

## **By Kieran Egan, 31-8-2018**

I have written some of my memories with John when we were younger and jamming galore: To my dear friend Jonny Baker with whom I jammed many times on Pentangle, Bert Jansch, Yes, Wishbone Ash, and John McLaughlin. The young man who astounded us all by managing to play Led Zeppelin's Bron-Y-Aur Stomp in Spanish tuning instead of open tuning and in the inhospitable four sharps of the Key of E with the consequential impossible fingering.

Johnny's warm heart and irresistible sense of humour inspired a cohesive and caring band atmosphere in our group Jewell Parc. It was exhilarating to play the guitar harmonies of Wishbone Ash with John and watch a cloud rise all around him which all but enveloped him. After much mirth at this 'supernatural' vision Kevin and I realised Johnny had been dancing on a very dusty carpet in the old venue we were playing at in Enfield. Not so supernatural after all but hilarious to us all. At this same gig we arrived and stepped up to the mics ready to play only to find Johnny had left his guitar in Parramatta where we shared a house. Boris immediately drove Jonny to Parramatta and back and the gig went down a treat.

Johnny and I went on a most dangerous road trip to Wagga in a storm made all the more dangerous by a green Toyota he owned which needed the brakes pumped well in advance of any required stopping. Needless to say late into the night Johnny and I were tired and at very slow speed ran into the rear of a taxi. There was mysteriously no damage to either vehicle and the taxi driver waved us on. By Yass we had to do the thirsty oil check on the car as it needed regular oil top up due to its oil guzzling. In the midst of a ferocious storm the car began to slide down the Hume highway shoulder towards a gully. In terror, we watched as the car defiantly bolted backwards away from us down towards the dark ravenous gully. Miraculously, we managed to dive back into this errant vehicle, stop it and continue with it on its thirsty way. We arrived in Wagga by some divine guidance and had a our usual ball of a time visiting friends and playing acoustic. The car of course became thirsty for oil again and somehow in feeding it oil the the oil cap was lost. The only way to find it was to retrace our route; one person scrutinising left, one scrutinising the right and one scrutinising straight ahead. Once again, miraculously we found it. The atmosphere travelling in this precarious vehicle ranged from deep philosophical discussions (which Johnny absolutely adored) to bursts of laughter at the tales we shared. Somehow we arrived safely back in Sydney after this perilous and hilarious mix.

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Johnny often called in to see my mother on his way back up to Warrimoo. They had great laughs eating pineapple and biscuits and drinking tea. Mum was very fond of Johnny and I was comforted to know she had company visiting after dad died. Johnny would take the rest of the uneaten pineapple back to his home afterwards.

John's masterpiece albums are deeply inspiring. He is an angel of inspiration in the world of music. Your lyrics in the latest album are deeply spiritual and moving Johnny. You have left a deep vein of heightened awareness and introspection in my heart and soul. Our powerful explorer of the deeper things that make us human Johnny.

Thank you for these great gifts from your loving artful soul full of wonder for this beautiful world. Other glorious memories with Johnny include us the band Jewell Parc all going to see The Song Remains The Same and the Yes premier movies in Sydney with creaking necks in the front row agog at Steve Howe and Jimmy Page's dexterous rhythmic antics on rosewood fingerboards. Exclamations of joy at these masterful phrases abounded. I thank Larry Jelly for introducing me to this great musician in the early 70s. A long drive from Sydney and a freezing rehearsal in Barbara's farm in Goulburn are etched firmly in my mind. Johnny's Les Paul studio and his Fender acoustic driven intensely by his tasteful phrases.