

Clive's work – the name comes from a phrase in one of the songs. We currently have 160 members, most of whom are here tonight, some having travelled from as far away as Paris and even Hong Kong.

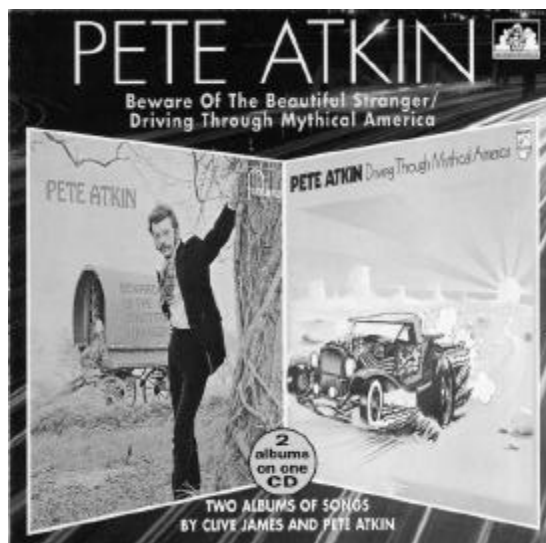
The reissue process also began to gather momentum, with a CD release from See For Miles records combining the first two Pete Atkin albums, *Beware of the Beautiful Stranger* and *Driving Through Mythical America*. This is now available from all good record shops and mail order outlets – it topped the Magpie Direct mail order chart for some weeks, earlier this year. A limited number of copies are available for sale in the foyer tonight. We expect to see the balance of Pete's back catalogue released on CD for the first time during the coming months. There's even the possibility of Pete recording an album of all-new material.

In the aftermath of Monyash we wanted to stage a bigger and better follow-up concert for 1998, and this is it. Plus, to our astonished gratification, Clive agreed to interrupt his globe-trotting TV production schedule to appear with Pete here in Buxton, and add his inimitable wit to the proceedings. Who knows, he might even be persuaded to sing ...

Enjoy the show!

Steve

Stephen J Birkill

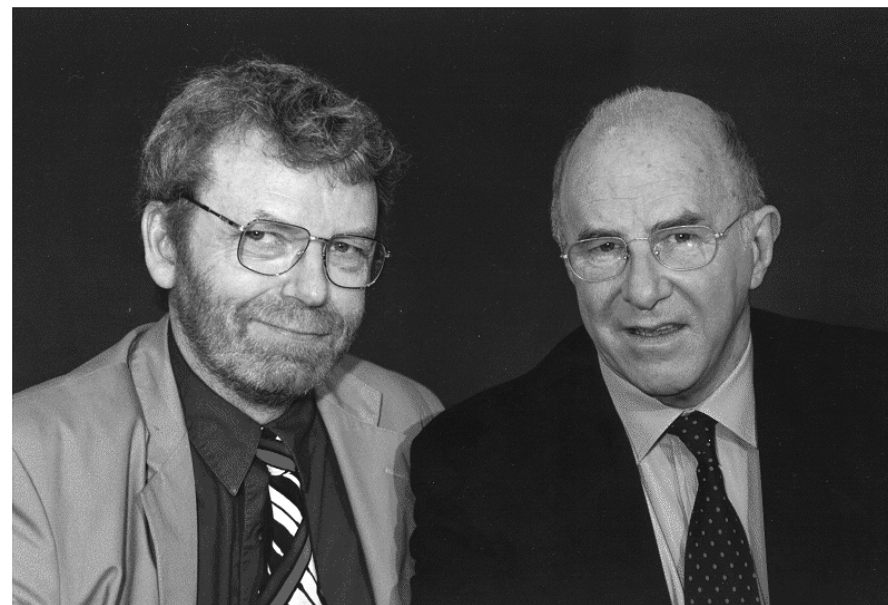


The first See For Miles reissue CD

The Pete Atkin Internet Website is at www.rwt.co.uk/pa.htm

Pete Atkin's *Beware of the Beautiful Stranger* with *Driving through Mythical America* is on **See For Miles C5HCD 664**. Visit the sales stall in the foyer of the Opera House.

Clive James' *Unreliable Memoirs* (3 volumes) are in paperback from **Picador**.



Pete Atkin and Clive James IN CONCERT

Together Again

Saturday, 15th November 1975. Newcastle University saw the culmination of the "Together at Last" Tour. For eight and a half years Pete Atkin and Clive James had written songs together. Lots of songs. If you include all their Cambridge Footlights revues and college smokers, they'd penned something like 200 – they'd long stopped counting (Clive recalls this period in volume III of his "Unreliable Memoirs"). Pete had recorded a number of them, six albums and five singles-worth, and Julie Covington, a friend from their university days, had also recorded an LP of their songs. And Pete had toured the country singing and playing them, on guitar and piano, solo and with a rock band, to rapturous reception in theatres, concert halls, festivals, schools, colleges, universities and folk clubs.

These weren't the average kind of 3-minute pop ditty. Atkin/James songs were a phenomenon of the early 1970s. Defying categorisation, they fell awkwardly rockwards of jazz and popwards of folk – they weren't any of those things – so the record shops never knew quite where to file the discs. Clive's lyrics were poetic without being poetry, dazzlingly clever and witty without being fey or obscure, powerful and poignant, ironic and tragic, and meaningful without compromising their credibility as popular song. Pete's tunes were driven by an offbeat ear for melody which took them through chord changes seldom heard in the rock idiom. But they worked, and they inspired a passionate devotion in those who heard them. The critics adored them, as did their fellow musicians; Atkin and James were compared with the likes of Lennon and McCartney, Brooker and Reid, John and Taupin or Rodgers and Hart. And when brilliant maverick deejay Kenny Everett played pre-release tapes of *Master of the Revels* and *Girl on the Train* on his Radio 1 programme back in 1970, everyone wanted to know who his "mystery singer" was.

In the intervening period, between 1970 and 1975, Pete had become something of a cult figure, playing close on 300 gigs up and down the country, recording numerous sessions and guest appearances for radio and TV, and releasing those few albums and singles – they’ve since become collectors’ items, highly valued on the secondhand market, all the more so because fans have refused to part with them. Clive had pursued his own career as a writer and TV critic, and had already developed the personality we now know so well from his books, TV shows and travel series. Every once in a while he would appear at one of Pete’s concerts and introduce a few songs or read some of his poems or monologues, but for the most part they pursued then, as they have since, entirely separate lives.



“Together At Last” publicity shot



Live Libel album

But in 1975, to celebrate the release of Pete’s sixth album, *Live Libel*, the duo got together for a 23-date tour of Britain, dubbed “Together at Last”. Pete and Clive wanted to thank their loyal followers, but they were ready to concede that the music would never make their fortunes in the fickle world of pop, that all the discerning and devoted fans and the critical acclaim they’d attracted couldn’t deliver competitive record sales in a year when the Number One spot had been held for nine weeks by the Bay City Rollers!

So when the curtain fell that night at Newcastle upon Tyne it signified the end of an era. Pete kept on playing a few gigs for the next two years, promoting compilation albums of their work and delighting his faithful audiences, but as intelligent rock music gave way to punk on the nation’s stages, radios and turntables, a time came when he had to quit. Like many of his creative contemporaries from Cambridge, Pete went on to build a new career with the BBC, first as a producer and eventually becoming Head of Network Radio in Bristol. Clive has since described his songwriting days with Pete as “the most intense creative endeavour I was ever mixed up in”. In an interview for the Manchester Evening News last week he said “A lot of people think Pete is a musical genius, and I’m one of them. We did all right back then, I have no complaints. You can’t be unpopular in a popular medium. If we’d had the same share of the market in the US as we had here Pete would have made a living. But people didn’t know where to file the stuff. It wasn’t Easy Listening, and folkies wondered why he was wearing the wrong clothes. He was either before his time or after his time.”

Since that concert in November 1975 Pete Atkin and Clive James haven’t appeared together on stage.

Until tonight!



BUXTON OPERA HOUSE

The Revival

The Internet is to blame. I’d been one of the faithful back then, and I knew Pete had been playing the odd folk club gig – about one a year, as a favour to old friends who used to book him in the 70s. So 2½ years ago, armed with my new research toy (the World-Wide Web) I set out to discover what Pete was up to. Eventually I spotted a listing for him, guesting at a club in Eastbourne in the summer of 1996, so I made contact and asked whether he might play a gig for us up here, and if there was any chance of a reissue of those albums. To my relief Pete turned out to be mild-mannered, charming and articulate, the very antithesis of the traditional pop star. He was flattered to be asked, and agreed to play a concert for us the following year in Derbyshire, which turned into the climax of what became the Monyash Festival of 1997.



Pete Atkin and Julie Covington on stage at Monyash last year

Pete’s voice and instrumental technique proved to be as strong as ever, and the evening was a triumphant success. He played a 150-minute set to an audience of over 250, some from as far away as Canada, in the marquee in our own field of dreams. As well as the old favourites he introduced a number of unrecorded Atkin/James songs, potential classics including *Search and Destroy*, *Canoe*, and *History and Geography*. And to everyone’s delight he was joined on stage for five numbers by Julie Covington.

I’d already built a Website devoted to Pete and his music, with a huge volume of background including details of all his recordings and lyrics to 150 songs, many with chord transcriptions and a few with sound samples. Now I set up *Midnight Voices*, an electronic mailing list for fans, to discuss Pete and