

1. LOVE DON'T PROVE I'M RIGHT

LP 1966 / 18 / Single / 13cm

2. EVERY TIME I THINK OF YOU

LP 1966 / 18 / Single

3. I BRAG ONE

LP 1966 / 18 / Single

4. WHITE LIGHTNING

LP 1966 / 18 / Single

5. RUN TO MEXICO

LP 1966 / 18 / Single / 13cm

6. HEAD FIRST

LP 1966 / 18 / Single / 13cm

7. YOU GOT IT

LP 1966 / 18 / Single

8. PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME HERE

LP 1966 / 18 / Single

9. CALIFORNIA

LP 1966 / 18 / Single

PRODUCED BY BOB NEWSON FOR GAGGET

PRODUCTIONS INC.

JOHN WAITE - Lead vocals, bass

WALLY STOCKER - Guitars

TONY BRICKS - Drums & percussion

Michael Corby - Backwards

John Sinclair - Synthesizer

Jack Conrad - Bass

Kurtis Kelly - Piano

Rodd Lawrence - Mandolin

Robby Hall - Additional Percussion

Background vocals - Mark McCall, Myra Matthews,

Glenn Lee, Mike Jupp

String and horns arranged and conducted by

Alan MacMillan except 'Every Time I Think Of You'

by Jimmy Haskell.

Recorded at Hobbs Valley Ranch and 'The Cattle',

summer 1975 by the Record Plant mobile unit.

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Recorded by: Ron Nevelson

Assistant Engineer: Mike Clark

Location maintenance: Kelly Nelson

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Corporation

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For Babys on-line resources please visit

www.thebabysarchive.com

www.myspace.com/thebabysofficial

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HEAD GAMES

JOHN WAITE IS ONE LUCKY SOB. HE'S ALWAYS HAD 'THE VOICE'. TWO PARTS BLUES-INFLUENCED ROCK HOWLER, TWO PARTS EMOTION-BRINGING SOULSTER, ONE PART COUNTRY CROONER, WAITE'S VOCALS HAVE ALWAYS GIVEN HIM AN ORIGINAL CALLING CARD, AND THEY'VE NEVER LET HIM DOWN. "THE VOICE SOUNDS BETTER THAN EVER," HE TOLD ME IN AN E-MAIL, IN THE SUMMER OF 2008. "WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT IT?" WHO INDEED, GIVEN THAT WAITE IS NOW 56 YEARS OLD AND THE VETERAN OF A FEW MILLION ROAD MILEST? LIKE I SAID, HE'S A LUCKY SOB.

EVEN THE MOST casual of listeners to his early work with The Badges makes it abundantly clear that Waite doesn't simply assume the guise of vocalist. This is not one of those singers who only fully hits his stride once he's found his trade and grown into the role. No, Waite came to The Badges, almost miraculously fully-formed, in a vocal sense, with a knack for delivering "just so" performances that always belied his tender years. The 'Wood Ford' album—The Badges' third on the back of a well-timed debut and follow-up 'Broken Heart'—was made when Waite was a mere 28 years old. But there's a level of maturity of "know how" and of confidence in his delivery here that makes a mockery of his age at the time of recording. You're listening to a guy who's right at the top of his game. But where exactly did 'The Voice' come from? And how did it end up on those particular grooves just over 30 years ago?

WAITE WAS BORN in the Northern English city of Lancaster, the traditional County Town of Lancashire. But he soon started to stray and nailed his colours to the rock road as a teenager, trying his luck with a number of half-cooked bands such as Graf Spee and Chuck Farm. Like a multitude of aspirants before him, Waite soon gravitated to London, as the "He blinged into view, to perform with a three-piece jazz rock trio named England. Nothing unusual here, of course, except that at this point Waite was actually trying to make his way as a singer, not a singer.

"When I was in Graf Spee I sang a bit of fugatta Phu," he tells me. "But I was innately shy, I didn't have any confidence in myself as a singer. I did end up doing a solo act in Eng[land] where I sang an Emerson James song, but I was still very much focused on 'beat playing'."



England went the way of all flesh, and most heads, but Water wasn't going to be put off the whole rock and roll caper that easily, so he copied sticks and moved to Cleveland in the United States to hook up with a band called The Boys, who were supposedly close to a record deal and in need of a bass player. It sounded perfect, but the relationship only lasted six months before The Boys imploded. Far from being disillusioned by the process, though, Water was actually inspired.

"I'd run out of steam in the US," he recalls. "We didn't get a deal, the gigs dried up and I was extremely blue. But I knew that there was an audience in the States that was potentially mine and I knew that I could definitely make a go of the hard thing."

This is the point where The Babys story began to take shape. Not in the States, though, but rather back in London in 1976, where a friend who worked in a central London guitar shop had alerted John to the fact that there was a guitar player in town who had "some interesting things in the pipeline". Two weeks after getting the tip-off, Water was back in England, preparing to meet a guy called Mike Corby.

"A gig was set up in a pub called The Dr Richard Davies on Pinnerback Hill in North London," he recalls. "We had quite a good conversation and hatched out a loose plan. I was interested because it seemed like this was something that had the potential to last. I'd already experienced bands that were going nowhere and Mike seemed like he meant it." So serious, indeed, was Corby that he already had a manager on board, in the shape of Adrian Miles.

"Adrian was dry and very serious – as serious as I was," remembers Water. "He said he was going to get this 'band' a record deal, which was a nice theory, of course. I was the best bass player I knew, so I went home and told my girlfriend at the time that this potential group seemed pretty serious and then that I was going to see what would develop. I don't get carried away, though. How could I? I was signing on at that point or looking for a job or whatever."

The Babys' line-up eventually began to take on shape and form when Miles brought in drummer Tony Brock. "He was the boss on the street at the time because he was a great player," says Water. "I think Adrian paid him a lot of money to show up and play. And he looked like a million bucks when I didn't have a pot to piss in. I even think he made a show to get his drums up."

THE BAND first went into the studio as a three-piece of Corby, Brock and Water where they cut two numbers, "I Wear Your Ring" and "You'll Get Yours", "just to see what would happen". "They were the first songs I ever wrote," explains Water. The 'band' had no songs, so we did two of mine that I finished quickly. It was the first time I'd ever sung in a studio and I certainly didn't consider myself a singer – I was just helping out as we went along. But that proved to be a milestone in the history of the band. If you hear those two songs, you hear the first real sound of The Babys."

The three guys knew, however, that they needed a killer lead guitarist, but the task proved to be monumental. Nobody seemed to fit and Duggar was starting to get in. Wally Stocker arrived at Miller's base camp in the nick of time...





"We saw an array of shots when we were auditioning until the very last guy showed up," remembers Waite. "And that was Wally! He was wearing a big army beret and arrived carrying his guitar case. We jammed on some Fives and some of the stuff we'd written and it just clicked. We all knew that we had something immediately. But I honestly think that if Wally hadn't shown up we'd have been done before we'd even started; we were that frustrated."

The issue of exiles for the fledgling act still hadn't been fully resolved, though. John reckons there was a full year where various options were considered before Miller eventually decided the guy simply in the cards should be the frontman after all...

"I remember getting a call from Adrian one Friday night and he said 'There's good news and bad news.' I thought 'Oh shit, because I'd had some bad conversations with Miller already. He said, 'The good news is that you're going to be the singer in The Babys. The bad news is that you're going to be the singer in The Babys.' All in all it was very prophetic."

Miller was as good as his word, and eventually secured the band that record deal he'd been promising - with Chrysalis - after coming up with the highly original idea of the line of shooting a video down. The Babys went on their way.

A FIRST album, *The Babys*, was recorded in Toronto with producer Big Ears, and released in 1976, but the band felt it didn't capture any of their energy. "Everyone hated the record: the record company, the press and girlfriends, us. We all felt we'd done the wrong thing. It felt like the end of the band."

explains John. He reckons it could very actually have been the end of the band, too, had it not been for a twelve-day stint in the States playing a couple of shows and making a few TV appearances.

"It was fantastic and everything went incredibly well," remembers Waite. "We got a great review in *The Village Voice* in New York that said 'I'd be real big thing as a singer and we all came back in love with the States and convinced that was where our future lay. Chrysalis paid for us all to move to LA and, feeling totally energized, we got down to making a record that would be as justice...'"

With a more compatible producer in tow, in the far northern San Francisco, *Broken Heart* felt more cohesive and far stronger than the debut and even contained a potential hit in a song called 'Don't It Taste?'. "When the record was done we all held our breath and... it went!" explains Waite. "We traveled everywhere and did all kinds of TV appearances, including *Top Of The Pops*, which was a really big deal in the UK at the time. We struck like fish and generally had great fun. It was a happy, happy time."

THE WORLDWIDE success of *Broken Heart*, and that of 'Don't It Taste?' in particular, propelled The Babys to a new level, but Waite soon found that success came at a price...

"It was like a vacuum," explained the singer. "We'd spent a lot of time on the road where we knew what we were doing it for. But suddenly we'd come off the road and we were stood there wondering what to do next. So much had changed in such a relatively short time that we were all a bit disorientated. We'd just

been the little band rehearsing songs in Foley Street in London. Now we were on Sunset Strip with a hit under our belts, but for the first time our cache of songs was used up. For the first time in three years we were having to put a record together from scratch and the problem was that there was a lot of silence, not much communication. We weren't hanging out as much as we used to. I had an acoustic guitar at my apartment and I started fiddling around on that, just anything to get started, really.

"When the songs started coming for this third album, though, the things I was writing were very similar. It wasn't infectious rock. It was sad and withdrawn and the reason why it was real was because suddenly it seemed like the people in the band were no longer getting on. Mike Corby and I really didn't speak at all by this stage. Moby and Tony were great mates and they'd be going out together, watching bands play. But the same feeling that we'd had before— an wall'd them. Man, it was rough times."

It wasn't that Water's songs were substandard, though "California", "You Got It", a number called "Word Is A Bitch" and a song which would appear much later in his career "Bad Religion Heart" ("I was laughed at for writing that one because it had a country feel") were all really strong tunes, but there wasn't much "hit in the air" celebratory stuff happening.

"... That's true. I was getting really fascinated by Bob Dylan. I was listening to a lot of Bonnie Raitt and Neil Young and was changing as an artist. I felt that I had to move on, that I was ready to go somewhere more serious and you could see that in the stuff that I was writing.

"I was really looking to make an album, because I was definitely more album oriented by the time. It was very much the best of the times, people were starting to get into the idea of listening to entire albums through headphones. You'd under a jacket, put the phones on and listen to a whole piece. I remember that getting that idea from Golden Earring, so I was really into the idea of making complete works of art. You know, stick the needle down on take one and stick with it all the way to when it runs off at the end of side two."

But were the band going to be of the mind as their template a new version of The Babys? The Mission Valley Ranch would provide the answer...

"The place was really off the beaten track," Water remembers. "You'd get off the freeway out of LA and end up going down this unpaved road - it had. I have to remember it was unpaved - and the further you went the more the landscape resembled a scene from a Jack Kerouac road novel." Mission Valley Ranch was the place where The Babys had decided to construct their third album.

As far as June can remember it took about a month at the Mission Valley Ranch to cut backing tracks and laydowns. "Through the grand piano might have been done at the Record Plant in Los Angeles." The financial stack was running, of course, and the costs of the album were proving not to be cheap. "I think it cost around \$200,000, which was a hell of a lot of money. But we were apparently good enough to get that shot of it and it seemed that everyone still believed."





but when the album was finished, Jilly remembers starting to cover round in the idea that this could well be the last time The Babys would record together. "Within the group the atmosphere was still really decent, so people on the outside I must have seemed absolutely impossible that we could keep the whole thing together given the vibe in the camp at the time. But from the inside out up to this point I'd always thought that it could and would work, no matter what. And despite the vibes in the band when we finally handed the record in I don't know any problems."

Two days later, though, there were "squabbles that serious people didn't think the album was up to snuff. I remember thinking, 'Well, that's the best we can do under the circumstances.'" The problem was that it was the band's record company Chrysalis who were signing the checks... and if they weren't happy...

"It was chaotic," says Wade. "The band's management was right opposite the record company in Hollywood, so we all went and met all the big wigs at Chrysalis and they were like 'What is this?' I said 'It's the record. It's the best we can do. They said 'But we expected something else.' It was a shock."

According to Wade there then followed a band meeting of five management offices to discuss the crisis.

"It was a question of 'What are we going to do about this, then?' But the real bottleneck was about to drop when the management said they thought the band had run its course and that I should go solo. This was all incredible to hear, because I was still very much feeling 'we'."

"We could have really split at that point," says Wade, who was coming from the shock of it all. "Because to have your work rejected on that scale was devastating. All sorts of things were going through my mind, even to the point of going back home to Lancaster and calling it a day."

There's an old saying which goes, 'There are three sides to every story: yours, mine and the truth'. The departure of Mike Corby from The Babys is no doubt one saga that confirms it. But the one clear truth that everyone agrees on is that following the rejection of the first version of 'Head First' Mike Corby was sent out of the band. And within two weeks Wade, Stocker and Brock were in a rehearsal room in the Valley with a \$2000 budget and the knowledge that they would "either recover the record or get dropped."

HAVING BEEN through the miseries of the Hidden Valley Ranch and a suitably overblown recording budget, The Babys were suddenly dropped down both financially and in terms of personnel. It was time for some lean rock and roll...

"When we started recording again Tony did his drums in the vocal booth and I was playing live bass alongside him, the complete opposite of having a big studio and spending tons of money. And I'd go as far as to say that we got some of the best records The Babys ever had out of a tiny room - the vibe was really there!"

"'Head First' was incredibly important in the evolution of the album," says Wade today. "It showed us how to make things better and how to integrate ourselves. It

gave us a bag to wear and allowed us to play a bit of four-area rock and roll. That's what we were looking for and the funny thing was that playing together in that way showed us that I had been there all the time. It felt like it was an right from the off, because The Babys was always a two-sided penny of the really hard and the sensitive," but there was still plenty of work to be done to help the band "escape from the jaws of death", as Waite now puts it. Fortunately, the three-piece couldn't have wanted.

"Love Don't Prove I'm Right" was an idea that came to me after Wally came up with a brilliant idea. I was walking on Sunset Strip and what Wally had written was so good rhythmically that I thought, 'Fucking hell, I think we're going to be all right.' Then we got hold of 'Every Time I Think Of You' and we gave it a real feeling to. Then 'I Was One' jumped up and the album suddenly became electric. I think we ended up doing four new songs to album standard for something like a thousand dollars a track."

With 'You', 'Please Don't Leave Me This Way', 'Run To Me' and 'California' all retained from the original recordings the band suddenly found themselves with an album that sounded far more balanced and which better reflected the two different edges of the group's organic sound.

"We definitely felt we had a strong album after the second phase," confirms Waite. "The other album was good, but it was missing something, somehow. Maybe that's understandable. After all, how many times do you do the same thing twice and the second time you do it better?"

"We went back in, reprinted and found there was an urgency about the new record that hadn't been there before, probably because necessity is the mother of invention. We were all completely dependent on the record company to pay the rent, to keep us going at the most basic level. To make sure we wouldn't get dropped we had to turn things around and that meant we were really focused. It was a question of 'what up and looking play'. We got out there, put the feet down and everyone rose to the occasion."

SUBJECTS are quite extraordinarily difficult. **Stevie Nicks**, the pain suffered during the album's creation resulted in their rock genre whose attractiveness hasn't diminished one bit over the course of a staggering 31 years.

"I think back to it now and I still think this was a great piece of work," Waite sums up. "It was concise and to the point. Listening to the tracks now only confirms what I've known all along. We always could do it, we didn't need all the schism. Once we got all that out of the way we understood. This is what we are and you'll better get out of the way because this is what we do best, you know? These are some of the best songs The Babys ever recorded."

HOWARD JENSEN,
Frontier, March 2001

Howard is a rock journalist who worked for Atlantic magazine throughout the 1970s. He currently runs the rock independent rock fan site www.rockinrol.com



everytime I think of you
the Babys



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THE BABYS

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THE BABYS



'HEAD FIRST' TRACK ANALYSIS BY JOHN WAITE

'Love Don't Show Me Right'

"That was Wendy's track. I always thought it sounded like someone else's, which really had a weird effect for me. It's possible we started creating it first, then they jumped in on the drums and then it was, 'Looking back, Wendy did that come from?' Literally, it doesn't mean sense to a lot of people, but I think it's perfect sense to me. I think that feeling is that doesn't give you a chance to break someone's heart."

'Every Time I Think Of You'

"New Republic came Super Stripper's place, Jack Cornell and his Kennedy, and he brought the tape in and played it for us. It had a really exciting melody, from what just a couple of chords changed, a piano and eventually singing off key. I couldn't believe Newcom had the balls to sing it in us, actually. But then I had the idea that we should get some get singers on the track and we could play something really serious feeling it. I was at home that night so I went to try to remember the '84 cover with the sax — and it worked."

'I Will Be'

"I wrote the melody in hand background with my pal Mike Gilly. He cannot hear the same thing and I wrote a groove thing to make it sound like it had a reason to be on a Babys album. I ended up having a really exciting song."

'Whole Lighting'

"Written for an old mate of mine called Billy Withers and it was about the first and his singing it with that feeling you had the first time you went to the dentist's and got the gas. Some people might think it was a weird and wrong track, but for me it fits perfectly in that Beach Patrol, Terry Sundin album sort of thing. I'd a big Steve Marriott fan and the other reason myself what Marriott would do when? I've been thinking about it a lot."

'Star To Member'

"Mike Corby started the song off — I think he did the best of

the songs — and then we all jumped in. The song really featured me of those of Paul by the drums, a song about lighting and billing someone in a bar, and having to get the rest out of them. I was into it the Taylor 'The Gambler' without being at the time too, so I had to 'turn out to be a king in a Minute, actually'."

'Head First'

"The first song we came up with what was called work on the album for the record then. We're actually recorded that the album was going to be called 'Head First' and then when we started thinking about 'You'll Be Head First' because I think that it would work as a title track. There it was and a number of writing the lyrics to it."

'New Year Day'

"The result of an earlier session that I had of my apartment to help me learn to play different chords. The song came out of thinking about you'd be kind of a Christmas structure. I was very aware of the space of it, really came together. It reminded me of 'You're So Good For Me' by Hunter Pe. I had the drumming element of the song and I wrote other people like the drums. I think people thinking for it when I play it."

'Please Don't Leave Me This Way'

"This was some that one of Terry's drum patterns, with all kind of weird or playing against the rhythm to create the feel of the song. It's a Four-type thing, actually not a single, but it's very ironic and it's a great album song."

'Callous'

"Originally the song back on side one of the original album. I wrote 'Callous' in my mother's living room in Lancaster. It's actually played around guitar in it and there's a two-tone type of that recording sitting in a cupboard somewhere. The song is the first person and it's all about showing your strength and showing a person you can't be pulled in by it that way."