

Alvin Stardust speaks to The Edinburgh Reporter



Three of the biggest acts from the seventies will appear together on stage in Edinburgh on Saturday night with all proceeds going to the National Autistic Society.

Alvin Stardust, Slade and the Rubettes will team up at the Assembly Hall for a once in a lifetime concert as part of the 'Rewind to the Seventies' charity project, and with tickets going fast, music fans are advised to move quickly or risk disappointment.

The three acts have eight number ones and dozens of top ten hits between them, and age has certainly not dampened their enthusiasm, so the audience is in for a treat.

Today, the man once dubbed the 'Godfather of Rock and Roll' by none other than Rolling Stone Ronnie Wood kindly took a break from rehearsals and spoke exclusively to the Edinburgh Reporter about what the fans can expect on Saturday night, his 50plus year career in the business and his plans for the future.

He said: "I fly up on Saturday morning and am really looking forward to the show. I'm not just saying this but Slade and The Rubettes are two of the best live bands still performing from that era. I'll be doing all of my old hits as well as some 50s rock and roll and some rock anthems such as Queen, but when I'm not on stage I'll be watching from the wings as Slade will be Slade and the Rubettes will be the Rubettes so it should be a cracking show for all ages."

Alvin found fame as Shane Fenton in the early sixties appearing alongside bands such as The Beatles, Joe Brown and

the Bruvvers, Del Shannon and Freddie and the Dreamers before he resurrected his career as Alvin Stardust in 1973 with the unforgettable 'My Coo Ca Choo' which entered the charts in November that year and remained there for an incredible 21 weeks reaching number two, only to be kept off the top spot by Slade's 'Merry Xmas Everybody'.

His follow up single Jealous Guy went one better, reaching the top spot in February 1974 replacing Suzi Quatro's Devil Gate Drive only to be overtaken by Paper Lace's 'Billy Don't be a Hero.'

'Red Dress' then peaked at number seven two months later and 'You You You' reached number six in August then 'Tell me Why' and 'Good Love Can Never Die' both made the top 20.

Such was his popularity at the time, Alvin was chosen to be part of the Green Cross Code road safety campaign Children's Heroes with his famous tagline of "You must be out of your tiny minds" directing children to look both ways before they cross the road.

Since then he has participated in A Song for Europe, starred in the UK tour of Godspell, played Uriah Heep in David Copperfield – The Musical and Sir Billy Butlin in The Butlin Story at the London Palladium. In 2005 he starred as the Child Catcher in Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, also at the London Palladium, and has numerous television appearances to his credit whilst continuing to tour as a performer and singer.

Alvin is no stranger to Scotland, and loves the intimate contact with audiences, particularly at smaller venues as he explained: "Unfortunately I won't get a chance to do any tourist stuff this time, but I know Edinburgh well and I'm in Scotland two or three times a year. I played the Festival two years ago, and also played the Brunton Halls in Musselburgh which was a fantastic night. I actually prefer the smaller venues these days, particularly in towns that don't usually

get the chance to see rock bands. At the end of the show, I like to speak to the audiences and get photographs with them and it feels more like playing for friends rather than a paying audience.

"I still get people coming up to me and mentioning Shane Fenton and 'Moody Guy' and '5ft2' and I know that they were around in the sixties, then others mention 'My Coo Ca Choo' and 'Jealous Mind' and I know they were from the early seventies, then you get some who want to talk about 'Pretend' and 'I feel like Buddy Holly' so I know they are a bit younger."

Alvin regularly does charity work, and the proceeds from this show will go to the National Autistic Society. He continued: "I've done a few shows for various charities, and this time the proceeds will go to autism. This is a cause close to my heart as I know a few people who have children who are autistic, and they are lovely kids but they can find it really hard at school. I feel strongly that the government should be doing more."

In a career that has lasted well over 50 years, you might imagine that Alvin would look back to the early days with a sense of longing, but nothing could be further from the truth. "I would say that this is the most enjoyable period of my life. Working keeps me fit, but I am still active. When I turned 70, I went to Mauritius with my wife and daughter where we swam with dolphins and tried scuba diving. We also took a helicopter ride inside a volcano. I've been surfing in Cornwall, and this year is our 21st wedding anniversary. Every seven years we renew our vows and this year we went to New York and took a horse and cart ride through Central Park and took in a few Broadway shows."

With so many hits to his name, which is his favourite? After some thought, Alvin replied: "I think 'I feel like Buddy Holly' is my favourite song as the lyrics contain titles from

45s, and is still regularly on playlists in France and Germany, but I also love 'Pretend' and of course 'My Coo Ca Choo' which reached number one in nine countries but only number two in the UK although it actually outsold the number one as it was in the charts longer, selling one and a quarter million in the UK."

At 71, Alvin could be forgiven for taking it easy, but thankfully for his army of fans he has no plans to slow down as his diary proves: "I have a show coming up in Belgium alongside Slade, Sweet, The Rubettes, David Essex and the Bay City Rollers and the audience will be around 25, 000, and there is a fair chance that we will all end up on stage together. Apart from touring, Radio 2 has just commissioned a show and I have just finished writing a book about my guitar, which has been signed by legends such as Buddy Holly and the Crickets, Bill Haley and the Comets, Chick Berry, Billy Fury, Marty Wilde, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones."

For anyone too young to have seen Alvin in action, get along to the Assembly Hall on Saturday night. Having seen him perform live recently, you won't be disappointed.

Tomorrow, The Edinburgh Reporter speaks to Alan Williams, lead singer of the Rubettes then on Friday, Dave Hill and Don Powell of Slade;traffic arrangements permitting.