



Dave Mason

*Rock n' Roll Hall of
Famer Coming
to South Florida*

by Glenn R. Swift

Rock icon Dave Mason, who found fortune and fame with the legendary band Traffic, will take the stage at the Sunrise Theatre in Ft. Pierce on Thursday, November 20 at 7 pm and at the Lyric Theatre in Stuart on Saturday, November 22 at 7pm. Both venues are located in their town's historic downtown district and offer music lovers an intimate, acoustically rich concert experience.

On Stage

Mason was born May 10, 1946 to a working-class family in Worcester, England. Interestingly, he did not come from a musical family, and, unlike so many other pop stars, he did not begin playing at age seven or eight.

“I always loved music, but I didn’t really begin playing the guitar until my early teens. I guess by that time I realized that working 9 to 5 wasn’t in the cards. So, I was left with two options: playing music or a life of crime,” cracked Mason.

Most would say he made the right choice.

Mason’s first stint was with an instrumental band, The Jaguars, which he joined at the age of 15. After recording two singles in 1963, Mason joined up the following year with childhood friend, drummer/vocalist Jim Capaldi, to form The Hellions, which released three singles on Pye Records. Following a brief stretch with Deep Feeling in 1966, Mason hooked up with the Spencer Davis Group, where he met another budding superstar, Steve Winwood. Shortly thereafter, Mason and Winwood joined forces with Capaldi and multi-instrumentalist Chris Wood to form one of the most influential rock bands of all time, Traffic.

“We came from very different musical backgrounds and our music reflected that mix,” said the Rock and Roll Hall of Famer. “There was something magical when we played together.”

Despite Traffic’s incredible success, there were a number of intense clashes between Mason and Winwood. The rift resulted from Winwood’s preference to write songs together with his fellow bandmates, as opposed to Mason who liked to write on his own. As a result of the conflict, Mason left Traffic in December of 1967 and didn’t rejoin the band until May the following year. Despite the tension, Mason wrote some of his best songs during these times – classics such as “Hole in My Shoe” and “Feelin’ Alright” (to this day his favorite).

Traffic broke up in 1969 due to Winwood’s desire to join what would be a short-lived supergroup, Blind Faith. Mason and his former Traffic bandmates then formed a new band, Mason, Wood, Capaldi & Frog. In that same year, Mason joined Jimi Hendrix during a live concert at the famed Albert Hall in London. “Hendrix was the most innovative guitarist of the rock era,” Mason said.

In between Traffic stints, Mason did some very impressive session work appearing on Hendrix’s “All Along The Watchtower” & “Crosstown Traffic” from Jimi’s classic album, *Electric Ladyland*. He also played on The Rolling Stones’ “Street Fighting Man” from *Beggars Banquet*. Mason then formed a

new group called Delaney, Bonnie & Friends, a band that Eric Clapton eventually joined following the breakup of Cream.

In 1970, Mason moved to California and ventured out on his own by recording what many believe was his best solo album ever, *Alone Together*. One of the first friends he made when he came to the U.S. was Mama Cass Elliot of the Mamas and the Papas. The two joined forces on *Dave Mason and Cass Elliot* the following year. Cass was excited about the new duo’s future, but Mason only saw their collaboration as a one-time project. The partnership with Cass was also plagued by record-label red tape, and Mason returned to the UK to rejoin Traffic, which Winwood had recently reformed following Blind Faith’s demise in the summer of 1971. The new Traffic lineup lasted just six gigs, but that was enough to produce *Welcome to the Canteen* – considered by many to be one of the greatest live rock albums of all time.

For much of the 1970s, Mason was embroiled in legal battles with record producers. Down on his luck financially, Mason was forced get a number of records out fast – the result being less-than-stellar releases over the next several years. Further compounding his personal misfortunes was a severe drug addiction, from which he sought refuge in the guest house of his neighbor and friend, Mick Fleetwood.

Eventually, Mason conquered his personal demons and recorded his greatest solo hit, “We Just Disagree” from his smash 1977 album *Let It Flow*. For 16 years, Mason remained a solo artist until joining Fleetwood Mac in 1993. After touring with FM for two years, he collaborated with the release of the group’s *Time* album in 1995, which featured two of Mason’s songs, “Blow By Blow” and “I Wonder Why.”

Mason never tried to hide his disappointment at not being asked to rejoin Traffic for their 1994 *Far From Home* album. Nevertheless, he later toured with Capaldi on several occasions.

These days Mason continues to perform as a solo act, but frequently joins hands with other rock superstars. He is a proponent of music education for children and signed on as an official supporter of Little Kids Rock, a non-profit organization that provides free musical instruments and lessons to children in public schools throughout the U.S.

“I still love performing,” said Mason, “and as long as I do, I’m gonna keep on playing.” **PBG**

Don’t miss out on a once-in-a-lifetime chance to see one of rock’s greatest performers. For tickets to the Sunrise Theatre performance, call (772)461-4775 or visit www.sunrisetheatre.com. For tickets to the concert at the Lyric Theatre, call (772) 286-7827 or visit www.lyrictheatre.com.