ROGER TAYLOR

Although best known for his powerhouse role in Queen, Roger Taylor is anything but a drummer confined to his kit. With rock n’roll in his veins all through his schooldays, he has always been a highly active, vocal member of Queen. He famously wrote Queen’s landmark hits "Radio Ga Ga" and "A Kind Of Magic", and was also the first to make a solo album, 1981’s Fun In Space. To date he has released four solo albums, which, aside from his work with Queen, further highlighted Taylor as a musician and writer with a strong sense of identity, a wide musical perspective, and - not least of all - a man not without a sense of irony. Just consider, for instance, the lyrics to “I’m In Love With My Car”, his B side to “Bohemian Rhapsody”, and a firm audience favourite in the Queen live set.

Taylor’s active approach has not been confined to his music: when media mogul Rupert Murdoch made attempts to buy Manchester United football club, Taylor funded the club supporters in their attempts to block the sale, and historically helped them succeed.

His history in one of rock’s most famous bands begins in the late 60’s, the time when he first teamed up with Brian May, and later John Deacon and Freddie Mercury, to form Queen. But before that…

Roger Taylor was born in Kings Lynn, Norfolk, on July 26th 1949, Roger became fascinated with music in the early 50s, when his family moved to Cornwall. He learned his first instrument, the ukulele, at a tender age, and enjoyed a brief taste of things to come in a pre-teen skiffle band whose collective talent survived just two public performances, both apparently excruciating!

His music took on a different direction in 1960, when he became a rather reluctant member of the Truro Cathedral Choir -- a prerequisite of his scholarship. He taught himself the guitar around this time, but by the following year had moved over to drums.
By 1966 Roger had not only progressed to drumming in Cornwall's most popular band, the Reaction, but had also become their lead singer, with his drumkit placed -- where else? -- in the principal position, at the front of the stage. That year, the Reaction won a hotly-contested local talent contest and, according to newspaper reports, were duly "mobbed by young girls".

While maintaining his keen interest in music, Roger decided to study dentistry, and in 1967 moved to London to enrol at the London Hospital Medical College. He later studied biology, obtaining a BSc in the subject.

In 1968 Roger formed another group, Smile, with Middlesex guitar ace Brian May and Tim Staffell. Smile played sporadically over the next few years and even issued a single in the United States. By 1971, Roger had long abandoned any desire to become a dentist or a biologist. By now Smile had ended, and Roger, with Brian May and Freddie Mercury, formed Queen.

The Queen legend often refers to how Taylor and Mercury were particularly close, and spent many hours on the town together seeing bands who at that time were their heroes: The Jimi Hendrix Experience, Led Zeppelin, David Bowie, The Who, all of whom influenced them and helped shape the musical destiny of Queen.

Roger began writing songs for Queen from day one, and each of the band's fifteen studio albums included at least one of his compositions. History notes that all four members of Queen wrote No.1 singles: Taylor dutifully provided his with "Radio Ga Ga" and "A Kind Of Magic", amongst the biggest.

1977 was the landmark year in which Queen released "We Are The Champions" and "We Will Rock You". Roger bought a Ferrari, and became the first member of Queen to launch a solo career with the release of the single "I Wanna Testify".

His solo album "Fun In Space" followed in 1981, and was succeeded by 1984's rock-based "Strange Frontier". Both LPs reached the Top 30. In 1987 Roger formed his own band The Cross, in which after more than 20 years he finally resumed the role of lead singer. The Cross released three distinctive albums and toured extensively in the UK and Europe.

After the tragic death of Freddie Mercury, Roger returned to his solo career with 1994's "Happiness?", an album on which he explored the theme of
"dealing with life and looking for happiness". The success of the album prompted further tours of the UK and Italy. Then came perhaps his most potent album, “Electric Fire”, which clearly showed Taylor as an acute observational songwriter. Rich in contemporary reflections on life, the album was full of attention-grabbing songs tackling thought-provoking and sometimes challenging issues — national obsolescence, domestic violence, and poverty, among them. One track, “People On Streets”, was inspired by visits Roger made to India and the inequalities he witnessed in the fortunes of that country’s vast population. Never shy to express himself, several super-rich and powerful world figures get name checked in the song.

That the Queen musical **WE WILL ROCK YOU** came into being could be seen as something of a surprise taking into account Roger’s openly expressed view that “musicals are completely foreign to me. It’s a genre I don’t particularly like.” But after working closely with Brian and writer Ben Elton on shaping the musical, Taylor found himself deeply entrenched in developing the show, breaking the rules of musical theatre and taking on the role – along with Brian - as musical supervisor, not only for the first production in London, but for each of the subsequent productions throughout the world. To date, local productions of the show have reached 8 further countries.

At the same time as setting up **WE WILL ROCK YOU**, Roger and Brian played a central part in the formation of the Nelson Mandela 46664 charity, performing at the first two South Africa concerts, and providing several new songs to the 46664 album which saw them collaborate with the likes of Bono, Anastacia, Dave Stewart and Beyoncé. Roger penned two new songs for the project, “Say It’s Not True”, a song about finding out you’re HIV positive, and “Invincible Hope”, based on the writings of Nelson Mandela and actually featuring the voice of Mandela reading phases from his autobiography.

In 2005, after an accidental encounter with former Free singer Paul Rodgers, Roger and Brian felt the time was right to put Queen back on the road. Billed as Queen + Paul Rodgers, Roger and Brian tested the water with a handpicked set of European dates. Such was the momentum built up over the six week European tour, a US tour was booked to follow, which saw Roger and Brian return to the USA to play for the first time in more than 20 years. The impact of the return to the road was summed up in a review of its closing night in Vancouver: “the night that arena rock officially made its comeback”.

Of being back at the kit – although the new live set sees him on vocals for a fair part of their set – Roger comments: “it’s given us a sense of rejuvenation. I’m even growing my hair long again. But I do have to remind myself of my age – and I think ‘Oh come on, behave yourself!’”

Given past evidence, did someone say, ‘unlikely’?

PS. Hair now short! – bad decision!