

## MIDGE URE BIOGRAPHY - MARCH 2011

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 **new romantic** and 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** chartmakers and innovative style-makers.

As interest in the **1980's** rises again to a new peak in 2011, 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 and produced **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**.

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 chart-topper 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 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. He has also recorded a contribution to BBC Radio 2's 'Electrifying - The History of the Electric Guitar.'

Whilst completing work on his next studio album **'Move Me'**, Midge also narrated a tribute to **Alex Harvey** for BBC Radio, appeared on BBC 1'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. Songs that hadn't seen the light of day for many a year like **Astradyne, Reap the Wild Wind and Sleepwalk** and 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 the **Hypertension** continues to go from strength to strength.

2005 was the year that Midge undertook both extensive **acoustic tours of Germany** 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** and **Fran Healey**.

**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 **Murreyfield** in July where he played with **Eddie Izzard** 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 the **Burnsong** project , which aims to encourage up and coming young songwriters in the "black art" of writing hit 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 London's 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.

A second Ultravox 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.

Midge has also branched out into the world of online downloads with his new music portal called "Tunited" - aimed predominately at providing up coming artists a platform of communication and contact with the public.

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

As summer 2011 beckons its business as usual in camp Ure...which means busy busy busy