



## Strings Attached

[Ian Hunter](#)

[Made in Germany Music](#) - MIG50022

Available from [MVD Entertainment Group](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange  
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Ian Hunter's one of those guys idolized by many, myself included, as much for his inexhaustibly offbeat just-this-side-of-normal stage and day life as for his musics. Fronting the still unique Mott the Hoople, he came into his full powers as a hard rocking tongue-in-cheek English Bob Dylan (early Mott LPs show this very clearly) straddling the line between yobbo street smarts, academic tomfoolery, and existential realpolitik. Above all, though, Hunter has been among the most human of rock's many songwriters, a sardonic pulling no punches while highly sympathetic to the vagueries of flesh and spirit. In high school, he'd be yer buddy, but you'd be careful in venturing too far in trading the dozens with him 'cause you knew he was capable of coming up with quips that just might take your head off, leaning forward with gentle wicked smile, you backing up three steps.

That Hunter would receive the symphonic treatment is entirely appropriate, hence the ***Strings Attached*** moniker to this re-release of a 2002 television concert in Norway, first emitted in 2003 and FINALLY making its way to American shores, thanks to MIG Records. Many individuals and groups have gotten the orchestral makeover, but this gig is, to my mind, more in line with the Red Rider's ***Symphonic Sessions*** than most others, though cuts like *Boy* demonstrate an even more epic nature to things than Tom Cochrane's work. More than anything, though, ***Strings*** finally reveals the many kindred qualities Ian has with Ray Davies' work with the Kinks. Even the version here of *All the Young Dudes* comes off as something from a more drunken ***Muswell Hillbillies***.

Then there's the rendering of one of my fave songs of Ian's, *Ships*, which is kind of a gathering point for the signifying dramaturgy going on in his presence amid a mostly acoustic band and the orchestra. There's an interestingly subtle near-clash between he and the symphony, a sometimes almost asynchronous meld that first seems as though the consequence of not enough rehearsal time until you realize Hunter's playing with the fabric of the mode itself, wringing it for all its worth, simultaneously wending out a frailty in vocal delivery and emotional patois until the uplift of the closing notes, where he's as strong as he's ever been.

That, I think, is the real center of this release, that furtherance of refinement in what's been executed a thousand times, the extension of what's of interest in art to the musician, taking the audience along for the ride. Start, then, this twofer with that cut, and you'll possess the key to the entirety. All the rest will unfold before your ears, and you'll renew your love affair with this eccentric exponent of what was once glam but has always been rock and roll, long proven in the gent's solo works. One last thing: Hunter's short patter in between songs is fascinating, the sort of revelation of a unique mindset making one wish he'd write a book on his life. Pay special attention to the intro to *A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square*, which is first reminiscence, then endearment, next shocking, and in sum hilarious.

### Track List:

#### Disc One

- Rest in Peace
- All of the Good Ones Are Taken
- I Wish I Was Your Mother
- Twisted Steel
- Boy (Hunter / Ronson)
- 23A Swan Hill
- Waterlow
- All the Young Dudes (David Bowie)
- Irene Wilde
- Once Bitten Twice Shy

#### Disc Two

- Rollerball
- Ships
- A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square (Maschwitz / Sherwin)
- Michael Picasso
- Wash Us Away
- Don't Let Go
- All the Way from Memphis
- Roll Away the Stone
- Saturday Gigs

All songs written by Ian Hunter except as noted.

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