



# WAY TO GO!

**Pete Way** is a living rock legend, the man who gave **UFO** a ferocious bottom end via his Thunderbird bass, and a fearsome reputation for leading a wildman lifestyle. *Howard Johnson* gets together with Pete for an enlightening, in-depth interview that leaves no stone unturned in discussing both the music and the madness...

**EVEN IN AN INDUSTRY** that's notorious for its hedonists and party animals, Pete Way has carved himself a reputation for unbridled excess. 'Wild Way' has partied hard ever since he first started swinging his bass around in UFO, the band he formed with vocalist Phil Mogg, guitarist Mick Bolton, and drummer Andy Parker in 1969. It's not all been fun. The heroin addiction that gripped Way and some of those close to him led to the deaths of two of his wives and numerous personal scrapes. But Pete insists the more 'traditional' health issues he's faced in recent years – prostate cancer and a heart attack – have nothing to do with the punishment he willingly meted out to his body over many years.

"People always say to me, 'I'm not surprised you've got problems given the life you've led,'" says Pete. "But my doctor tells me that has nothing to do with it."

But enough of his lifestyle. Pete Way deserves our attention far more because of his contribution to one of the finest classic rock bands of all time. His thunderous yet insistently memorable bass lines, delivered with aplomb on his trademark Gibson Thunderbird, gave UFO both raw power and melodic charm, making songs like 'Doctor, Doctor', 'Rock Bottom', 'Lights Out' and 'Love To Love' classics of the 1970s genre.

At the age of 68 Way is still smiling, still making music. He's got a new album in the works, produced by Mike Clink, who engineered the classic UFO album 'Obsession' and the double live 'Strangers In The Night'. Well, 'in the works' doesn't really acknowledge the fact it's been something like seven years in the making. No matter. Pete's still excited by it.

"Every time we got momentum, something got in the way," he says. "I had the heart thing, and the prostate cancer didn't help, going back and forth to hospital for blood tests. But we've got 16 songs now, which will be whittled down to 10. We've had plenty of offers from labels to put it out. It won't be long now. And I can tell you one thing. It's not watered-down rock, or as Mike Clink calls it, 'honey-coated rock'. It all sounds relevant..."

## **YOU WERE BORN IN THE NORTH LONDON BOROUGH OF ENFIELD BACK IN 1951. WHAT WAS IT LIKE GROWING UP THERE?**

"I suppose it was a typical north London suburb, borderline drab. There wasn't a huge amount to do there

when you were a teenager, so I'd go down the town centre and hang out while trying to pretend that I was some sort of thug. I guess at that time I was more of a mod than anything else. I was fashion conscious, so didn't have the leather jacket and the quiff like the rockers did. I was more a Carnaby Street person, because you looked better – and you got more girls that way!"

## **WHERE DID YOUR INTEREST IN MUSIC COME FROM?**

"I wasn't from a musical family. There were people in the family who sang, but there were no international stars, put it that way! But as soon as I understood Elvis that was it for me, and it went on from there. When bands like The Who and the Stones came along I was hooked on them too. I liked The Beatles, but not that much – too poppy."

## **HOW DID YOU DISCOVER THESE GROUPS?**

"The radio was a bit hit and miss, because in those days you could have anybody from Frankie Vaughan to Jimi Hendrix on at the same time. The art was to find one of those record shops where you could check out an album at a listening post and decide if you wanted to buy it. Or in my case listen to it knowing you had *no intention* of buying it, because you didn't have any money! From the age of about 12 I went to a shop called Pearsons in the centre of Enfield, right near The George pub where everybody used to gather. The first record I ever bought was either something by The Kinks or the Stones. Probably The Kinks, actually, 'You Really Got Me'. I had a friend who had a lot of Beatles stuff, but then when the Stones came out I thought, 'This is much more for me!'"

## **SO HOW DID YOU PROGRESS FROM BEING A MUSIC FAN TO BEING A MUSICIAN?**

"I'm not sure I ever became a musician! My bass playing was always loud, confident – and wrong! But that seems to be all you need in rock, a good bluff! It all happened by accident, really. You have a friend who's playing guitar and they know three or four chords. So you think, 'Well he can do that better than me, so I'd better have a go at the bass.' I was really naïve at 14, so it took me a while to work out that you had to tune the bass not only to itself, but also to the guitar. It was a steep learning curve, but I gradually improved by sitting down in the bedroom with a guitar player every night. You improve because ▶