Little Red Robin Hood Hits The Road (Robert Wyatt)

Swallowed Up By A Big Fat Snake

An interesting collection of rare tracks produced by Tartan Productions. The rare tracks have been transferred successfully to CD and include:

1. Froggy Went a-Courting
2. Wrekorder Wrondo
3. The Orchestral Hergest Ridge (Part One)
4. Blue Peter (different mix)
5. Five Miles Out (first mix)
6. Adlib track
7. Extract from the Orchestral Tubular Bells including the Sailor's Hornpipe
8. The Bell (Spanish version)
9. Live Orabidoo

10. When the Night's on Fire (rough mix)

11. From BBC television, 1989

12. Moonlight Shadow (acoustic version)

13. Australian television 11/1992

14. QE2 / Portsmouth live

Amazing Great Stuff

Just like the title says, this is an incredible insight into some of the early demos for Heaven's Open and Tubular Bells II.

Track Listing:

1. Mike Oldfield's Single (recorded from vinyl and digitally cleaned)

2. Dark Room Sequence (from The Killing Fields film soundtrack)

3. Pran's Last Night (from The Killing Fields film soundtrack)

4. When The Night's On Fire (early demo with vocals by Barry Palmer)

5. When The Night's On Fire (alternative version with vocals by Bonnie Tyler)

6. Far Country (demo)

7. Innocent (demo)

8. Earth Moving (demo)

9. Fed Up (early version of Gimme Back)

10. Making Of Tubular Bells II – Glockenspiel

11. Making Of Tubular Bells II – First Electric Guitar (1)

12. Making Of Tubular Bells II – First Electric Guitar (2)

13. Making Of Tubular Bells II – First Electric Guitar (3)

14. Making Of Tubular Bells II – Bass (1)

15. Making Of Tubular Bells II – Bass (2)

16. Making Of Tubular Bells II – Bass (3)

17. Making Of Tubular Bells II – Acoustic Guitar

18. Making Of Tubular Bells II – Second Electric Guitar

19. Making Of Tubular Bells II – Keyboard

20. Early Stages Of Tubular Bells II – Sentinel

21. Early Stages Of Tubular Bells II – Clear Light

22. Early Stages Of Tubular Bells II – Blue Saloon

23. Early Stages Of Tubular Bells II – Sunjammer

24. Early Stages Of Tubular Bells II – Red Dawn

25. Early Stages Of Tubular Bells II – Weightless

26. Bonus Track – Sad Sing (Tim Cross version)

Return to the Origin

This contains the music from Mike's MusicVR game, segued together as one single track. Although much of this music is unreleased, some appears in a different form on the albums Tres Lunas and Light and Shade

01. Welcome (1:39)

02. Proud Spirit (1:57)

03. Ants Run (0:32)

04. Bird To Island (1:55)

05. Viper (1:24)

06. Dolphins (2:11)

07. Underwater Castle (1:33)

08. Piano Game (1:54)

09. Rose (2:09)

10. Redwings Flight (1:08)

11. Planet Game (2:54)

12. Tai Chi (1:15)

13. Bats Flight (1:30)

14. Sword Game (1:28)

15. The Thin Men (1:21)

16. Butterfly World (1:08)

17. Owl Flight (1:56)

18. Canyon (1:28)

19. Sprite Game (4:17)

20. Good World (0:44)

21. Rings Games (1:05)

22. Space Skater (0:24)

23. Return To The Origin (2:00)

24. Discus Flight (2:07)

25. Landfall (0:52)

26. Horse Choir (0:46)

27. Horse Ride/Art In Heaven (1:32)

28. Moon Game (2:16)

29. Finale (1:43)

There is a detailed listing of many more bootlegs at Joe Lamb's informative Mike Oldfield bootlegs website. The author does not condone the distribution or selling of bootlegs and these details are provided purely for information.

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