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Small Face, Big Heart

The Slim Chancer who dared to dream.
By *Oregano Rathbone*

Ronnie Lane Just For A Moment: Music 1973-1997

★★★★★
UMC 7721126 (CD/6CD/2LP)



Fate is breathtakingly cruel and indiscriminate. Ronnie Lane, the most beaming of all Faces, a walking endorsement for the best selves of heart, soul, humanity and spirit, stoically dealt with a pitiless degenerative disease (MS) for two decades before being taken aged a mere 51.

Even in the best-case scenario, none of us are here for long; and if the dust ever settles again you'd like to think that those who spent their brief span stoking hatred will be held to account – or defenestrated arse-first, either is good – while those, like Lane, who exuded goodwill and helped in some small way to relieve the collective burden will earn their indelible gold star from posterity.

Fans and former bandmates have produced a number of heartfelt tributes to Ronnie Lane since his death in 1997, but the *Just For A Moment* box set is as close to a definitive eulogy as you're likely to encounter this side of the pearly gates. Contained within its slipcase and hardback cover are six CDs covering the four albums Lane released after splitting from the Faces, plus selections from his collaborations with Pete Townshend and Ron Wood, in addition to unreleased treasures, non-album singles, boisterous live tracks and alternate takes – oh, and a poster, and a book of Lane's lyrics. (A double-vinyl "best of the box" set and a single-CD version are also available.)

It's a deeply affecting listen, even at its most celebratory. Or, it's a remarkably uplifting listen, even at its most subdued. The barnstorming party tunes properly kick their shoes off, straight through



Lane (back row, left): proud captain of Slim Chance FC

the conservatory windows, but Lane's real faculty as a songwriter and performer

was to tap into a secret vein of vulnerable serenity. Even with The Faces, while the band were nutting footballs into the audience, Lane was surreptitiously pocketing the keys to your heart. Whatever the word is for feeling spiritually boosted even while the tears are rolling unimpeded down your face and into your beard, this is very much it.

The first disc in the set, consisting of 1974's *Anymore For Anymore* plus well-chosen extras, provides a delicious reminder that Lane and the early incarnation of Slim Chance (with Gallagher and Lyle among the conscripts) nailed the whole bucolic bliss vibe on the first go. Holed up on Lane's newly-acquired Fishpool Farm in Hyssington, they "got it together in the country" to an extent that made Traffic look like dilettantes, and successfully trailed mud right into the grooves.

With Lane's Dylanesque phrasing and the accordion-and-mandolin set dressing, it's as though *The Basement Tapes* have broken the surface to find a ceilidh in full swing. *Bye And Bye* (Gonna See The King) features a bottleneck so dusty it's as if the bottle has just been plucked from the cellar, while *Chicken Wired* suggests the kind of brakeless abandon you'd expect at the last hoo-down on Earth. Lane's signature tenderness informs *Tell Everyone* and *Don't You Cry For Me*, and a version of Derroll Adams' *Roll On Babe* is achingly perfect, with the complexion of an autumn sunset.

Beyond perfect is *The Poacher*, a sad and sprightly air which seemed to be everywhere in the summer of 1974, but which only achieved a middling No 36 chart placing: a disappointment considering that its rolling non-album precursor, *How Come*, was popular enough to even secure Lane and his band a slot on *The Basil Brush Show*. And there was the rub. Having dreamed his rural fantasy into precarious existence, literally taking the show on the road with the infamous (and fiscally ruinous) *Passing Show* events, Lane couldn't translate his pastoral vision into commercial sustainability after the first flurry.

However, diminishing financial returns didn't precipitate a dip in quality. As *Just For A Moment* discreetly emphasises, there was plenty of convivial substance left in the tank. If 1975's *Ronnie Lane's Slim Chance*, with a new line-up, appeared more pubby in tone with its occasional tack piano and avuncular sloop-bucket mixes, sweetly-sung interludes such as *I'm Just A Country Boy* and *Tin And Tambourine* train a warm sun on your back, while *Don't Try'n'Change My Mind*, from 1976's *One For The Road*, is peak Slim Chance; an effortless, amiable shuffle which feels like a bear hug.

Inasmuch as Lane's claim to divinity is secured herein with a clutch of deathless ballads – *Annie*, *Debris*, *April Fool*, *Just For A Moment* – CD6 might be the real revelation, a collection of later years live and studio tracks that prove his voice, songwriting chops and sense of humour were in far better shape than any of us could have dared hope.

TRACKLISTING

CD One:

- 1-11: *Anymore For Anymore*
- Bonus Tracks**
- 12. *How Come* [Single]
- 13. *Done This One Before* [B-Side]
- 14. *From The Late To The Early*
- 15. *Just For A Moment*
- 16. *How Come* [Alt. take]
- 17. *Ooh La La* [BBC John Peel Session 11/12/1973]
- 18. *Debris* [BBC In Concert 23/04/1974]
- 19. *Flags & Banners* [Live, The Thames Hotel 11/12/73]
- 20. *Last Orders* [Live, The Thames Hotel 11/12/1973]
- 21. *I'll Fly Away*

CD Two:

- 1-13: *Ronnie Lane's Slim Chance*
- Bonus tracks**
- 14. *Brother Can You Spare A Dime?* [Single]

- 15. *What Went Down* (That Night With You) [Single]
- 16. *Lovely* [Single B-Side]
- 17. *Roll on Babe* [BBC Live In Concert 13/12/74]
- 18. *Sweet Virginia* [BBC John Peel Session 19/11/74]
- 19. *Walk on By* [BBC Live In Concert 12/02/76]
- 20. *You're so Rude* [Live Victoria Palace 16/03/75]
- 21. *From The Late To The Early/How Come* [Live Victoria Palace 16/03/75]
- 22. *What Went Down* (That Night With You) [Alt. take]

CD Three:

- 1-9: *One For The Road*
- Bonus tracks**
- 10. *April Fool*
- 11. *Annie*
- 12. *Nowhere to Run*
- 13. *Silly Little Man*
- 14. *Catmelody*
- 15. *Last Orders*
- 16. *Lonely*
- 17. *Under My Nose*

- 18. *Feeling Like A Lion*
- 19. *Going West*

CD Four:

- 1-11: *See Me*.
- 13-17: *R&B Sessions*
- Bonus tracks**
- 12. *Three Cool Cats See Me*
- 13. *The Wanderer*
- 14. *Rocket '69*
- 15. *The Joint Is Jumpin'*
- 16. *Annie Had A Baby*
- 17. *Pisshead Blues* [Fishpool sessions]
- 18. *Barcelona* [Demo]
- 19. *Three Cool Cats* [Demo]

CD Five:

- 1-8: *Live At Rockpalast* 03/03/1980
- 1. *Rats Tales* (Catmelody)
- 2. *Flags And Banners*
- 3. *Annie Had A Baby*
- 4. *How Come*
- 5. *You're So Rude*
- 6. *Lad's Got Money*
- 7. *Kuschty Rye*
- 8. *Man Smart, Women Smarter*

- 9. *Debris* (Ronnie Lane's Big Dipper) [Live Capital Radio 29/05/81]
- 10. *Around The World* (Grow Too Old) [Fishpool sessions 1977]
- 11. *Last Night* [Fishpool sessions 1977]
- 12. *All Or Nothing* [BBC John Peel 15/01/76]
- 13. *Bombers Moon* [The Merton Sessions Early '81]
- 14. *Last Tango In Nato* [The Merton Sessions]
- 15. *Silly Little Man* [Fishpool sessions]
- 16. *She's Leaving (I Can Hear Her Singing)* [Demo]
- 17. *Lovely* [Outtake]
- 18. *Rats Tales* (Catmelody) [Fishpool sessions]

CD Six:

- 1. *Ooh La La* [Live, Texas '88]
- 2. *Rio Grande* (Bombers Moon) [Live, Texas '88]
- 3. *Nowhere To Run*

- [Live KLB 14/12/89]
- 4. *Annie* [Live KLB 14/02/89]
- 5. *Buddy Can You Spare A Dime?* [KLB 22/12/87]
- 6. *You're So Rude* [Live At KUT 1988]
- 7. *Dirty Rice* [The Back Room Austin 12/05/87]
- 8. *Winning With Women* [Live At KUT 1988]
- 9. *Ooh La La* [Live, Texas '87]
- 10. *Don't Try'n'Change My Mind* [Live In Japan]
- 11. *Glad And Sorry* [Live In Japan]
- 12. *Just For A Moment* [Live In Japan]
- 13. *Spiritual Babe* [Demo (Houston)]
- 14. *King Of The Lazy World* [1992 Studio session]
- 15-19: *Arlyn Studio sessions*, January 1989
- 15. *Peaches*
- 16. *Sally Anne*
- 17. *Spiritual Babe*
- 18. *Hearts of Oak*
- 19. *Strongbear's Daughter*