

# Save Our World / Wonderful Life

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## Torpoint School, Cornwall – 10/03/81

I had been Head of Music at **Torpoint School** since 1974. Torpoint, just in case you're not local, is just across the River Tamar from Plymouth, linked with Plymouth only by various ferries – the main Tamar Bridge taking traffic and the railway from Devon in to Cornwall is located some miles up the river at Saltash.

As far as I can remember, the original contact from the composer probably came towards the end of 1980. I do remember receiving a letter from **Bart Blaze**, telling me that he had written this song basically about his concerns for the way, even back at the start of the 80s, we were mistreating the planet, and the consequences for children of each successive generation. We arranged a meeting in school, and I have to say his appearance, even then, was striking, to say the least! Without being rude, the words 'hippy', or 'alternative' sprang to mind. He was born 'Nigel May', but went through all the correct procedures to change his name to Bart Blaze, which he always wrote with a special flourish under the letter 'z'!

There was no written-down music, only the words which Bart had come up with. So initially he sang me the tune he had in his head, and I transcribed it on paper, came up with the harmonies he liked, made some suggestions about extra vocal lines and other technical issues, and, once he was happy that what I'd written was what he intended it to sound like, I remember making an announcement to ask for volunteers to form the choir. We had a choir and the usual other groups, but his idea was to have as many involved as possible. Of course, telling youngsters that it would hopefully be turned into a 'pop' record and sold, made it easy to drum up volunteers!

I can't remember whether we rehearsed more than once a week in the lunchtime, or not, but because we had a definite recording day of March 10, 1981, we had a quite tight deadline to try to get everything ready. The whole idea was that this wasn't to be a hand-picked group of youngsters, but anyone who wanted to join in. If I did find someone who had a serious problem in keeping in tune, I tried to move them further back, rather than have to ask them to leave! I can't really recall how many we ended up with, but it must have been 50 or 60 crammed into the Music Room – mainly girls, though some boys, too – from 11 to 16, as the school at that time, didn't have a Sixth Form.

Logistically, it wouldn't have been too easy to ferry 60 or so children to a recording studio, so Bart arranged for a mobile studio to come to school, and record the choir in the Music Room. Obviously we had to make sure that things like the lesson-change bell, or morning break didn't happen while we were recording!

On the day, the choir were assembled in the Music Room, and I was playing the piano while they sang. Bart, who had been in to a few previous rehearsals, 'conducted' on the day, which really meant bringing the singers in at the right moment, and coordinating voices and piano. Unfortunately, and you can hear it clearly on the record, Bart got more and more excited as the piece went on, with the

result that the final speed was considerably faster than the way it started, whereas there was actual intention to do it! I have listened to the master tape again, which I probably haven't heard since '81, and I must say that the accidental speeding-up now sounds rather good, and adds to the overall enthusiasm!

But, at the time it was actually a nightmare for the other players you can hear on the record, and especially the drums. The reason for this was that, when the mobile studio left the school, all it had recorded, of course, was the choir, and my piano backing which of course had to match the speed at which Bart had them singing!

After school that day, I met up with the other players at one of their houses, on the Cornish coast. The mobile studio was there, already to record the other instrumentalists separately, and then to mix this all together into what you now actually hear. Paul Wood was a Year 11 student at the school, and was an accomplished electric lead guitarist, and bass guitarist. So, and I'm not sure of the exact order, he probably first laid down an effective bass line which Bart and he had worked on, Paul taking his lead merely from Bart's suggestion of how he felt the bass line should go, as there wasn't a formal score as such. Having done that, he would then overdub the lead-guitar part.

The fact that the recording of choir and piano was gradually getting faster all the time, did pose some problems for Paul, they were easier to control than the drum part, because the player had to ensure that he picked up exactly on Bart's (unintentional) speed increase as the song went through. Luckily Bart had an excellent drummer in Russ Davies – an ex-Marine musician, now a peripatetic drum teacher – who coped with the speed increase as if it never happened! But Russ did say to me, that it was one of the hardest things he'd actually had to do in his career so far!

When I arrived after school, Russ had set up his synthesiser keyboard so I could add the string sound which starts both pieces with an effective run-in, which was the only way to start given that tracks were being overdubbed. Eventually everything was completed and the tapes would be mixed down by Bart for the eventual pressing. Obviously what we did with *Save Our World*, we also had to do with the B-side, *Wonderful Life* step by step, and all within the confines of a morning and late afternoon/evening for me, and after/evening for Paul and Russ.

Eventually the records were produced and sales took off. Obviously parents, grandparents, friends and relations of those children directly involved made up the bulk of the orders – I can't remember how much they actually sold for – and, while it didn't make the school rich, or get to number one in the charts – it wasn't a financial embarrassment and, of course, did a lot of good locally for the school in the wider community.

Just one other thing remains in my memory. As soon as the records were available, we obviously wanted to get as much exposure as possible in the media. I knew the Programme Controller at the then 'Plymouth Sound' commercial radio station, and on the way home from school, popped into their studios, and quite by chance, although I had intended just leaving a copy for them to give some air-time to when they could, the Programme Controller just happened to be in Reception, and when I gave him the copy, he said: "I'll get whoever's on air right now to play *Save Our World*, and if you tune into the station, you should hear it played before you get home!"

I hardly got into my car and started driving home, when over the radio, came 'Torpoint School's brand-new recording of *Save Our World*' It was quite a thrill, and especially because they didn't try it through first, and it could have been terrible, or even a faulty pressing, but luckily they trusted my judgement!

Now, getting on for some 35 years since that March day, I have tried to Google Bart Blaze (aka Nigel May) and have at least managed to find a picture of him, of course a lot older, as we all are, and it seems, according to the 2002-03 Census, that he is currently still living in Cornwall, now in Launceston, about 33 miles north of Torpoint, with his wife Ilse, and son, Apollo.

Interestingly, Google also comes up with a Bart Blaze using the pen-name of **Paul Treburley**, who has a positively –reviewed book on religious matters to his name – *I've Got The Power!* All I can say is that Treburley is part of Launceston, so it could also be the same person. Here are the only two photos I could source of Bart Blaze – the left one (2008) is from a Musicians' website, while the right one (2007) is from his book page, though I would respectfully suggest that the two pictures are more than a year apart!



Philip R Buttall  
Plymouth | August 2015

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Click [here](#) to listen to *Save Our World* – or [here](#) for *Wonderful Life*