

HOW ON EARTH DO you get your head around the career of Bryan Adams? The 65-year-old Canadian is one of the most successful rock artists of all time. And here he is today, 44 years after releasing his first album, 1980's 'Bryan Adams', still selling out shows all over the world. All of this has been achieved without anything that could remotely be described as rock'n'roll razzmatazz. Adams still wears his hair conventionally short the way he did when he first emerged on the scene, still prefers jeans and t-shirts to any kind of stage 'attire', still plays the same blue-collar rock that he always has. There's really not much use in comparing Adams to other rock stars. As he so rightly says, "I don't fit the stereotype."

I first met Bryan on 30 July 1983, backstage at the famous Day On The Green rock festival in Oakland, California. He'd just released his third album, 'Cuts Like A Knife', and the single 'Straight To The Heart' was going gangbusters in the States. The performing line-up that day was impressive. Bryan shared a stage with Journey, Triumph, Eddie Money, and Night Ranger.

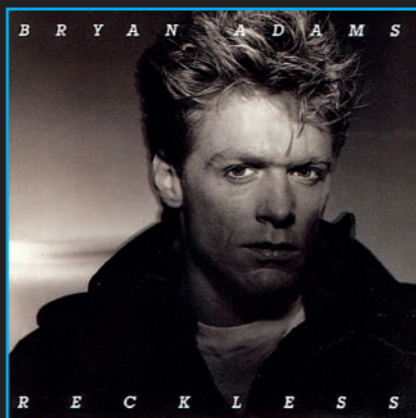
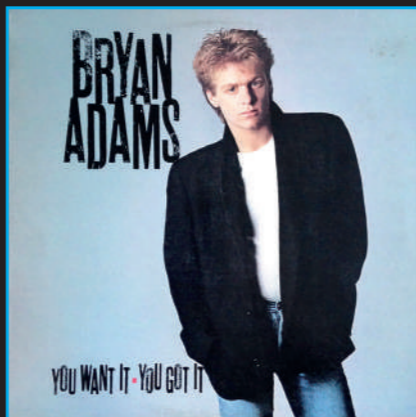
When he heard my English accent it was Bryan who came up to me asking which magazine I wrote for. When I told him I was here for British metal mag *Kerrang!* he suggested we go out and watch fellow Canadians Triumph together. I raised an eyebrow and said that surely it wasn't a good idea for someone who'd just played the festival to go out into an arena full of 60,000 rockers. Bryan waved my worries aside, pulled his baseball cap down low, and off we went. Not a single person bothered him and we both happily headbanged our way through Triumph's set.

Bryan and I stayed in touch from time to time, and in 1995 the powers-that-be at *Kerrang!* asked me to escort him to the magazine's awards ceremony in London, where Bryan was picking up an award for 'Klassik Songwriter'. Before we went inside we bought a four-pack of Guinness, as Bryan had mentioned there probably wouldn't be any of his favourite tipples at such a fancy affair.

A *Kerrang!* writer was working checking guests at the door. He looked me and Bryan up and down before asking who the bloke with me was, and what was he carrying in the plastic bag he had with him. Surprisingly he didn't recognise Bryan. "I'm Bryan Adams, I've got four cans of Guinness with me, and I'm here to pick up

an award," Bryan said. "I don't think I'd ever seen that writer so embarrassed!"

Fast forward to 2024, and I was really happy to catch up with Bryan once more, this time performing at the Zenith in Paris. I'm delighted to report that it was like being transported right back to 1983. Bryan still plays with the same energy, and his love of delivering for a live audience is still very much intact. He may be 65, but The Kid still wants to rock, so the pleasure was all mine to sit down with him for this in-depth interview exclusively for *Rock Candy Mag*...



YOU WERE BORN IN CANADA IN 1959, BUT YOUR PARENTS WERE ENGLISH. WHAT INFLUENCE DID THE FACT THAT YOU WERE IMMIGRANTS HAVE ON YOU GROWING UP?

"I never really considered it at first because I thought everybody ate beans on toast! It wasn't until I was put into an American school that I realised the true significance of having a British upbringing at home. But being Canadian, I feel I've had the best of both influences."

YOUR DAD WAS IN THE MILITARY,

SO YOU MOVED AROUND A LOT WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG, SPENDING TIME IN PORTUGAL, AUSTRIA, AND ISRAEL. HOW DID THAT EXPERIENCE SHAPE YOU?

"Actually, all that moving around happened *after* my father had left the army. He joined the diplomatic corps after serving with the United Nations as a peacekeeping observer. I guess everything you experience at a young age shapes you. But thinking about it, there were a few musical things that really did make an impression on me while I was living in Portugal. One was [traditional Portuguese music] fado and hearing it in the restaurants that we went to. Then my father took us to Seville just across the border in Spain to see a flamenco performance. He loved flamenco, and we were in the front row. I'd been dragged along to endless operas when we'd lived in Vienna, but this was kind of the first gig I attended. Flamenco is really intense, girls kicking their skirts up in front of my face, clapping and laughing; my brother and I grinning away. It's amazing to think that I got to work with [renowned Spanish flamenco guitarist and composer] Paco de Lucia so many years later."

YOU BOUGHT YOUR FIRST ELECTRIC GUITAR IN READING IN THE SOUTH OF ENGLAND. WHAT WERE YOU DOING THERE?

"I was around 11 years old and was visiting my Uncle Philip who used to live there. My dad had bought me a Spanish guitar after that flamenco show when I was about nine (even though I had originally wanted to be a drummer), but I couldn't really get my hands around the neck. Anyway, hard rock was starting to take off and I told my uncle that I really wanted an electric guitar, so he took me down to the local music shop and bought me one. I still have it."

IN 1974, WHEN YOU WERE 14, YOU MOVED BACK TO CANADA WITH YOUR MUM AND YOUR BROTHER. YOU ENDED UP IN VANCOUVER...

"Yes, my parents divorced, sadly. All of a sudden we'd gone from being diplomats to being absolutely skint. My mother did that classic thing when some parents split; she didn't want anything and just wanted to leave. Once we moved to Vancouver she worked in a pub and eventually got a government job during the day, and it was hard because I was hating school there. That was mostly because they didn't play soccer, and I'd

just come from Portugal where football was absolutely *everything*. I eventually joined a local Italian league, but I couldn't understand why nobody played the game in Canadian schools. They used to play this idiotic thing called murder ball, where you throw a ball at the opposing side of the gym and if you hit the opponent, they're out. Fortunately, I was really starting to get into music playing with a basement band, and even more fortunately my ma encouraged me. I started auditioning and heard about this club band looking for a singer. I got the job. I was 15."

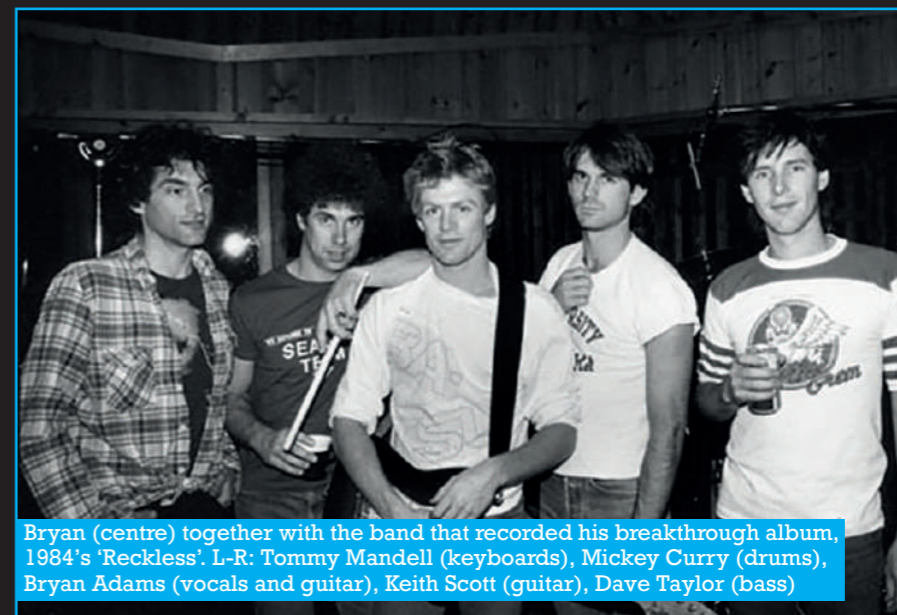
JIM VALLANCE WAS ALSO IN VANCOUVER AT THAT TIME AND WOULD BECOME YOUR WRITING PARTNER IN DUE COURSE. HOW DID THE TWO OF YOU MEET?

"We met by chance. I bumped into Jim at a music shop when I'd just turned 18. We sort of knew each other because he was a session drummer in town, and I'd started getting hired by a few people to do sessions in Vancouver as a background singer. I found out that he was writing songs for a band called Prism. We decided to meet for a cup of tea, and we wrote our first song together the same day."

OF COURSE THAT WRITING RELATIONSHIP WENT ON TO BE IMMENSELY SUCCESSFUL. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS MAGICAL ABOUT IT?

"It's probably down to our mutual love of boiled cauliflower, which used to be one of Jim's culinary specialties! Seriously though, I liked practically every song idea Jim ever came up with. I think he liked a lot of mine too, so it just worked. Plus he's a much better musician than me, so it was always fun trying to keep up with him."

YOU SIGNED A RECORD DEAL WITH A&M IN 1978 WHEN YOU WERE JUST 19 YEARS OLD. HOW DID THAT COME ABOUT?



Bryan (centre) together with the band that recorded his breakthrough album, 1984's 'Reckless'. L-R: Tommy Mandell (keyboards), Mickey Curry (drums), Bryan Adams (vocals and guitar), Keith Scott (guitar), Dave Taylor (bass)

"NO ONE CAN PREPARE YOU FOR SUCCESS; THERE'S NO INSTRUCTION MANUAL. YOU JUST HAVE TO RIDE THE WAVE AND HOPEFULLY HAVE A FEW GOOD FRIENDS TO HELP YOU STAY SANE ALONG THE WAY."

"It was the demos that Jim produced that did it... He'd set up a studio in his basement and I'd go over to his place and the two of us would work for hours on end trying to put songs together. By the time I had maybe four or five numbers, I decided to shop them around and everybody told me to f*ck off! I didn't have a band or a manager and you needed those things for A&R people to take you seriously. Somehow, though, I managed to persuade A&M to take a chance on me. I did the deal with the label

myself and it wasn't a good deal, but it was a foot in the door and that's what I needed."

BY THE TIME YOU RELEASED YOUR DEBUT ALBUM, 'BRYAN ADAMS', IN 1980 YOU'D CUT OFF YOUR LONG HAIR...

"Yes, I know. Thankfully you can see that hair on the cover of my album 'Tracks Of My Years'. As you can probably tell, I was into heavy rock."

IT WAS YOUR SECOND ALBUM, 1981'S 'YOU WANT IT, YOU GOT IT', THAT GAVE YOU SOME TRACTION IN THE STATES.

"Yes. That album sort of launched things on US rock radio, and due to the airplay we got a few opening slots for bands like The Kinks and Foreigner. It was around that time that I asked Keith Scott if he wanted to form a band. We'd met when I was 16 on the street in Toronto a few years earlier and I'd recognised him because everyone knew Keith was by far the best guitar player on the scene. He still is. We went for coffee and became friends. Once Keith got involved, things really clicked into gear, and guess what? We're still on tour together 40-something years later."