

## COR BABY THAT'S A PH.D.

Songs of Anger and Redemption are delighted to welcome OTWAY back to Katie Fitzgerald's in Stourbridge, West Midlands on Saturday 9th March 2024.

Just months after performing his 5,000th gig to an adoring Shepherd's Bush Empire crowd, unique singer songwriter John Otway has been awarded an Honorary PhD in Music by Oxford Brookes University.

Otway, best known to many for his first hit 'Cor Baby That's Really Free' said 'I'm really thrilled to be awarded this totally unexpected honour, especially as I failed all my A levels as I decided to concentrate on preparing for my burgeoning career as a rock star. To get this from Oxford Brookes 50 years later shows I did the right thing. And I did have some further education in Oxford in the 1970s - my learning was at a pub in St Clements, The Oranges and Lemons performing my embryonic act there over 50 times in 12 months. In that short time I went from playing to 20 people in the pub to having a hit record. I haven't done a sensible days work since! Now this doctorate puts me on the same level as other celebrity Doctors such as Brian Cox, Angela Merkel, Brian May, Kermit the Frog and Geri Halliwell.'

In announcing the honour Gavin Barber, Deputy Director, Academic and Student Administration at Oxford Brookes, said: 'Oxford Brookes is proud to be awarding an Honorary Degree to John in recognition of his international musical and cultural contribution over five decades. As a champion of live music and an active supporter of grass-roots venues, and of course a legendary performer, John's commitment, generosity, talent, and dedication embody the values and attributes that we seek to encourage and develop in all of our students'.

When his first autobiography came out the publishers decided to market Otway as 'Rock n' Roll's Greatest Failure' for his innate ability to make bizarre career moves, often plucking defeat from the very jaws of success.

The title has stuck yet he has actually enjoyed a 50-year career in the music industry with successes that are the envy of many wannabes. Since playing his first gig in his hometown of Aylesbury in 1972 he has built a sizeable cult following of amazingly loyal and adoring fans through his ceaseless touring, surreal sense of humour and a self-deprecating underdog persona.

He first achieved micro-stardom with a memorable (and very painful – ask him) 1977 appearance on the Old Grey Whistle Test leading to his first hit record. In 2002, a mere 25 years later, he had another hit when 'Bunsen Burner' entered the Top Ten.

As well as his brace of hits (more UK hit singles than Led Zeppelin note), he has had 15 album releases (more than Ed Sheeran) including six with on-off, on-off again-on partner Wild Willy Barrett. He has sold out The Royal Albert Hall and headlined the London Palladium (neither of which David Bowie achieved). His self-made biopic Otway the Movie: The Story of Rock n Roll's Greatest Failure premiered in Leicester Square, was shown at Cannes, voted 2nd best film of 2013 by Guardian readers and is still popular on Netflix. Two volumes of his autobiography have been published (precisely two more than Mick Jagger has managed).

Otway's song 'Beware of the Flowers Cause I'm Sure They're Going to Get You Yeah' was voted the seventh greatest lyric of all time in a 1999 BBC poll - higher than anything by Bob Dylan, Paul Simon, The Bee Gees or Leonard Cohen.

As an actor he has appeared in TV's Super Gran, William Tell, Heartbeat and others including a certain brand's 'Secret Lemonade Drinker' commercials.

Never happier than when performing, during lockdown he performed 9 shows from his sitting room via Facebook, each attracting over 10,000 views. But it is his legendary live shows, that have kept the fans coming and this micro-star shining for half a century. He celebrated his 5,000th in April and as of 1 September is up to 5,041 with many more booked to the end of the year and beyond.

