

K NOW WE'RE TALKIN

By Helen Marketti

A chat with Chris White of The Zombies

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland has recently unveiled a new exhibit dedicated to the career contributions of 60s group, The Zombies. The Zombies were part of the British Invasion influence that swept across America during the mid-60s. Their signature hits included, She's Not There, Time of the Season and Tell Her No. The original band members were on hand to accept the dedication at a recent ceremony at the Rock Hall on July 12. The exhibit will be open until the end of the year. Earlier in the month, I had the pleasure of speaking to bass player, Chris White. He spoke to me by phone from his home in London.

"I first started out being interested in Buddy Holly, Elvis Presley, Del Shannon and of course, Bill Haley as he seemed to be the one that started it off with, "Rock Around the Clock". Most of the American acts really affected us because it was the rawness of it all," explains Chris.

Chris remembers fondly his time with The Zombies. He still joins the band now and then but is not involved on a steady basis with the touring Zombies. "I am two years older than the rest of the guys. I did attend the same school as Colin Blunstone (lead singer). The band started around 1961 and the bass player had left the group because he wanted to concentrate on taking exams. They asked me to join and that is how it got started. I was in several skiffle groups prior to joining The Zombies. Skiffle was popular in England because it was easy to play."

"There was a show on the BBC called, Juke Box Jury. There were guest panelists who would listen to new songs and share their thoughts. George Harrison of The Beatles was a guest on the episode when they played, She's Not There by The Zombies. We were so glad when George said he loved our song," remembers Chris.

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1967 was the Summer of Love era. However, it was not necessarily a loving time for The Zombies. "In 1967, we decided to produce our own album that was called, "Odessey and Oracle" and unfortunately it was not successful and we broke up," said Chris. "Rod (Argent) and Colin (Blunstone) reunited in the early 2000s calling themselves "Argent and Blunstone" but they kept being billed as The Zombies. When it came to the 40th anniversary of "Odessey and Oracle", we decided to get together and play since we had not played together since 1967! We played a premiere because we never had a chance to play it live. It started to receive backing and support. In 2015, we decided to tour America and play the album exactly as it was recorded. I will join the band for "Odessey and Oracle" as does our original drummer, Hugh Grundy."

Original member, Paul Atkinson is no longer with us. During the dedication at the Rock Hall, Chris White remembered his friend and fellow musician by dedicating the exhibit in Paul's memory. "When we are on stage, it's like we are still teenagers. It's the same energy," says Chris. "However, it's not the same energy when we leave the stage as we are now in our 70s. (laughs). We still play together because we like each other. We were very lucky in that regard. We are like brothers."

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