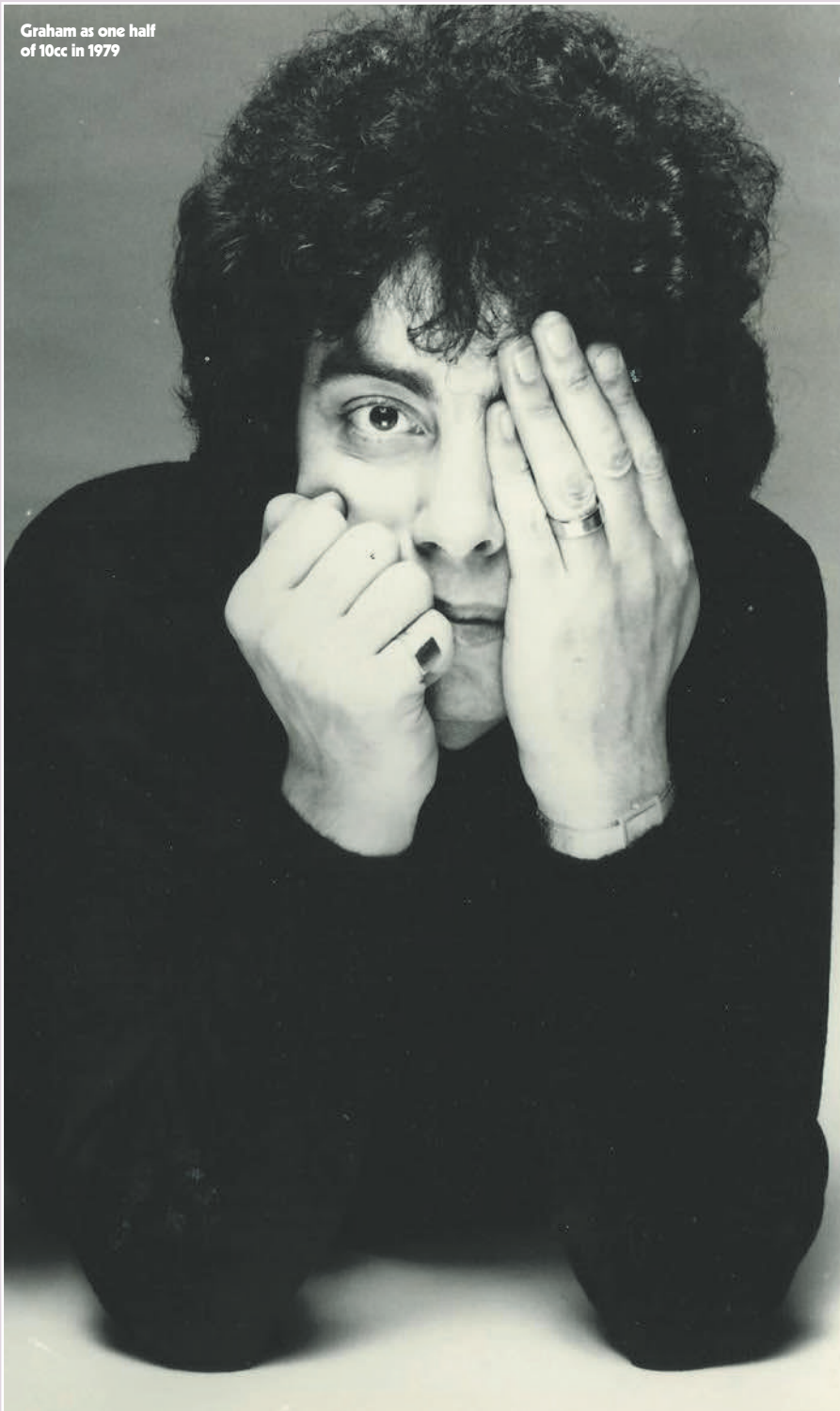


# Chasing Waterfalls

**GRAHAM GOULDMAN** is in buoyant mood at the other end of a phone call from Liverpool, where he's preparing to appear at the city's Epstein Theatre. He's halfway through the Heart Full Of Songs tour, performing stripped-back selections from a remarkable canon of work that reaches back over 50 years and includes many cornerstones of modern pop.

**ANDY MORTEN** finds himself waiting at the bus stop without an umbrella

Graham as one half of 10cc in 1979



**Shindig!:** The role of Jewish musicians and writers hasn't been as noted as perhaps it could've been. Do you feel growing up Jewish had an impact on you musically or your approach to the industry?

**Graham Gouldman:** Certainly growing up going to the synagogue had an impact on me. The music is often in a minor key and I always favour minor keys – they kind of have more soul. I don't think of myself as Jewish, although I'm very proud to be Jewish. The music industry is generally very colourblind and religion-blind so I've not been aware of it really. Unless I've got some Yiddish word and someone in the band says, 'What does that mean?' 'Ah! I'm going to use that!'

**SD!:** How tuned in were you to the mid-60s music scene in Manchester?

**GG:** I was totally tuned into it – it was what I lived for. Manchester was a university town – loads of bars and clubs and always loads of great bands coming through. We'd get the Stones one week, The Animals the next week, The Kinks the next week; you'd get to see everybody. Manchester's always been great at supporting all the arts.

**SD!:** Which songwriters did you admire when you started writing?

**GG:** The songwriters that I still admire: Lennon & McCartney, Bacharach & David, Ray Davies, Leonard Bernstein, Stephen Sondheim. Lennon & McCartney were the biggest influence – I'm still trying to do it.

**SD!:** Your group The Mockingbirds was the warm-up band on *Top Of The Pops*, right?

**GG:** We were for a while, yes. It used to come from a church in Dickenson Road in Manchester and while they were setting up lighting and camera angles they'd have warm-up bands on to keep the audience entertained. The Yardbirds were on doing 'For Your Love' and we were the warm-up band. Slightly bizarre.

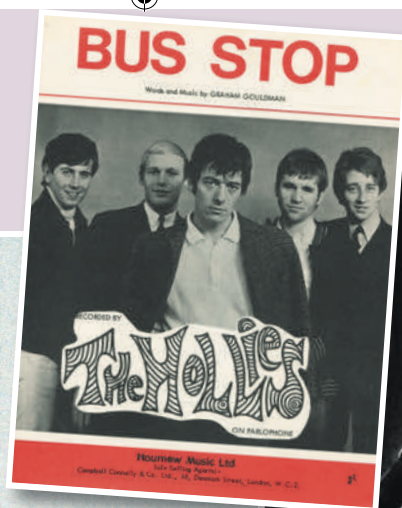
**SD!:** Did you ever think, "Why isn't my group doing better than it is while my songs are doing so well?"

**GG:** Probably because I gave my better





Good as gould. Clockwise from this pic: The Mockingbirds with Kevin Godley and Graham (second and third); The Hollies take 'Bus Stop' into the Top 5; the '68 solo album; Graham with his errant producer Peter Noone; sublime one-shot single from '72



## "I would have loved The Mockingbirds to be successful, of course, and Kevin Godley was in the band as well so half of 10cc was already there"

songs away. I was very happy with that actually. The Mockingbirds did a version of 'For Your Love', which was rejected, and it found its way to The Yardbirds. That started me on a roll. I would have loved The Mockingbirds to be successful, of course, and Kevin Godley was in the band as well so half of 10cc was already there.

**SD!:** Which of the '60s recordings of your songs do you love and hate the most today?  
**GG:** I loved The Hollies' version of 'Bus Stop'. And 'Look Through Any Window'. I thought they were fantastic. I love them all really but if you're asking for one, then 'Bus Stop' by The Hollies – great energy, beautiful singing. They were one of the greats.

**SD!:** On songs like 'No Milk Today' and 'Bus Stop' did you consciously set out to inject some British social realism into pop music, or to lend a sense of downbeat romance to everyday working class experiences?

**GG:** (Laughs). That's such a convoluted thing. No. When you're writing, you just

right what you feel. There was no sense of writing about this or that. My dad actually wrote the first verse of that and when I read it I heard the melody. Then I wrote the middle bit in my head – the words and the music all came in one go. I have a social conscience as a human being but not as a songwriter.

**SD!:** Was *The Graham Gouldman Thing* a record company thing, trying to put you out there as an artist after your success as a writer?

**GG:** Yes it was. The idea was that Peter Noone was going to produce it; one of the artists I'd written for being the producer. I think he turned up for the first day and then we didn't see him any more. In the end, John Paul Jones, Eddie Kramer and myself managed quite well without him. I'd worked with John on various things before we did that album and he was one of the greatest bass players and arrangers. I remember when he told me, "I'm going to give up the session playing and join a band," I told him he was mad. He was doing four

or five sessions a day and probably making very good money for those days.

**SD!:** Many of our readers are fascinated by the whole Kasenetz-Katz hit factory thing. What are your recollections of working for them in the late '60s and early '70s?

**GG:** I went to New York. They had a kind of Brill Building thing going on, that approach to songwriters. "Just gimme one more more shot!" (Laughs) I was very fond of Jerry and Jeff, they were great characters. When I think of them I think of the phrase, "Every cloud has a silver lining". I'd already become involved in Strawberry Studios so I said to them, "Look, I don't want to record here – I want to go back and record in the studio that I'm a partner in and work with the people I want to work with," who happened to be Eric [Stewart], Kevin [Godley] and Lol [Creme]. We did loads of things there for them and that was one of the many elements that became the catalyst in bringing us together. We'd ship stuff out and they'd just slap a name on it and stick



it out. We didn't care, we were very happy doing that. We were doing a lot of stuff but we always did it to the best of our ability. We did football records, comedy records, but we enjoyed doing it and that's always the best thing... if you can afford to do that.

**SD!:** You were still physically building Strawberry Studios at the time.

**GG:** Yes. The studio was really the brainchild of a guy called Peter Tattersall, who got Eric involved and then they got me involved.

**SD!:** Which leads neatly onto the subject of Hotlegs.

**GG:** What happened there was we'd had a new four-track installed in the studio and Eric was testing it out. You know, if we bounced three tracks onto one track that

would leave new tracks, and we wanted to see how far we could go. Kevin started playing this drum beat and Lol was sitting nearby playing a guitar and singing this song, subconsciously, just doing something. Dick Leahy (Philips Records A&R manager) came in and said, "What's that?"

"We're just testing the tape machine." "That's a hit!" Anyway, the record was a big hit. This was during the period when I was still working with Kasenetz-Katz so I came back. Another other thing that sort of glued us together was when Hotlegs were asked to support The Moody Blues on tour, so I joined them on bass. We were out as Hotlegs but really that was 10cc. If you listen to the Hotlegs records you can hear the parts of us that were eventually brought together to form the components of 10cc.

**SD!:** Some of the Hotlegs material is very lush and ornately produced. It must have been difficult taking it out on the road.

**GG:** Do you know what? I don't remember. We probably just did a 20-minute set with stuff from the album. I don't even know if we'd have done 'Neanderthal Man'. It was always a bit of a compromise – and I'm talking about 10cc now – in that we never made records with the thought of, "We're going to have to perform this on stage one day so we'd better

not do this." We always made the record for the song; the song is key. You serve the song to the best of your ability, you don't worry about how you're going to reproduce the song live. I'm on tour now doing songs that had very big productions, but playing them on a couple of acoustic guitars and a keyboard, they sound just great. It's like sitting round with an acoustic guitar singing 'I'm Not In Love' and people still go, "Wow!"

**SD!:** We're big fans of your 1972 CBS single, 'Nowhere To Go'. A beautiful one-off?

**GG:** Yep, just a one-shot. I don't even remember that much about it. I'm actually going to check that one out because I like the song. It's in 3/4 time and has strings on it, right? Baroque 'n' roll!

**SD!:** As a songwriter you were the most successful person in 10cc when the group first coalesced. Presumably that had no impact on how the four of you behaved or treated each other.

**GG:** No, absolutely not. We were a very democratic band. This is how 'Donna' came about. The first single we were going to put out was a song called 'Waterfall' that Eric and I wrote, and because we'd written it, we said to Kevin and Lol, "Come up with

**"We were doing a lot of stuff at Strawberry but we always did it to the best of our ability. We did football records, comedy records, but we enjoyed doing it and that's always the best thing"**



The group that almost ate the world. 10cc, L-R: Gouldman, Lol Creme, Eric Stewart, Kevin Godley; early '70s Strawberry Studios ad



Gouldman and Creme face off on stage in the mid-70s; adventures with animals and Ramones



the B-side.” They came up with ‘Donna’ and of course as soon as we’d finished recording ‘Donna’ we realised it was something special. (Laughs) So it’s because of that attitude that we became successful in the first place.

**SD!:** Do you remember how you felt when Lol and Kevin quit?

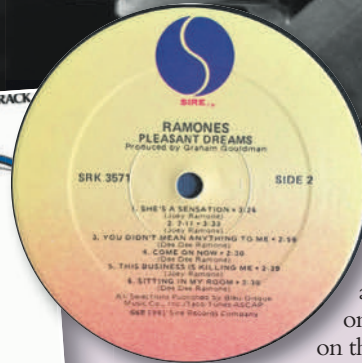
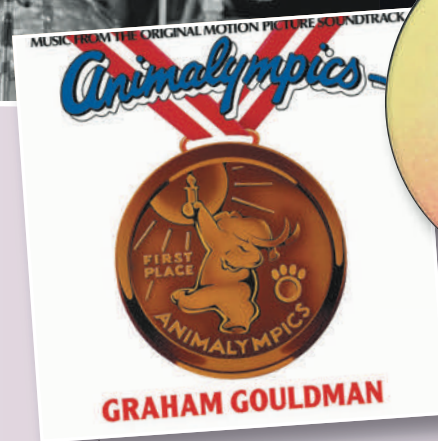
**GG:** I was very upset. It was a shock, and Eric and I thought long and hard about whether we should carry on under the name 10cc or form a new band. We knew we were a good team anyway so there was no doubt that we were going to carry on in some guise.

**SD!:** You teamed up with Andrew Gold in the duo Wax and embraced the synthetic production style of the day. Was that a conscious shift away from guitars, pianos and analogue instruments?

**GG:** It was the ‘80s! It wasn’t conscious, it was just what was happening at the time. We were using instruments that were around. There were some guitars around but there were lots of synthy basses and keyboards, which seemed to suit the songs we were writing. I don’t know if you know the song ‘Ready To Go Home’ that Andrew and I wrote – that was on the 10cc album *Mirror Mirror*. That’s one of the best songs we ever wrote. In fact that was the last ever 10cc single, ironically.

**SD!:** What was it like working with the The Ramones on their *Pleasant Dreams* album?

**GG:** (Pause) Interesting. (Laughs) Let’s put it this way: when they approached me I said, “Why?” They loved the whole British



Invasion thing and of course bands like

The Yardbirds, they absolutely adored them. Even so, I thought we were strange bedfellows. I said, “Let’s not get too starry-eyed about this. Let’s do two or three tracks and see how it goes. If it doesn’t work out we’ll say goodbye.” But they liked what was coming out so we carried on. They were always punctual, always very conscientious about what we were doing. Joey was absolutely charming, everybody loved him.

**SD!:** Watching *Animalympics* on a Saturday morning remains a fond childhood memory. How did you come to write the soundtrack and did you get to meet the actors who did the voices?

**GG:** I didn’t, unfortunately, get to meet the guys who did the voices. I think that came about because my manager met the director and put me forward to do the music, I did a couple of things and they liked it. It was a joy to work on because I the director, a guy called Steven Lisberger, would have the storyboard and say, “I need a song here,” or “This character needs a song.” I’d say, “If you could have any song that already exists – like a Who song or a Beach Boys song – what would it be?” So that was like having a massive clue about what I had to do. One of the best things about that was getting to

work with Jimmie Haskell, who did all the orchestral arrangements. I’m singing one of the songs from that on this tour, one of my favourite songs actually, called ‘Love’s Not For Me’.

**SD!:** What’s the best advice anyone’s ever given you about songwriting?

**GG:** Be original. We’re all influenced by what we hear and you’ll hear my songs in other people’s songs and other people’s songs in my songs because that’s what made us want to write songs in the first place. And the need to write, of course – that’s the other thing. Sometimes when I’m writing a song I’ll think, I’m bored. Change tack! I’m heading off down another road, then I’ll come back to the mainline. I think of my songs as kind of a journey. I could go about this for hours and hours (laughs). Try and be different. Don’t bore people. There are no rules. Do what you feel.

**SD!:** Kevin Godley and Eric Stewart have both published their autobiographies. You must have some stories to tell. Any plans?

**GG:** I’ve been asked to do one and I’m considering it. It’s not number one on my agenda but I feel at some point I should. Probably. And that’s my answer!

*Contributors: Hugh Dellar, Duncan Fletcher, Ben Graham, Fiona McQuarrie, Jon ‘Mojo’ Mills, Andy Morten, Thomas Patterson, Paul Ritchie, Spenser Tomson, Chris Twomey*

**Love And Work is reissued by Wienerworld. Listen People: The Graham Gouldman Songbook is out on Ace on November 24th**