

## MIDGE URE BIOGRAPHY - MARCH 2012

An artist who has received **Ivor Novello**, **Grammy**, **BASCAP** awards along with a flotilla of gold and platinum records, really needs very little introduction.

Musical success is seldom measured in time spans of more than a few years, if not **Andy Warhol's** often quoted "fifteen minutes", so the fact that by the time Midge's single "If I Was" went to **No1** in 1985 he had already crammed several musical lifetimes into a 10 year professional career speaks volumes - **Slik**, **The Rich Kids**, **Thin Lizzy**, **Visage**, **Ultravox** and of course the most famous one off group in musical history **Band Aid** had by then all had the guiding hand of his musical navigation.

Then you have to take account of Midge's **musical directorship** of a series of rock concerts for **The Prince's Trust**, Wicked Women for **Breakthrough** and in honour of **Nelson Mandela**; a **Lord Provost** award for services to Scottish music; record production for **Phil Lynott**, **Steve Harley** and countless others; his video direction of memorable hits by the **Fun Boy Three**, **Bananarama** and others, or a whole swathe of landmark singles by **Ultravox**; TV, theatre and film music credits ranging from '**Max Headroom**' to stage and big screen.

His musical roots were playing and learning the records of the **Small Faces** and other rockers who did things very much their own way, Midge appeared to the wider public in a moment of heady teen success with **Slik**. Their sway-along Bell single 'Forever And Ever' took over at **No.1** in the UK from Abba's 'Mamma Mia' on **Valentine's Day 1976**. Soon outgrowing Slik's pop dimensions, Midge was snapped up by ex-Sex Pistol **Glen Matlock** the following year for his new outfit, the **Rich Kids**, who charted amid an avalanche of press with a self-titled EMI single early in 1978. By April '79, with his name being added to many musicians' contact book, Ure had been asked by **Billy Currie**, **Chris Cross** and **Warren Cann** to become the new frontman in **Ultravox**.

The band was a major influence on the electro-pop movements of the early '80s and many an open-minded studio and bedroom experimentalist since. Their successful trademark was combining Midge's powerful guitar riffs with sweeping synthesiser motifs, enigmatic imagery and state-of-the-art visuals. Throughout the first half of the '80s, they brilliantly combined the responsibilities of **top 10** artists and innovative style-makers.

As interest in the **1980's** rises again to a new peak in 2012, courtesy of reformations of the likes of Duran Duran and most recently Spandau Ballet, **Ultravox's** chart catalogue rewards merits new scrutiny. Tracks like '**Reap the Wild Wind**', '**Dancing With Tears in My Eyes**', '**Love's Great Adventure**' and 1981's timeless '**Vienna**' were all massive hits the world over as they charted with awesome regularity, not only on single, but with seven consecutive top ten albums in just six years.

Even by then, the **Midge Ure** story had some individual chapters, of course. He wrote , produced and co founded the studio collective **Visage** in 1980, then hit the top 10 in the summer of **1982** with his first release under his own name, an atmospheric take on the Tom Rush song made famous half a dozen years earlier by the Walker Brothers, '**No Regrets**'. Then came **November 25, 1984**, a historic day for Midge and all of pop music, as 36 artists by the collective name **Band Aid** gathered at SARM Studios in west London under Ure's production. They recorded '**Do They Know It's Christmas?**' a song he had just written with **Bob Geldof** as the industry's heartfelt and eloquent contribution to Ethiopian famine relief. **600,000** copies sold in its first week in the UK alone was only the beginning: **800,000** more were bought in the second week, **more than three million** world-wide, and the unstoppable emotion engendered by the project led to **Live Aid**, the summer 1985 global concert that, all exaggeration aside, spoke for a generation.

Within months, a staggering **£8 million** had been raised for the starving in Africa, and Geldof said that without Ure's initial enthusiasm for the idea, not to mention his rapidly penned sketch for the single, neither Band Aid nor Live Aid could have happened. Midge is still to this day a **Band Aid Trustee** and an ambassador for **Save the Children**.

Just two months after Live Aid, Midge was back at **No.1** in Britain, this time under his own name, with **'If I Was'**, and by the autumn he had a **No.2 solo album** to accompany it, entitled **'The Gift'**. In 1993, that particular song was to lend itself to the retrospective album 'If I Was'. After an initial solo outing to the Oxford Debating Society where his response to "What song would you write for **Take That**" was met with the characteristically witty retort of "An instrumental!" broke the ice, he supported the album's release with a 22-date **'Out Alone'** tour of Britain, armed only with a couple of guitars and a keyboard.

In **1996** the new 'Breathe' album was followed by further extensive touring, including dates in the US as special guest to the **Chieftains**. The **Swatch** campaign brought spectacular renewed international activity for the record in 1998. The album and eponymous single were subsequently in the top 20 throughout Europe for much of that year, and **No.1 in Italy, Germany, Austria and Switzerland**, where Midge toured voraciously. 'Breathe' sold over **half a million copies** in Europe alone. Respected German composer **Eberhard Schoener** invited him to perform at the re-opening of the Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, in front of an estimated audience of 500,000.

Soon after Midge was busy producing and writing with and for various artists, both established and unsigned, at his studio in Bath, and writing music for films. Other duties included the 'Music for Montserrat' benefit at the **Royal Albert Hall** alongside **Sir George Martin, Sir Paul McCartney, Elton John and Eric Clapton**, and a performance for the launch of the Hard Rock Hotel in Bali.

**1999** brought a major Japanese tour and shows for **WOMAD** in **Singapore** (where he broke the house attendance record) and **Las Palmas**, where the band played to a packed town square in a performance broadcast by Spanish TV later that year. Yet another new strand to his career emerged when Midge **presented** shows for **BBC Radio** on the careers of **Roxy Music, Bryan Ferry and Thin Lizzy**, also participating in a 15th anniversary radio show to celebrate the Band Aid success.

Whilst completing work on his next studio album **'Move Me'**, Midge also narrated a tribute to **Alex Harvey** for BBC Radio, appeared on BBC1's 'A Question of Pop' with **Craig David**, and made various festival appearances, including a performance with Sir George Martin for **'Wings & Strings'**, as well as completing another extensive **European** tour of his own to support the album release.

Following Midge's appearance on the flagship ITV program **"This is your Life"** in early 2001, EMI released **'THE VERY BEST OF MIDGE URE & ULTRAVOX'** which prompted him to go back out on the road in "rock band mode" **'Rewind - The Greatest Hits Tour'** a major fifteen date UK jaunt supported the release and performed his hits from across the full spectrum of his career. The show was filmed at the **Shepherd's Bush Empire**, and released on DVD through Eagle Rock. Once again, Midge was instrumental in the video production, always preferring to keep things under his direct control. Another important milestone was the opening of the **www.midgeure.com** online shop; a vehicle which allows him to release his own product, completely under his own control. The first exclusive shop release was **"Glorious Noise - Breathe Live"**, followed by **"Intimate Moments"**; a collection of previously unreleased material. As he says, "I needed a home for the songs that didn't fit a particular album. They're my Little Orphans!"

As we moved into **2002**, once again he combined a series of acoustic shows with a glorious summer spent performing a series of shows in historic building across the UK in

band format with **"The Pretenders"**. Another exclusive release also hit the virtual shelves. **"Intimate Moments"** is a candid record of his acoustic show, captured on a double CD.

Always one to ring the changes, Midge next decided to revisit his "electronic" roots in the **"Sampled, Looped and Trigger Happy"** tour. The 35 show tour left no corner of the UK untouched by this amalgam of old and new, the old being given a contemporary twist sitting comfortably alongside the new. The shows were captured on the tour DVD, *If I Was*.

German label **Hypertension** picked up the release and issued it both on DVD and a soundtrack CD entitled **Re\*Live** and his relationship with **Hypertension** continues to go from strength to strength.

2005 was the year that Midge undertook both extensive **acoustic tours of Europe** and the UK as well as performing with the long standing **"Night of the Proms"** in Germany. This 21 date sell out tour of **arenas** saw a massive production with full orchestra.

He then went on to be executive producer for the **Band Aid 20** single working with the likes of **Paul McCartney, Joss Stone, Radiohead** and **Chris Martin**.

**Midge's** services to both music and charity were finally recognised in the Birthday Honours list in 2005, when Midge was awarded a long overdue **OBE!**

He also released his autobiography *"If I Was"* through **Virgin books**, and undertook a promotional tour of bookshops where he did a short acoustic performance and a question and answer session.

He's also received honorary doctorates from both **Edinburgh** and **Dundee** Universities, mainly in recognition for his work with **Band Aid** and **Live 8**, which took up a lot of 2006! Midge actually managed to fit in a performance at the Edinburgh Live8 show in **Murrayfield** in July where he played with **Eddie Izzard** helping out on piano! Surely a first!

**In November 2006 Midge** and band performed a show with **Level 42** and the **Cutting Crew** for legendary German TV show **"Rockpalast"** which was received with great critical acclaim! The show was broadcast in early January 2007. He has also performed with German icon **Xavier Naidoo** at his recent **O Livelait** show.

In September 2006 Midge travelled to Korea with old friends **WOMAD** and performed with Troy Donockley and AD Chivers there. He also just narrated a documentary about the **Cavern Club** which was broadcast on **BBC Radio 4**.

**"Uncovered"** is his latest live incarnation - launched onto the UK theatre circuit in 2008.... Combining his own classic hits with a selection of songs that have been a major influence on him along with a smattering of personal reflections, all done in an acoustic format.

Midge has long held an ambition to record an LP of cover versions of songs that influenced him..... the ambition was born when as a teenager in his first hit band Slik he saw The Walker Brothers performing No Regrets on Top Of The Pops in 1976....

He managed to record his own version of No Regrets in 1982, but it was to take 25 years and a change of format from LP to CD before he would record a full set of his favourite songs.

**TEN** was recorded in a log cabin in Eastern Canada during the long snow bound winter of 2007 - 2008 and was released again by German label Hypertension in September 2008.

The CD contains 10 (surprise !) songs that influenced the teenage Ure when growing up in Glasgow in the 1960's - 70's, so alongside the obvious (David Bowie) are the less obvious - The Carpenters...Lulu !!! - All songs chosen for their unique qualities and lasting impact on Midge.... songs that somehow shaped his songwriting.

**In November 2008** Midge joined and participated in and acted as patron for the **Burnsong**

project , which aims to encourage up and coming young songwriters in the "black art" of writing songs.

A spin off from this project was Midge's involvement with the Burns Humanitarian Awards in Scotland in May 2009 - where the Burns Humanitarian Trust award was awarded to Guy Willoughby of the Halo Trust which removes landmines worldwide.

April 2009 saw the unthinkable happen - **ULTRAVOX REFORMED !!** Six months of talking between Midge and other Ultravox band members Chris Cross, Billy Currie and Warren Cann led to a 3 week tour of the UK and Ireland....

The last UK show at Londons historical **Roundhouse** was filmed for the **HD DVD** release "Return To Eden"

Summer 2009 saw Midge combining further Ultravox festival appearances, solo acoustic shows, outdoor festival appearances with his own 4 piece band, and appearances at the ever popular " Here & Now " outdoor shows which play at stately homes across the UK with other 1980's guest vocalists.

November 2010 also saw Midge return to his role of MD for the Princes Trust at the Royal Albert Hall with a cast of the usual suspects including Eric Clapton and Phil Collins. He even managed to fulfil a lifelong ambition and performed "Seven seas of Rhye" with Queen.

The second part of Ultravox's tour in 2010 took in Europe and Scandinavia, and following that plans were made to record an original new set of songs together for the first time in 26 years... work started in September 2010 in Canada, and continued throughout the winter into Spring 2011. The subsequent album 'Brilliant' released on the Chrysalis label through EMI on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2012 received huge critical praise from the media and even more from the fans who never thought such a thing could ever happen.

Midge, Chris Allan and Lee Curran have shot a documentary "Brilliant beginnings" which follows the band through Europe and the writing and recording of the album in Canada, Los Angeles and London.

Midge is in the process of adding extra chapters to his autobiography "If I Was" and has plans to release it in e-book format.

Midge continues to present show for BBC radio 4 including, **Rockin Scots. Rocking the Blitz Club. Motownship**, the story of music and youth in the townships of Cape Town. **Mysterious Mr Mercury** the Freddie Mercury story. **The art of water music** and **The Ziggy Stardust story**.

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The next year saw Midge performing across Europe with a full orchestra on 'Rock meets Classic' sharing the stage with none other than Alice Cooper. He then embarked on the 'Retro Futura' tour of the USA with Tom Bailey (Thompson Twins) Howard Jones and China Crisis receiving outstanding reviews for his live performances.

A new album release finally happened in 2014. "Fragile", the first 'new material' in over a decade (available in North America via eOne), spawned the UK hit single 'Become' bringing huge acclaim from the media.

More touring in Scandinavia and the Baltic states to South Africa and Germany followed.

Midge also appeared at the 'Ryder Cup opening gala concert' in his hometown of Glasgow

where he performed the classic Ultravox song 'Vienna' with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra bringing the entire audience to their feet in a standing ovation.

2015 saw Midge returning to America on his 'Fragile Troubadour' tour performing solo acoustic versions of songs from his 'Fragile' album, alongside many of the groundbreaking hits from his colourful and influential musical past.

Midge's 2016 return to the US, this time with a band playing all the solo hits as well as all the Ultravox hits, is being met with a huge buzz on Facebook and all over the internet.