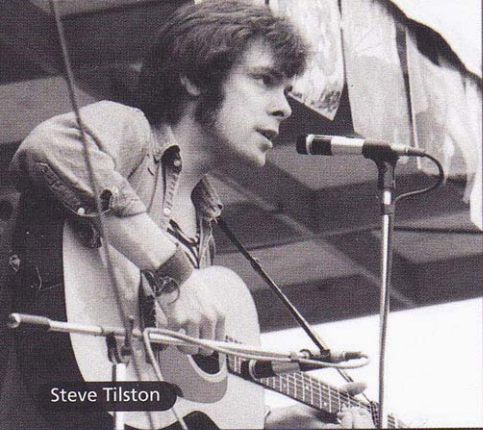


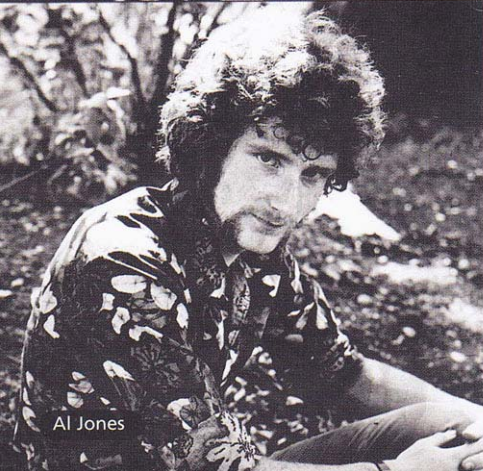


GHOSTS from
the BASEMENT

lost songs, dreams and folkadelia from
the vaults of Village Thing, 1970-74



Steve Tilston



Al Jones



Ian A. Anderson

It was late 1969 and, licking my wounds after losing two rounds with major record labels, I'd made a tactical retreat back to Bristol from whence I'd exported myself in 1968. I was inhabiting the notorious flat above the Bristol Troubadour with the club's then manager, bassist John Turner, and – briefly – fellow songwriter/guitarist Al Jones. The 5 nights a week coffeehouse in what we'd christened Clifton Village was in its heyday as one of the country's leading 'contemporary folk' venues, sharing an axis with London's Les Cousins. Artists from all over Britain were being attracted to live in the city by the local scene's reputation. Over small-hours brainstorming and late breakfasts, John and I came up with the idea to launch a record label and agency, taking control of our own destinies from the music business. The Village Thing was born.

I eventually moved to a nearby basement flat in then run-down Royal York Crescent which I shared with Maggie Holland and we initially ran the new organisation from there, including recording some of the albums in the bedroom. Later, as it grew, we moved into offices in Park Street that we shared with local graphics company and rock promoters Plastic Dog. As well as the artists on our label, Village Thing also acted as agents for other locally-based musician friends like Keith Christmas and Shelagh McDonald.

Subtitled 'the alternative folk label' (decades ahead of the coining of 'alt.folk', let alone 'psych folk', 'acid folk' and all the other bewildering terms that get showered on it these days), Village Thing released two dozen albums and a few singles between 1970 and

1974. With immediate strong national press and radio support, we initially prospered with our unique and hard-to-pin-down mix of established names and newcomers, original singer/songwriter/guitarists, a few visiting Americans, and folk entertainers. It was essentially the contemporary folk scene's complement to the more traditionally-based recordings being simultaneously released by Bill Leader's wonderful Trailer label, and soon both were manufactured and distributed by the folk 'major' of the day, Transatlantic.

Over the years, many of Village Thing's releases have gained cult status amongst collectors of '70s contemporary folk and songwriter/guitarists, often changing hands for high prices and now enjoying a big revival of interest. So – whilst remembering with great affection the folk entertainers like the late Fred Wedlock, the anarchic Pigsty Hill Light Orchestra, much-loved Irish singer Noel Murphy and jug band superstars Tight Like That who shared the catalogue and indeed provided some of the label's best sellers at the time – this compilation concentrates on the larger 'contemporary folk' core of Village Thing's output.

Village Thing was literally a cottage industry: its official headquarters were at Inglestone Common, a tiny hamlet in the wilds of Gloucestershire where business partner Gef Lucena of Saydisc lived and many of the initial recordings were indeed done in Gef's cottage. Later, we were able to set up in a Quaker meeting house at Frenchay on the outskirts of Bristol. Equipment was good but basic – at least one album was recorded with a pair of mics plugged straight into a Revox

Steve's sessions and stayed. Dave, with his totally unique and often mind-boggling guitar playing, self-made instrument, utterly delightful songs and madcap tunings, became a great friend. With his own debut *The Words In Between* he produced one of Village Thing's towering treasures, a criminally under-acknowledged classic of the day. It's available on CD now, expanded with some of the tracks from its follow-up, *Elephantasia* (WEBE 9039), though not *On The Run* which is on CD here for the first time.

VTS 10 was the lost Village Thing album. We had begun to record singer/songwriter **Dave Mudge**, originally from Devon and until then playing in the popular folk duo Mudge & Clutterbuck. In spite of strong support from Al Stewart, they had somehow not quite managed to complete recording deals with several majors and finally chucked in their towel. Our initial sessions in my Royal York Crescent flat had featured guests like Keith Christmas, but petered out. The album never got finished and the tapes vanished down the years, but we never re-allocated the catalogue number. Just as we were finishing this compilation, a four-song Dave Mudge demo recorded by local musician Tim Webb in Trowbridge in 1973 or '74 was unearthed and restored: from it we present one of Dave's most popular songs *Memory Book* as at least a taste of the one that got away. Dave Mudge died in 1998.

The always well-dressed Ian Hunt – 'the handsome Mr Hunt' as he was affectionately known on the scene – was the nimble guitarist of choice for many around Bristol at that time. He'd been strongly featured on my first

two VT albums and we'd appeared as a duo on the very first Glastonbury Festival. When Village Thing's house double bass player John Turner decided to leave the Pigsty Hill Light Orchestra for more serious musical pursuits, the two teamed up as **Hunt & Turner** and produced their one album *Magic Landscape* which was well received. Over recent years it has attracted re-issue, on vinyl even, on labels from South Korea to the USA.

By 1971 I was regularly touring in Belgium and Germany and on those travels I met a couple of Belgian-based American exiles. **Tucker Zimmerman** had come to Rome on a scholarship, and ended up in England in the late '60s where his first album was produced for Regal Zonophone by Tony Visconti. After moving to Belgium, he'd built a strong following in Germany, where they called him a 'song poet'. His second, home-recorded album had been released on a small German label and we were happy to pick it up for UK release, the only Village Thing album we didn't originate.

The other American was already a legend. Zen banjoist **Derroll Adams** had come over with Ramblin' Jack Elliott in the '50s and never gone back. Resident in the UK, he'd become a major guru for the young Donovan and people like Ronnie Lane of the Small Faces. Eventually alcohol had got the worse of him – as witnessed in the Dylan *Don't Look Back* film's hotel room fracas – and he'd had to get out of England, to France and then Belgium where he was miraculously taken care of and nursed back to drink-free health by a beautiful young woman, Danny. They soon married and we brought them over to

Village Thing. Along with Wizz Jones and others, he recorded his wonderful *Feelin' Fine* which saw his triumphant return to stages including the 1972 Cambridge Folk Festival. Sadly, Derroll died in 2000 at the age of 74.

By 1973 my great friend, early musical partner and eccentric songwriter/ guitarist genius **Al Jones** had endured a thoroughly disillusioning experience recording a poorly-produced album released on EMI Parlophone and then another uncompleted one for Bill Leader's Trailer label. He'd retired semi-hurt to Cornwall but I prised him back to record *Jonesville*, one of my other great Village thing pleasures and treasures. Sessions in the Quaker hall involved a drummer encased in a box made of mattresses. Al really was an original, both in his oddball lyrics and crafty chord structures. The full *Jonesville* album augmented with five previously unheard 1974 demo tracks (from where comes *The Road To Marazion* included here) should be on CD before long (WEBE 9047). Tragically, Al Jones passed away in the summer of 2008.

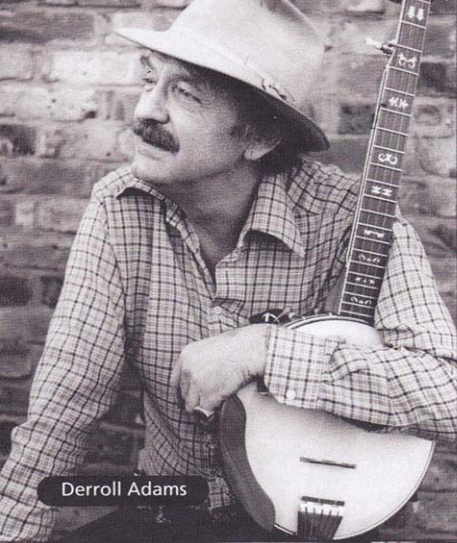
Probably the most sought-after Village Thing album of all by collectors came from superb New Zealand singer/ guitarist **Chris Thompson**. He'd spent time in Ireland where he'd recorded some initial tracks; rumour and radio tapes from Belgium (again) had reached us and I eventually bumped into him in a London club where he was visiting with Wizz Jones. We got him to Frenchay with tabla player Keshav Sathe and among the tracks we recorded to complete his album was the extraordinary flight of *Her Hair Was Long*. Frustratingly, distributors Transatlantic 'lost' most of his album pressing in an

insurance scam and only 101 copies were sold. It was the writing on the wall for Village Thing. A small label CD re-issue in the States a few years back fared little better: original vinyl copies have sold for several hundred pounds on eBay. Chris returned to NZ in 1974 and is still performing.

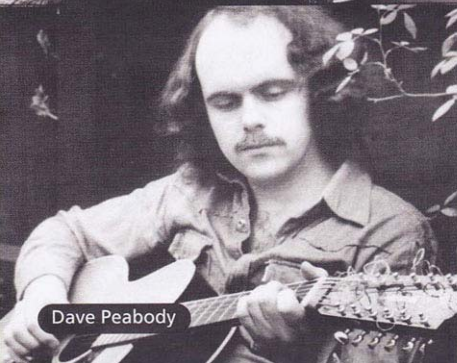
Bouncing good-time bluesman **Dave Peabody** came to Village Thing as part of jug band Tight Like That, and we later proposed the first of his many solo (and other) albums that he would make down the years as one of the UK's now-veteran acoustic blues players – he's also a noted music photographer of course. *Peabody Hotel* was a clever title, that establishment in Memphis being the field recording location of many classic early blues and country 78s.

Towards the tail end of the Village Thing era we ran into another couple of rambling Americans – in fact, unless memory is playing tricks on me it was at a Derroll Adams come-back gig in London's Carnaby Street. **Lackey & Sweeney** were from Tucson, Arizona and doing that classic '70s thing of seeing Europe while living in a Volkswagen Microbus full of instruments. They quickly became pals of myself, Maggie Holland and Al Jones and club favourites wherever they went. Their *Junk Store Songs For Sale* was one of the last in the Village Thing catalogue before the label closed in 1974 and, as with Chris Thompson's, it never got the circulation it deserved. Bill Lackey is back playing in a band in Tucson after a long time in California, and Cathy Sweeney is currently whereabouts unknown, out there somewhere on the West Coast.

Ian Anderson, April 2010.



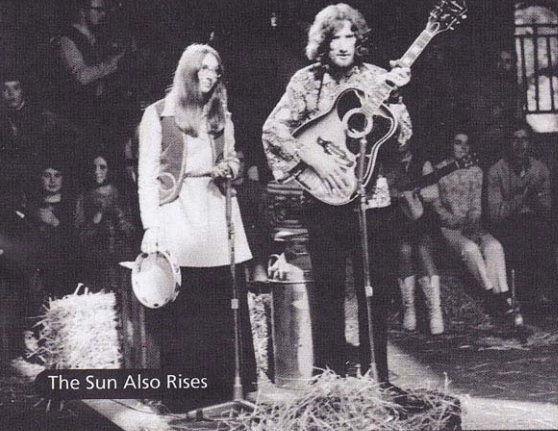
Derroll Adams



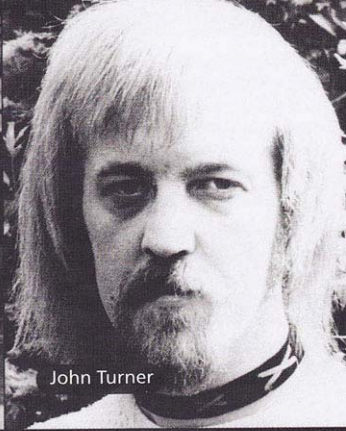
Dave Peabody



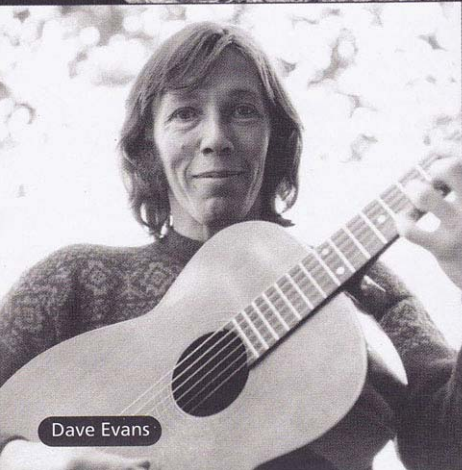
Ian Hunt



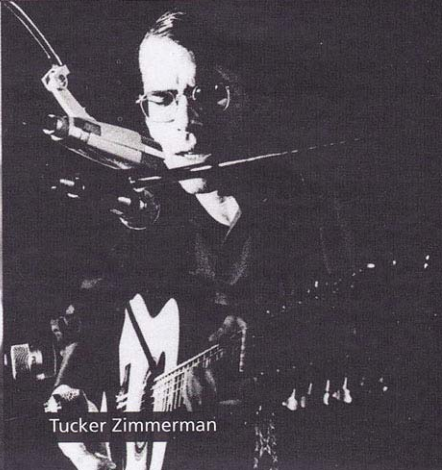
The Sun Also Rises



John Turner



Dave Evans



Tucker Zimmerman

1. Wizz Jones

See How The Time Is Flying (Alan Tunbridge) from *The Legendary Me* (VTS4). Wizz Jones (guitar, voice), Peter Berryman (guitar). Recorded 1970 at Village Thing, Inglestone Common, Glos. Produced by John Turner, engineered by Gef Lucena.

2. Derroll Adams

The Sky (Derroll Adams) from *Feelin' Fine* (VTS17). Derroll Adams (banjo, voice), Wizz Jones (guitar). Recorded August 1972 at Village Thing, Frenchay. Produced and engineered by Ian Anderson.

3. Al Jones

Get Out Of My Car (Al Jones) from *Jonesville* (VTS 19). Al Jones (guitars, voice), Tony Fennell (drums), Dave Gillis (organ, electric piano), Graham Smith (harmonica). Recorded March 1973 at Village Thing, Frenchay. Produced and engineered by Ian Anderson.

4. Dave Evans

Grey Lady Morning (Dave Evans) from *The Words In Between* (VTS6). Dave Evans (guitar, voice). Recorded July 1971 by Ian Anderson, at home in Royal York Crescent, Clifton Village, Bristol.

5. The Sun Also Rises

Tales Of Jasmine And Suicide (Richard Sylvester/ Graham Hemingway) from *The Sun Also Rises* (VTS2). Graham Hemingway (guitar, voice), Anne Hemingway (percussion, voice), John Turner (double bass). Recorded 1970 at Village Thing, Inglestone Common, Glos. Produced by Sun Also Rises and Ian Anderson, engineered by Gef Lucena.

6. Ian A. Anderson

Time Is Ripe (Ian A. Anderson) from *A Vulture Is Not A Bird You Can Trust* (VTS9). Ian A. Anderson (guitar, voice), Ian Hunt (guitar). Recorded September 1971 at Rockfield, Monmouth. Produced by Ian Anderson, engineered by Kingsley Ward & Ralph Down.

7. Chris Thompson

Her Hair Was Long (Chris Thompson) from *Chris Thompson* (VTS 21). Chris Thompson (guitar, voice), Keshav Sathe (tablas). Recorded 1973 at Village Thing, Frenchay. Produced & engineered by Ian Anderson.

8. Steve Tilston

I Really Wanted You (Steve Tilston) from *An Acoustic Confusion* (VTS5). Steve Tilston (guitar, voice), Dave Evans (guitar, voice), John Turner (double bass), Keith Warmington (harmonica). Recorded Feb/Mar 1971 at Village Thing, Inglestone Common, Glos. Produced by Ian Anderson and Gef Lucena.

9. Lackey & Sweeney

Good To Cry (Kathleen Sweeney) from *Junk Store Songs For Sale* (VTS 23). Billy Lackey (guitars, voice), Kathleen Sweeney (autoharp, voice), John Turner (double bass). Recorded July 1973 at Village Thing, Frenchay. Produced by Ian Anderson and Maggie Holland.

10. Tucker Zimmerman

Another Normal Day (Tucker Zimmerman) from *Tucker Zimmerman* (VTS 13). Tucker Zimmerman (12-string guitar, organ, voice), Marie Claire Lambert (voice). Recorded 1971 at home in Belgium. Produced and engineered by Tucker Zimmerman.

11. **Hunt & Turner**

We Say We're Sorry (Hunt & Turner) from *Magic Landscape* (VTS 11). Ian Hunt (guitar, voice), John Turner (guitar, voice), Rodney Matthews (percussion). Recorded May/June 1972 at Village Thing, Frenchay. Produced by Hunt & Turner. Engineered by Gef Lucena & David Wilkins.

12. **Dave Mudge**

Memory Book (Dave Mudge). Previously unreleased demo. Dave Mudge (guitar, voice), Tim Webb (harmonica). Recorded at home by Tim Webb, Trowbridge, 1973/74.

13. **Dave Peabody**

Mistaken Identity (Dave Peabody) from *Peabody Hotel* (VTS 22). Dave Peabody (guitar, harmonica, voice), Dave Griffiths (violin, backing voice), Hugh McNulty (bass), Bill Lackey & Kathy Sweeney (backing voices). Recorded June 1973 at Village Thing, Frenchay. Produced and engineered by Ian Anderson.

14. **Derroll Adams**

Love Song (Derroll Adams) from *Feelin' Fine* (VTS17). Derroll Adams (banjo, voice). Recorded August 1972 at Village Thing, Frenchay. Produced and engineered by Ian Anderson.

15. **Wizz Jones**

When I Leave Berlin (Wizz Jones) from *When I Leave Berlin* (VTS 24). Wizz Jones (guitar, voice) with Lazy Farmer: John Bidwell (flute), Sandy Jones (banjo), Jake Walton (dulcimer), Don Coging (banjo). Recorded October 1973 at Village Thing, Frenchay. Produced and engineered by Ian Anderson.

16. **Chris Thompson**

London Blues (Chris Thompson) from *Chris Thompson* (VTS 21). Chris Thompson (guitar, voice), Brian Dunning (flute). Recorded in Dublin 1973 by John Weir.

17. **Steve Tilston**

She Sits Wondering Why (Steve Tilston). Previously unreleased, from the *An Acoustic Confusion* album sessions. Mastered from the only existing copy of an original vinyl test pressing. Steve Tilston (guitar, voice). Recorded Feb/Mar 1971 at Village Thing, Inglestone Common, Glos. Produced by Ian Anderson and Gef Lucena.

18. **Ian A. Anderson**

Marie Celeste On Down (Ian A. Anderson). Previously unreleased Hot Vultures demo. Ian Anderson (guitar, voice), Maggie Holland (bass guitar, reverser). Recorded 1973/4, location unknown.

19. **Al Jones**

The Road To Marazion (Al Jones). Previously unreleased cassette demo. Al Jones (guitar, voice). Recorded 1974 by Ian Anderson, at home in Farnham, Surrey.

20. **Dave Evans**

On The Run (Dave Evans) from *Elephantasia* (VTS 14). Dave Evans (guitar, voice), Rodney Matthews (percussion), John Merrett (bass guitar), Keith Warmington (harmonica). Recorded June 1972 at Rockfield, Monmouth. Produced by Dave Evans and Ian Anderson, engineered by Ralph Down.

See back cover for compilation credits.

Ghosts From The Basement was compiled and produced by **Ian Anderson**, 2010.

Digitally remastered April 2010 by **Duncan Cowell** at Sound Mastering, from original master tapes where available. Exceptions are tracks 12, 18 and 19 from previously unreleased demo tapes, 9 from the vinyl album as the masters are lost, and 17 from a rare unreleased test pressing as the tape has vanished: in these cases best effort has been made to produce a decent sound from the only available sources.

Designed by **Jali Roll Martian**.

Artist photos by **Joe Gedrych** (Ian A Anderson, Dave Mudge, Steve Tilston), **Dave Mason** (Lackey & Sweeney, Chris Thompson), **Dave Peabody** (Derroll Adams, Dave Evans) and photographers unknown.

Original LP sleeves by Plastic Dog (**Rodney Matthews** and **Terry Brace**), except for Sun Also Rises (**Andy Leggett**), Steve Tilston (**Pete Jackson & Sam**), Tucker Zimmerman (**Philippe Chappell**) and Dave Peabody (**Moore Morris**).



Thanks to all the above, everybody who played on a Village Thing record, Gef Lucena, Maggie Holland, Linda Ashworth-Jones, Mark Jones, Charles Reynolds and Tim Webb.

Sun Also Rises, Steve Tilston and Hunt & Turner's LPs are available on CD on Saydisc in the UK and Lion Productions in the USA. The two Wizz Jones

albums are out on Sunbeam Records. Dave Evans and Ian A.

Anderson's choice Village Thing recordings can already be found on Weekend Beatnik, and those by Al Jones will be re-issued in the near future.