

## 5. Ann Grootjans, August 14, 2014

Not sure if anyone is actually even remotely interested, but a promise is a promise, so here's what I remember of Wing & A Prayer and Sydney ....

When I heard that the British songwriting academy wanted the then recently recorded "Alan Freeman Days" for its digital album project in 2008, I left Robin a message that I couldn't image that the other artists involved would give away a brand new unreleased song and that instead of seeing a potential hit single go to waste, he should maybe consider giving them a new (acoustic) version of an older song, and why not "Sing Slowly Sisters" which had a great melody and would be something special too for Robin's fans to have. Imagine my surprise when some time later I found a CD in my mailbox with a track called "Wing & A Prayer" that used one of the melody lines of "Sing Slowly Sisters". Indeed, instead of just reprising "Sing Slowly Sister", Robin had written and recorded a variation on one of that song's melodic refrains, and named it "Wing & A Prayer", which he described as a love song and an anti-war song. Eventually, Basca did convince Robin to give them "Alan Freeman Days", so it was decided that "Wing & A Prayer" would be made available to Robin's fans through his website store later that year. Personally I've always been very fond of "Wing & A Prayer" and had mentioned a couple of times to Robin that if he'd add/replace tracks on Catherine's Drive maybe a PJV produced version of that song could find a place on the album too. I always imagined "Wing & A Prayer" in a production style similar to "Embrace", and although Robin was open to the idea fate decided otherwise. When Robin called Pete early in 2012 to go into the studio to work on new tracks, Pete was abroad, thus that never happened.

I don't think that "Sydney" was the last song/music ever that Robin composed as he had started writing for his second classical album In 2012 which he wanted to call "Flowers of August", but it's probably right to say that it was the last song he "recorded". Recorded in this case meant that he put the track together using the Garageband application which had just been installed on his iPad. I remember getting an email from Robin around four or five in the morning (I was in bed) on what I think was the 25th or 26th of August 2011, that included a music file called "prayer" and a message from Robin that the attached song was called "Sydney", that he had just finished it, and, that he wanted me to put it on his website for his fans. Well, what much else can I say than that I listened to the recording and cried. I knew how sick Robin was, and the melancholy of the song was overwhelming. I also felt it really meant a lot to him. I felt a strange mixture of happiness (with the new song) and sadness (for Robin). I do remember that we exchanged a couple of text messages about it and that later that day Robin emailed me a slightly better mix of the recording. He also mentioned quite a few times in later conversations that he wanted to make a proper recording of "Sydney" together with Barry and include it on a Bee Gees album. That never happened either. Personally, and on a lighter note, I also associate "Sydney" with walking from The Prebendal's gatehouse to the main house and upon opening the entrance door being greeted by the smell of burnt toast and thinking "ah, Robin is up", ... that was on August 16, 2011 and later that morning we talked about getting him GarageBand on his iPad, hence the association with "Sydney", ... but that convo is probably better told another time at another occasion ... To conclude, would it be inappropriate to make an appeal to Barry right here and now to at the least include "Sydney" in his live set next time he plays in Australia?

There are some more tracks from the sessions with Pete I didn't detail, but if I can be frank, "Mother of Love" aside, I personally would consider those "b-sides" and "bonus tracks". Of course other people may have other opinions ...

Quite a few times over the past two years I saw people write about their concerns that 50 St Catherine's Drive may never be released. My personal concern has actually never been that it wouldn't come out, I've always been concerned about what they'd release and how, and how it would get promoted. That, is what really, really worries me.

A.G.