

Now We're Talkin

By Helen Marketti



An Interview with Colin Blunstone of The Zombies

The Zombies were part of the 1960s British Invasion, when bands from England swept America with their music, appearance, and presence. The Zombies hit the charts with “She’s Not There,” “Tell Her No,” and “Time of the Season,” a signature anthem for the sixties as well as a transcending voice for each new generation. The Zombies were inducted into The Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2019.

The Zombies will be performing at The Kent Stage (Kent, OH) on June 28. Tickets are going fast! Lead singer and original member Colin Blunstone took some time from his busy schedule to chat by phone from his home in England:

“I lived in a small town outside of London when I was growing up,” remembers Colin. “I never dreamed at a young age that I would be a professional musician. My favorite artists were Elvis, Little Richard, and Chuck Berry. They were the ones that first got me interested in rock and roll. Other favorites of mine were Ricky Nelson and Buddy Holly.”

He continues, “When we first got together as a band, our audiences were maybe 30 to 40 people and it took a while for us to build a following. In early 1964 we won a rock and roll competition that many bands had entered. It was shortly after-

wards that I thought, “dare I hope to even think that there could be a career in music for us?” We played 4 or 5 songs. We sang “You Can’t Do That” by The Beatles and a jazz version of Gershwin’s “Summertime.” Winning that competition led us to sign a recording contract with Decca Records. Our first single was “She’s Not There,” which was a huge world-wide hit. We just got carried along by circumstance. I always thought those events are what happened to me rather than me choosing the events.”

The Zombies began in the early 60s with only one musician change. “When we started in 1961, we had a bass player named Paul Arnold. He left the band because he wanted to be a doctor. Chris White then joined us and we had stayed with the same line up.” Band members in the original line up included Rod Argent, Hugh Grundy, the late Paul Atkinson, Chris White, and Colin. Rod and Colin are still touring and writing new material, along with their new talented musicians who have been with them for several years.

How did the band get its name? “Naming a band is an elusive thing,” said Colin. “It’s an abstract thought because you try to answer the question of what it is that you’re looking for. For about a week, we

called ourselves The Mustangs, then we called ourselves The Sundowners, named after the film that starred Robert Mitchum and Deborah Kerr. It was actually Paul Arnold who had left the band that came up with the name. There was really no explanation to it, he just suggested The Zombies out of the blue and everyone liked it because it was catchy.”

A career spanning over fifty years is something that Colin expresses gratitude for on a daily basis. “I am eternally grateful that people are still interested in our music. It’s been a wonderful surprise that we still have a career at this time in our lives. I think our songs have a timeless feel about them because they sound as relevant and fresh today as they did the day we recorded them,” he explained. “It’s important for us to write and record new material as well. People seem to really like the new songs we are recording. We receive a great reaction for new material as we do for the classic hits.”

The 1960s were a turbulent time, with the counter-culture raging on many levels. “As we know, England was bombed intensely during WW II. I remember our family had to ration for food and for petrol and that seemed to have continued on until the late 1950s. Then a whole new way of looking at life began to emerge and it seemed that it was centered around music,” said Colin. “The Beatles started it all. They opened the doors for all of the other British bands to play around the world and in America, in particular. London was the center of the artistic world during the 60s. I think it spread into other areas as well, such as Mary Quant for fashion, John Osborne in the theatre, and Michael Caine in the cinema and so much more.”

Get your tickets to see The Zombies at The Kent Stage before they are sold out! It is a show that you will not want to miss. “The incarnation of The Zombies is really a hot band,” said Colin. “We have a lot of energy and play a wide selection of music from our old hits to album tracks to deep cuts that some may not remember The Zombies doing, to many new songs from our new album which we just finished. There will be something for everyone. Music that lasts over time is a good test.”

www.thezombiesmusic.com
<https://kentstage.org/>
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