



Lady Sunrise

Shortly after finishing “See The Morning”, while waiting for the Derooy pressings to arrive in the post, Mick Stevens started work on “Lady Sunrise”. Most of this album was recorded in his tiny student room in Rutland Hall at Nottingham University, where at 19, he was studying for a degree in Russian and Slavonic studies. A couple of the tracks were recorded at his parent’s home in Essex. At the time Mick regularly performed live around the Nottingham area, playing either solo folk sets where he occasionally played support for musicians such as Bert Jansch and Davey Graham, or rock/blues material in 3 and 4 -piece electric bands.

While critics may scoff at a “concept album”, the songs, written during a particularly turbulent emotional period, fit well within this theme. The main reasons why Mick never released it as an album are probably because he both anticipated this kind of critical rebuke and because the material was intensely personal - yet I think some of these songs are among his best. As usual, the lyrics were written with his own blood – both metaphorically and in reality. Sadly, the tape just remained on a shelf gathering dust. There was little encouragement from the fact that in the early 70s the British music industry was almost totally under the control of producers Micky Most and Jonathan King, who probably prevented a lot of musicians such as Mick being given a chance with a major label. King’s only comment on “See The Morning” was that it was “dated”.

As on the first album, these songs were recorded on a Tandberg 3000x reel-to-reel deck using mono sound-on-sound for the overdubs. A Shure Unidyne III 545 microphone and home-made mixer, together with Mick’s novel recording techniques, ensured a fairly decent sound quality for the time - the bass on the title track sounded magnificent on the original master. The keyboard part for this was played on a cheap Woolworths toy organ that only cost about 50p. Money was tight and decent keyboards were expensive, but Mick regretted using it later because it was so far out of tune. He winced every time he played it back but unfortunately never re-recorded the song – a pity because it has one of his most haunting melodies, partially borrowed from a medieval hymn. The problem with sound-on-sound was that, unlike modern multi-tracking, you didn’t get a chance to keep anything but the last-but-one take. The bass guitar, borrowed for only a few days from a friend, adds a richer texture to some other songs. I have fond memories of being asked to play it on “I’m Going Home” in the tiny bedroom while Mick played lead



on his Shaftesbury Les Paul copy, occasionally stooping down to the mixer on the bedroom floor. Unfortunately, the original master tape was lost - the only remaining copy is an ancient, bog-standard Audio Magnetics C90 from which this album has been assembled.

Andrew Stevens February 2007

Thanks to Mick's Mum and Dad for their constant support and encouragement
Photos: Andrew Stevens

