

# Adrian Belew Interview

Photos by Murray Cammick



Adrian Belew carefully measures out a generous tip for the waitress, and then insists on paying for the breakfast out of his own pocket.

Over the past few days, room numbers have been bellowed across bars and dinner tables at Noah's Hotel like it's a housie marathon. The Bowie guitarist could probably charge this one to about seven different people without raising an eyebrow, but he wants to pay for it himself.

That night at QEII Park, Belew will play guitar like a man who not only would have charged his meal, but who would have driven a car through the room at the end for good measure. And then set fire to it.

But for now, it's breakfast. Eggs over easy, which the kitchen doesn't begin to understand, wheat toast, coffee, and a little cassette recorder whirring away in the centre of the table.

So what was the process whereby Belew moved from Frank Zappa to David Bowie?

"Robert Fripp saw me with Frank in London and called David, who was looking for a new guitarist. Then Brian Eno saw me in Germany with Frank, and he also called David. Brian was probably more instrumental. So we went out to dinner — and that was that. I knew Frank was taking a few months off to put together the movie we made too, but I didn't know it was going to last this long."

Belew has now done a couple of albums with Bowie — "and possibly a film".

After Japan he's not sure what Bowie has planned, but Belew does have a solo album coming, which he has already begun.

"It's what I was looking to do before Frank got hold of me: I've done about a month's work on the record so far. It won't be just guitar music. I like music with a light side to it lyrically, and the intent will be to make you laugh."

Is the humour thing a carry-on from working with Zappa?

"Yes, some of it is very inspired by Frank, like the idea of taking real serious hard-to-do music and then putting fun into it."

How much did Belew know about Bowie before he was asked to join the band?

"In the band I had before Frank — Sweetheart, who were real good but who didn't make any records — we did "Rebel Rebel", "Young Americans" and "Stay". I was pretty familiar with certain periods, although I wasn't interested in Ziggy. When I started, RCA sent me a bunch of tapes, and I learned them all off before we went into rehearsal for two weeks in Dallas."

What Bowie songs does Belew particularly enjoy playing?

"I'd say my four favourites would be "Heroes", "Stay", "Beauty And The Beast", and "Station To Station". "Stay" and "Station To Station" are guitar-orientated of course, but I enjoyed them as pieces of music the first time I heard them. *Heroes* is my favourite album. I enjoy the strength of it — in the way he sings."

The afternoon before, Bowie had been fairly vague about the forthcoming album. Twenty two tracks had been done, and it should be out around April, he said. Belew is similarly vague, but he does offer some insights.

"It's impossible for me to say what the new material is like. As we left them, they had no lyrics, no singing. Each one was different, but they hadn't taken on any form. They had me go in and just play. Sometimes I didn't know the chord sequence, sometimes not even the key. It was a very unique way of recording. I felt it put me at a loss, though maybe it did capture the best I could do."

Bowie's band ("I think they're absolutely splendid" says Bowie at the press conference) confirm at the concert that they deserve to be one of the very highest-paid units currently working in rock. Belew is clearly more than happy to be a part of it.

"I admire them all. It's a really great band. Entirely positive."

And playing with Carlos Alomar?  
"We basically let our own styles prevail. He's very well versed in moving chords around and colouring things different ways. His rhythm-guitar work is fantastic."

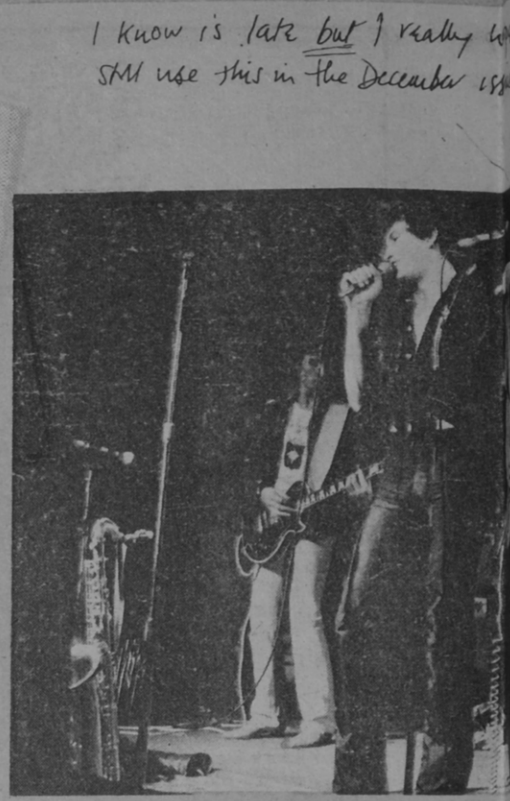
As to his own style, Belew apologises in advance for a few "very obvious" things he will do at the concert. But in big auditoriums, he says, you've got to do things for the guy in the very back row. He much prefers smaller theatres.

"I want to stretch what I can do as much as possible with what I have. I think I've come pretty close to doing all the things on the records."

And then some.  
Belew lives in Illinois, and he's happy to be away from New York and Los Angeles. He's not sure how long he will be with Bowie, but he obviously wouldn't mind being retained — even though he originally only expected to tour Europe and the States.

It doesn't look as though the solo album will relate too strongly to his Bowie role, but anyone who has been picked up by both Bowie and Frank Zappa clearly has to be watched very carefully indeed.

Roy Colbert



I know is late but I really like it  
SMI use this in the December 1978

## ...meanwhile back in H HELLO SAILOR

### HELLO SAILOR

Graham "Beef" Brazier, Harry "Hubcap" Lyon, Dave "Hood" McCartney, Rick "Rock" Ball, and Lisle "Duke" Kinney. Occupation: Rock band.

### THEIR BEST CONCERT

"Sunday, November 12, 1994, Hello Sailor at the Whisky-A-Go-Go, Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood.)

The Whisky is one of America's most prestigious clubs and, along with the Roxy, the Troubadour and the Starwood, is one of the most important in the Los Angeles area.

1994 is a new band only recently signed to A&M Records. They have a new LP, their first, a female lead singer who was with LA Jets and a new guitarist Steve Hunter, former guitarist for Alice Cooper and Lou Reed, was added to the band after the album was recorded. Neither the lead singer's cock-teasing performance nor some particularly hot guitar playing save 1994 from being — to borrow Frank Zappa's words — "just another band from LA". Worse... 1994 play heavy metal of the most predictable kind, including some riffs you feel sure you've heard before and others you know you've heard before.

Hello Sailor played two sets after a hurried five minute soundcheck: "Tears of Blood" through to the song that is still the show's highlight, "Son of Sam", and including three new songs — "Olio", "Naughty But Nice" and "Same Old Reoccurring Dream". The last set earned them an encore — "White Light/White Heat".

Hello Sailor are playing consistently better than I remember them playing in New Zealand. But, after a week of playing to small audiences in small clubs, still earning next to no money, the Whisky was something special and the band played to the occasion. Talent, after all, is an asset... and so is originality.

### OBSERVATION No. 1.

Consider this: "Blue Lady" could be as

big a hit in the States as it was in Auckland

### THEIR HOUSE

(8888 Hollywood Hills Rd., Laurel Canyon, Hollywood.)

Nobody knows for sure how many people live in this house but the number is generally reckoned to be around 15. At any hour you can count on somebody still being up — but then this is America, where restaurants, supermarkets, drug stores and movie houses are open 24 hours.

### THEIR MOST POPULAR SONGS

"Son of Sam", "I'm A Texan" (the m necks like this one) and "Boys in Brazil"

### MONEY

Nobody's making any yet — in fact, the band are considering taking part-time jobs. For the record, Hello Sailor was paid \$300 the first time they played at the Rock Corporation. When they play there again on December 15 their fee is \$125.

### OBSERVATION No. 2

In the right light Dave McCartney looks like Willy DeVille.

### THE KNACK, THE KATS

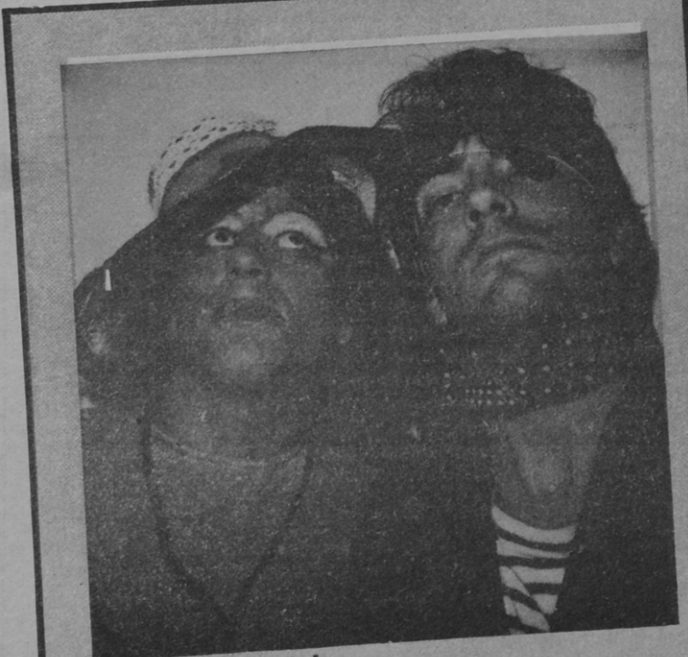
Graham Brazier and Harry Lyon reckon the Knack to be the hottest unsigned local band. The Knack may well have a record contract by the time you read this.

Hello Sailor has often played as support act to the Knack and also to the Kats. Both bands could easily be mistaken for being English — the Knack play what is now being called "power pop" at high velocity in the style of the Jam and the Who; the Kats play clever pop that has similarities to Cheap Trick, but their style is all their own.

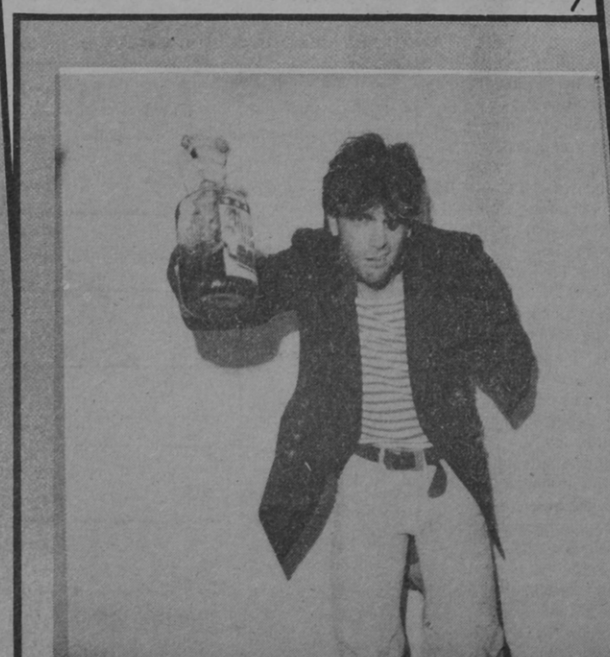
### AMERICANS

To Hello Sailor all Americans are "sepo" — an Australian slang term for septic tank. Americans, on the other hand, generally don't know anything about New Zealand.

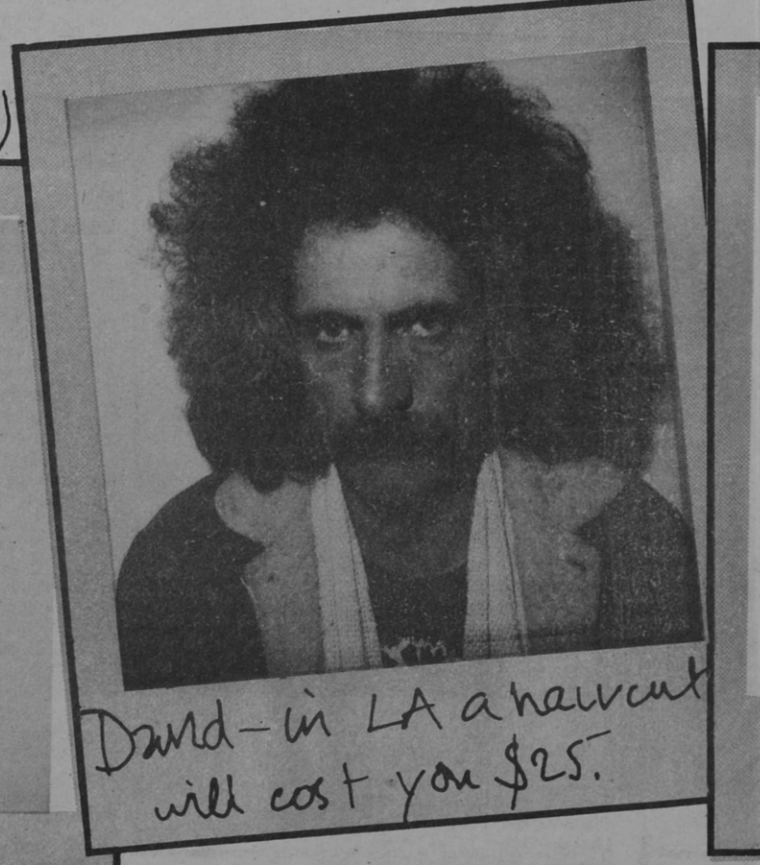
Photos by Jeremy Templar



Rick and Harry



Harry



Dave - in LA a haircut will cost you \$25.