

GOOD COMPANY



The classic Bad Company line-up photographed in the Hague, Netherlands, 22 February 1975. Clockwise from top: Paul Rodgers (vocals, guitar, and piano), Boz Burrell (bass), Simon Kirke (drums), Mick Ralphs (guitar)

As **Bad Company** are finally inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame and a new generation of bands shows its appreciation via the first ever Bad Co. tribute album, *Howard Johnson* catches up first with singer **Paul Rodgers** and then with drummer **Simon Kirke** to explore the career and legacy of this much-loved classic rock band.

PAUL RODGERS

GUITARIST MICK RALPHS PASSED away on 23 June this year at the age of 81 following a long health battle in the aftermath of a debilitating stroke. His sad death brought the curtain down on Bad Company, one of the most successful and influential classic rock bands of all time. The original line-up – Ralphs, vocalist Paul Rodgers, bassist Boz Burrell, and drummer Simon Kirke – lit up the charts in the '70s with their soulful take on hard rock. Maybe this wasn't all that surprising. Bad Company was a supergroup of sorts, given that Rodgers and Kirke had already enjoyed success with another legendary band, Free, while Ralphs had made his name in Mott The Hoople, and Burrell had earned his stripes in King Crimson.

The hits flowed like water for the new band and songs such as 'Can't Get Enough', 'Bad Company', 'Good Lovin' Gone Bad', and 'Feel Like Makin' Love' were quickly acknowledged as classics of the genre by a generation of fans who fell hard for Ralphs' simple-yet-insistent riffs and Rodgers' heartfelt vocal deliveries. Over the course of six studio albums released between 1974 and 1982, Bad Company came to define a unique kind of rock'n'roll cool that relied less on the brash swagger of hard rock, and more on the notion of drilling down into the music to capture some soul and an expression of the human condition.

Paul Rodgers never was one to toot his band's horn all that loudly. The man from Middlesbrough in England was much more comfortable letting the music do the talking, which is most likely why for many years he was resistant to the idea of Bad Company being inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame, also reasoning that rock'n'roll doesn't belong in a museum. The singer has softened his attitude over the years and now says he's "happy and proud to be a part of this brotherhood and sisterhood of music" as the band is inducted in 2025.

In addition to this undoubted honour, this year also sees the release of the first Bad Company tribute album, 'Can't Get Enough', featuring contributions from a new generation of musicians influenced by one of the foundational hard rock bands. So the time is absolutely right for *Rock Candy Mag* to examine the career, the importance, and the legacy of Bad Company, one of Britain's finest rock'n'roll exports...

PAUL, WHAT WAS YOUR STATE OF MIND WHEN FREE FIRST BROKE UP IN 1971?

"I'd made it clear at the time that I didn't feel Free was ready for another US tour. I think we were completely out of our depth when we played a couple of shows there [in May of 1971], but that whole experience taught me a lot. I decided I wanted to get away from the band because to my mind we were in danger of becoming a pop group. That was the last thing I wanted. We were being encouraged to get locked into pop music and I'd

seen other bands getting crucified for being a 'teeny bopper band', which is what those kind of acts were referred to back in the day. I wanted to get back into the blues, to loosen up and get more inspiration from that traditional music. Nobody else in the band wanted that, though, especially [bassist] Andy [Fraser]. He would put his bass down and walk out of the room if we tried to play the blues. Same with Simon because he wasn't really into blues music either. And I didn't get any support from [guitarist] Paul Kossoff, which surprised me because I thought that lack of interest in blues music was part of his own frustration with the band at that time, the fact that we weren't loose enough. So I decided to take some time out to think about things. I formed a band called Peace [with bassist Stewart McDonald and drummer Mick Underwood in 1971] just to keep busy and keep creating music, and that was when I met Mick Ralphs because we toured with his band Mott The Hoople. We started working on writing songs together, exchanging ideas and forming a relationship, and even though I went

back to a different version of Free [in 1972], it didn't take long for that to fall apart and for Mick and I to commit to working together. Mick was the strength behind the project because he had

such wonderful songwriting skills and was a great guitar player. So Mick and I were writing with a view to forming a band – or at least that's what I thought we were doing. I found out later that Mick believed we were going to be an acoustic duo like The Everly Brothers. While this was all starting to come together, Simon happened to call me, so I suggested he come over for a jam. That right there was the roots of Bad Company."

WAS LED ZEP MANAGER PETER GRANT INVOLVED RIGHT FROM THE START?

"No, he wasn't. It was just Mick and I thinking about becoming a band, just the two of us hanging out at my cottage. I had a connection to Led Zeppelin's road manager, Clive Coulson, who'd previously tour managed Free. He came around to see me and told me that I should call Peter about management because he was interested in me. I was surprised. I didn't think he would be interested because Led Zeppelin was the biggest band in the world at that time. They were absolute gods. But Clive visited me a couple of times and kept saying the same thing. Eventually, I called Peter from my friend Henk Huffener's house in the little village of Albury near Guildford in England. That was the start of it."

SO HOW DID BOZ GET INVOLVED TO ROUND OUT THE BAND?

"We started looking for a bassist and tried out maybe 14 different players. There was a Welsh guy I really liked, but I can't remember his name. I offered him the job, but he didn't want it. Then there was a guy called Alan Spenner, who'd played with Joe Cocker at Woodstock. He was a great bass player, but he turned up three days late and didn't even realise it! I needed everybody to be