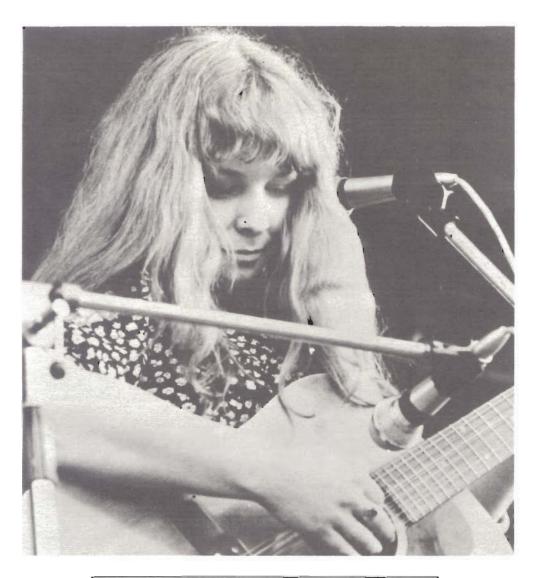
PIANO/VOCAL

# Sandy Denny Song Book

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THE NORTH STAR GRASSMAN AND THE RAVEN	rs 8
CRAZY LADY BLUES	10
NEXT TIME AROUND	12
JOHN THE GUN	15
THE SEA CAPTAIN	18
BACKWATERSIDE	21
LATE NOVEMBER	22
THE SEA	25
NOTHING MORE	28
PEACE IN THE END	30
WINTER WINDS	33
THE POND AND THE STREAM	34
BANKS OF THE NILE	36
NOTTAMUN TOWN	39
FOTHERINGAY	40
AUTOPSY	43
COME ALL YE	46
WRETCHED WILBURN	49
A SAILOR'S LIFE	52
THE OPTIMIST	54

#### Interview

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talked to me after three months of persistent pestering on my part during which time she almost deserved comparison to that equally silent woman of the movies, Garbo. But there the comparison ends, and Sandy has now, as she says, pushed herself out of her self-made shell. She discussed in detail the progress of her career, from being a wandering folk minstrel while at art college to becoming one of Britain's most talented and respected vocalists and songwriters.

The career has included spells in the Strawbs, Fairport Convention and Fotheringay. Now a concert performer, she is still continuing her association with Richard Thompson and Pat Donaldson, an old associate in Fotheringay has joined with her.

STEWART: At art college you were performing as a solo artiste. What made you decide to join the Strawbs?

DENNY: I don't know. I wasn't really looking to join a group. But they asked me, and I thought 'oh, well it's something to do'. I mean, I wasn't looking forward or backwards. Anyway, it didn't last all that long, because I wasn't doing what I wanted to do. Not that I didn't like them all – I really had some good times.

STEWART: Was it from the Strawbs that you went into Fairport?

DENNY: No. I left the Strawbs and just started back on what I did before; going around concerts and the clubs. Actually, I did more concerts after I left them - not quite so many clubs. Then about nine months or a year after that I joined the Fairport.

STEWART: It was with them you came into prominence as a good vocalist. Did Fairport help you to develop?

That elusive lady Sandy Denny finally DENNY: I don't know. You see I've never really had any definite plan. Even when I left college to sing professionally I didn't have any future thoughts in my mind. I just wanted to do something from day to day, which is something that I always do.

> Like, I'm not very good at making clothes because I want them to be completely finished immediately. and that's the trouble with me because I always live for the moment. And I don't really know whether Fairport helped me, or whether I was just going on from day to day as I always was going to anyway. It just so happened that I bumped into them, and it developed into quite a long relationship. But I think I must have acquired an awful lot more musical ideas from them than I might have done from any other group. Their influences are so mixed. Our tastes began to develop together, and also in different channels if you know what I mean, which is why people have always been branching out from Fairport. I mean, I don't know what is going to happen now, but I think it will carry on as it always was.

I think we've all helped each other in a lot of ways.

STEWART: Why did you leave Fairport?

DENNY: It was very... I get strange mental aberrations at times, and I'm also very frightened of flying. And we were just about to embark on a tour of the States, and I wasn't very stable at the time in my head. I just didn't think I could face it, and now I'm glad that I didn't. I just started getting very neurotic and I thought that was it.

STEWART: Why, then did you help form Fotheringay? DENNY: I don't know.

STEWART: The point I want to make is, do you feel happier playing in a group format? DENNY: Yes, well I do really. I've never owned up to being a guitar player for instance, although I have been playing guitar ever since I became a professional singer. But one has to own up that I'm not the greatest.

There are so many things that can be done with the music that accompanies a song, and I think it is so much more creative having a whole lot of people doing it. You see, if I do play something it will either be on piano or guitar. A group can embellish the song, where I might not be able to. STEWART: Fotheringay split during the making of the second album. Do you feel that you were developing as a performer during the Fotheringay period? DENNY: Yes I did actually. At the time that Fotheringay split I think they were really...well, we put one track down, and this is the day I remember most of all. We did it in two takes. It was a song we'd been playing for about a week, and it was really great. I suddenly remember getting up from the piano and thinking "wow, that really was great," and when we listened to it back it was. Then we broke up about a week later. It was really quite amazing the feelings that flowed around; it was quite a strained affair to say the least. STEWART: And what feelings did you come out with? DENNY: I don't know...I felt very void because everyone kept accusing me of going solo, which is something that I've never actually said I was going to do. When I say solo I mean on the stage on my own that is what solo means.

Although in some respects you can sever yourself from the rest of the group, and literally call them your backing group, I've never wanted to do that with the people I play with, because I don't look down to them in any way whatsoever; in fact I look up to them.

#### **TRAVELLING**

Well, they are human beings and they happen to be putting their channels of energy into some other musical instrument. From time to time in the future I may do a gig or two completely on my own. But I won't make a habit of it, because I prefer travelling with people, and also playing with them on stage. I like the feelings that come over.

STEWART: I think it was more the publicity that came with your first album and appearances that led to the belief it was the solo Sandy Denny. You weren't billed as a member of the group. DENNY: Yes, but I can't do anything about that. There are advertisements for my album that I get really annoyed with, but I can't do anything about it without creating an amazing fuss. I'm not really into it.

with the drawing on it, a line drawing thing. It said that it was my first solo album and all that kind of thing. Well, I hadn't even seen that before it went out.

STEWART: Let's turn to your songwriting. That did develop through Fotheringay and was given as an explanation of what you were going to do after the split. But was it with Fairport that your writing first started to show itself?

Like for instance that poster

DENNY: No, not quite. Because I wrote most of the songs in Fotheringay...and I didn't really write very much with Fairport at all. It was only when I left them that I realised I could. Because the ones that I wrote before I joined Fairport are things like "Who Knows Where The Time Goes." and it was a very strange time....

STEWART: Yes, I noticed on the albums you did with Fairport, and with your other work, that there wasn't a great deal of your own material. But you did write with Richard Thompson in Fairport, and then Trevor Lucas in Fotheringay, and I thought there must have been some reaction from other musicians that enabled you to do so.

DENNY: Well, funnily enough I think that my first songwriting influences came well before that, from somebody called Jackson Frank. He's an American bloke who made one album over here just called "Jackson Frank." Paul Simon produced it.

I really loved the way he wrote, and he has probably had more effect on me than anyone. I can still hear his influences in my songwriting now. And I think with all the other influences that I've come in contact with since then, I have developed along my own lines, but still with this classical background of music.

STEWART: What is it that inspires you to write?

DENNY: Sounds, just sounds.
STEWART: And the influences to
write them?

DENNY: I don't know, it's so funny. I can't tell you. I can't tell you about my songs. They're so strange. They're about people. I don't know why they are – they just come out like that. I do try to write a bit more cheerfully, but it doesn't always come off.

STEWART: A recurrent theme in your songs has been the sea — with titles like "The Sea", "The Pond And The Stream" and "Sea Captain". Is there a specific reason for this?

DENNY: No, I don't think so, except that I like the sea. I mean don't you?

STEWART: Yes. Now getting back to the people theme, you have said that only about ten people can understand these songs. Do you find that you have to write about something that is so deeply personal.

WEIRD SONGS

DENNY: You see, the trouble is ...if I wrote blatantly about something it would be going against my character, because I'm not blatantly anything. In a way, I don't like people to know what's happening in my head. And this is a fault. Obviously I should be terribly open and everything but for some strange reason it just goes against the grain. My songs are a bit devious and perhaps weird.

I do try and write simple songs and I'm beginning to get a lot straighter now, but it's very hard for me, because it's against something. STEWART: Why do you think Judy Collins recorded "Who Knows Where The Time Goes?" DENNY: Because it's a lot simpler, a lot less complicated than my other songs and because it's fairly simple to identify with it. Whereas it's not terribly easy to identify with some of my other songs. STEWART: Did you find that the period after leaving Fotheringay was very creative? DENNY: No, I was very dead in a lot of ways. I felt almost defeated in a strange sort of way I never stay like that for very long. As I say, I'm not a very forward thinking person and I tend to wallow in whatever it is that's going on around me,

## THE NORTH STAR GRASSMAN AND THE RAVENS

by SANDY DENNY





To the tower and to the ravens,
 And the tale which hopes they'll never leave.
 What if they should go?
 We always dread to think of them.
 I wonder if they flew one day,
 And no-one ever knew they'd gone
 To circle over ships at sea,
 Claiming yet another son.

That is you to me, That is where I think you are, Never on the land, But gone to find the North Star.

#### **CRAZY LADY BLUES**

by SANDY DENNY





2. Now should I say more, for I know so well, And you're no hazy maiden in grey. How can I be sure, it's not easy to tell, But you're a crazy lady, I'd say. Crazy lady.

#### **NEXT TIME AROUND**

by SANDY DENNY

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- 2. They put up the walls with no more to say. Nobody stopped to ask why it was done. The stream was too far and the rain was too high, So into the cities the river did run. Because of the architect the buildings fell down, Smothered or drowned all the seeds which were sown. I wish I were somewhere, but not in this town, Maybe the ocean next time around.
- 3. I seem to remember the face and the name, But if it's not you I won't care. I know of changes, but nothing could change you To Theo the sailor who sings in his lair. And then I'll turn and he won't be there, Dusty black windows to light the dark stair. Candles all gnarled in the musty air, All without flames for many's the year.

### JOHN THE GUN

by SANDY DENNY







3. I am the master of the games Which you will hardly ever play. So I will teach your sons, And if they should die Before the evening of their span of days, Why, then they will die young.

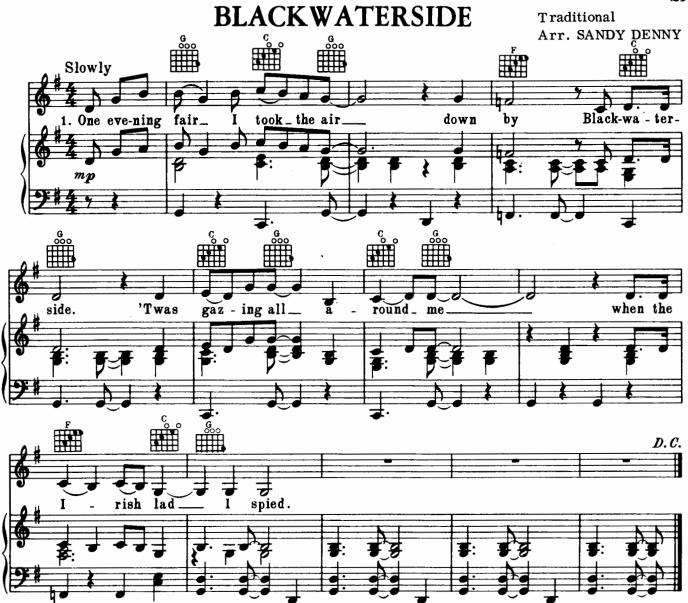
4. Condemn me not
For always will I play the game of war,
In moonshine or in sun.
And if any cross the path I choose to tread,
Their chances they are poor.
My name is John the Gun.

#### THE SEA CAPTAIN









- All through the first part of the night
   We did lie in sport and play,
   When this young man arose and he gathered his clothes,
   Saying fare thee well today.
- That's not the promise that you gave to me
   When first you lay on my breast,
   You could make me believe with your lying tongue
   That the sun rose in the west.
- Go home, go home to your father's garden,
   Go home and weep your fill,
   And think upon your own misfortune
   Which you brought with your wanton will.
- 5. There's not a girl in this whole town
   As easily led as I,And when the sky does fall and the seas they run dry,
   Why, it's then you'll marry I.

#### LATE NOVEMBER



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- 2. The wooded ravine to the wandering stream,
  The serpent he moved, but no-one would say,
  The depths of the waters, the bridge which distraught us,
  And brought to me thoughts of the ill-fated days.
- 3. The temples were filled with the strangest of creatures, One played it by ear on the banks of the sea, That one was found but the others they went under, Oh, the tears which are shed, they won't come from me.
- 4. The methods of madness, the pathos and the sadness, God help you all, the insane and wise, The black and the white, and the darkness of night, I see only smoke from the chimneys arise.
- 5. The pilot he flew all across the sky and woke me,
  He flew solo on the mercury sea,
  The dream it came back, all about the tall brown people,
  The sacred young herd on the phosphorous sand.

#### THE SEA



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- 2. Time? What is that? I've no time to care. I've lived for a long while nearly everywhere. You will be taken, everyone, you ladies and you gentlemen. Fall and listen with your ear on the paving stone. Is that what you hear? The coming of the sea?
- 3. Sea flows under your doors in London Town, And all your defences are all broken down. You laugh at me on sunny days, but mine's the slight of hand. Don't you know I am a joker, a deceiver? And I'm waiting for the land.

#### **NOTHING MORE**

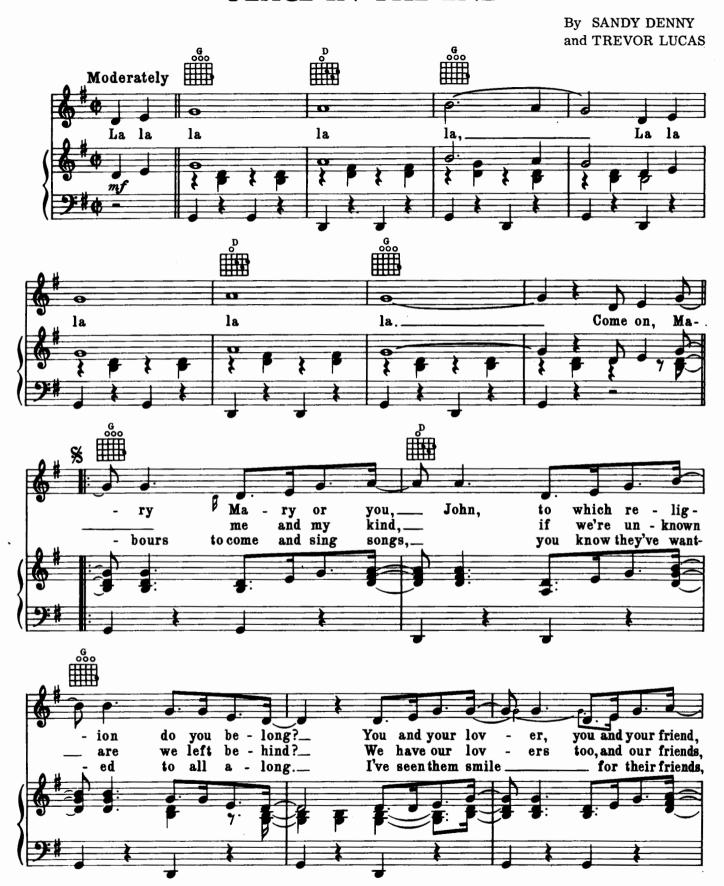


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- Oh, the pearls that you hold in your hand,
  They are beautiful to see,
  But you show them not to anyone,
  Not even me.
  For you are like the others, he said.
  I never can be sure
  That you wish just to see the pearls,
  And nothing more.
- Our lives they are not long.
  Why can you take no time
  To tell us all we're wrong?
  My tune it does not change, he said,
  And neither does your song,
  And words, I use them rarely,
  When I'm all alone.

#### PEACE IN THE END



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#### WINTER WINDS



- 2. He who sleeps, he does not see
  The coming of the seasons,
  The falling of a dream
  Without a time to reason.
- 3. When she walks through evil
  Or the paths of broken illusions,
  Carefully now she lives
  For she has mended her confusion.

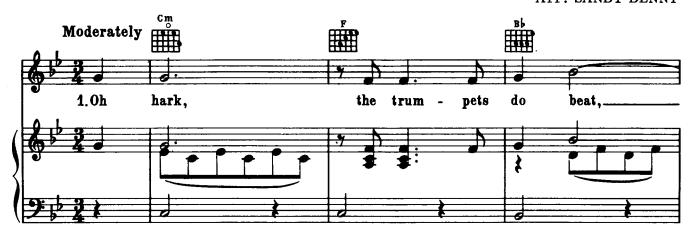
#### THE POND AND THE STREAM





#### BANKS OF THE NILE

Traditional Arr. SANDY DENNY













- 2. Oh Willie, dearest Willie, don't leave me here to mourn,
  Don't make me curse and rue the day that ever I was born.
  Oh, the parting of our love would be like parting with my life,
  So stay at home, my dearest love and I will be your wife.
- 3. Oh, my Nancy, dearest Nancy, sure, that will never do.
  The Government has ordered, and we are bound to go.
  The Government has ordered, and the Queen she gives command.
  Am I bound enough, my love, to serve in a foreign land.
- 4. But I'll cut off my yellow hair, and I'll go along with you. I'll dress myself in uniform, and I'll see Egypt too. I'll march beneath your banner while fortune it do smile, And we'll comfort one another on the banks of the Nile.
- 5. But your waist it is too slender, and your fingers they are too small. The sultry suns of Egypt your rosy cheeks would spoil.
  Well, the cannons they do rattle and the bullets they do fly, And the silver trumpets sound so loud to hide the dismal cries.
- 6. Oh, cursed be those cruel wars, that ever they began, For they have robbed our country of many a handsome man, For they robbed us of our sweethearts. Why, their bodies they feed the lions, On the dry and sandy deserts which are the banks of the Nile.

#### **NOTTAMUN TOWN**



Met the king and the queen,
 And a company more
 Come a-walking behind
 And a-riding before.
 Come a stark naked drummer
 A-beating the drum,
 With his hands on his bosom,
 Come marching along.

3. Sat down on a hard,
Hard cold frozen stone,
Ten thousand stood 'round me,
Yet I was alone.
Took my hat in my hands
For to keep my head warm.
Ten thousand got drownded
That never was born.

#### **FOTHERINGAY**



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## **AUTOPSY**

by SANDY DENNY

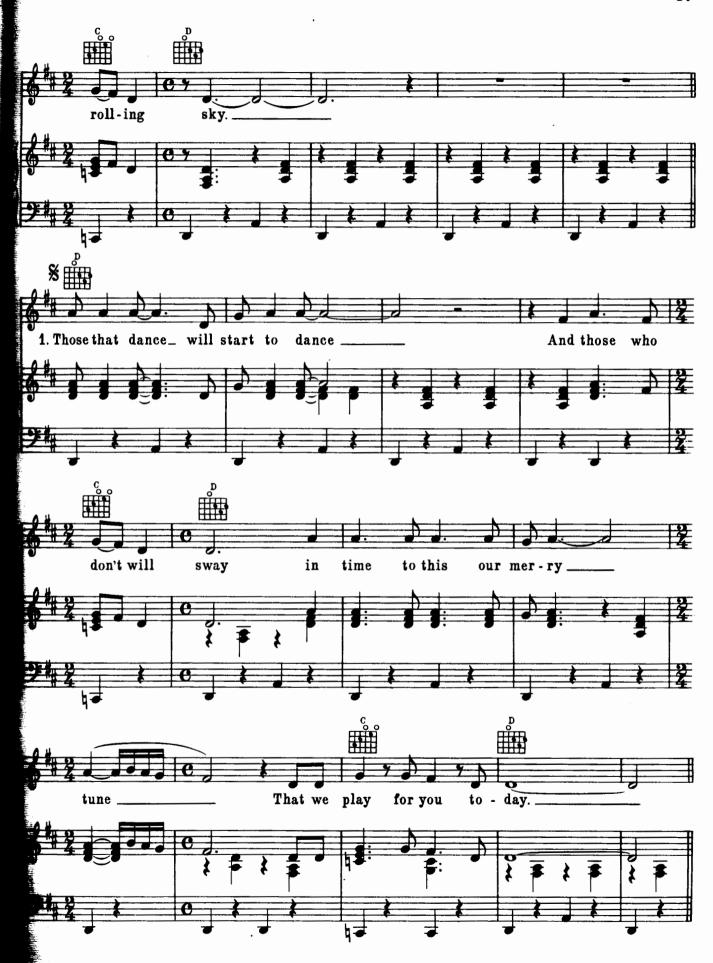






## **COME ALL YE**

By SANDY DENNY and ASHLEY HUTCHINGS Moderately all you roll - ing min - strels, to-geth-er we will And try to\_\_\_ \_ rouse the spir-it of the air, And move the





- 2. Our fiddler, he just loves to play. That's why he plays so good. And now he plays a violin Made out of solid wood. Chorus
- 3. Possessor of the magic touch, But no magician, He will play for you some magic notes Instead as you will see. Chorus
- Chorus 5. The man who plays the bass does make Those low notes you can hear. The high notes come from you and me For we will sing so clear.

4. The sound of beating on his drums

From behind you'll hear,

And to the rhythm of guitar

We hope you'll lend an ear.

Chorus

# WRETCHED WILBUR



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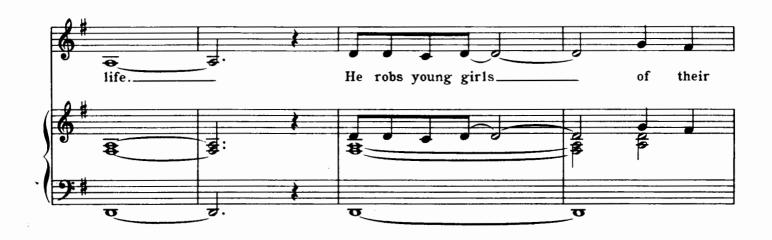




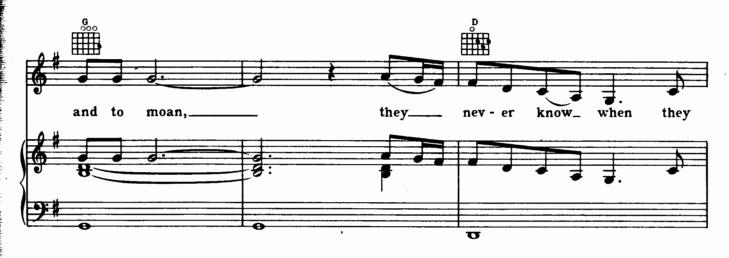
# A SAILOR'S LIFE

Traditional Arr. FAIRPORT CONVENTION











- 2. Well, there's four and twenty all in a row My true love he makes the finest show. He's proper tall, genteel and all And if I don't have him I'll have none at all.
- 3. Oh, father, build for me a bonny boat, That on the wide ocean I may float And every queenship that we pass by, Their island choir for my sailor boy.
- 4. Oh, they had not sailed long on the deep When a queen ship they chanced to meet. You sailors all, pray tell me true, Does my sweet one sail among your crew?
- 5. Oh no fair maiden, he is no here, For he's been drownded, we bring him here On you green island as we passed it by, There we lost sight of your sailor boy.
- 6. Well she wrung her heart and she tore her hair. She was like a young girl in great despair. And her little boat against the rock did run. How can my real love, my sweet William is gone.

## THE OPTIMIST







- 2. There's a tale which says he was pursued by an assassin. What he knows of that, no-one can tell. How close he came to the trapper, But he stopped by a wishing well. He said, "Next year there will be many flowers, Each one much brighter than the one before."
- 3. As he turned he caught the feeling,
  And he smiled as he walked down the road.
  All my days they are filled with meaning,
  But I have yet to fathom the code.
  But next year I'll call the tune and it won't be easy.
  The timing's all out of place with how you feel.

# Biography

In the summer of 1970, readers of "Melody Maker" voted Sandy Denny Britain's No. 1 girl singer.

In a trice she was 'discovered' by the nation's daily press who were labouring under the illusion that the only ladies working as singers were called Dusty, Cilla, Sandie and Lulu.

So it was that, after more than four years as a folk club soloist, as a member of the Strawbs, lead singer with Fairport Convention and the instigator of Fotheringay, Sandy Denny became a star.

And, such is the lady's way, that she promptly packed up what she was doing and announced her temporary retirement. She did not, she said, want to get into the stardom bit.

Sandy Denny is pretty casual about herself, and gets as much amusement out of being called a star as she gets pleasure from just getting up on a stage with a guitar or piano for accompaniment, and singing a bunch of nice songs.

Sandy is 23, and made her debut at a London surburban folk club called "The Barge". She decided to get up when she heard the girl there doing a lesser job than she knew she could do.

A year later she left art college, her diary already pretty full with club bookings. The money wasn't great, but Sandy decided singing was a better way to earn a living than anything else she could think of.

For two years she worked solo, then was asked by the early Strawbs to work with them. She did, briefly, gained confidence, and then replaced Judy Dyble as lead lady with Fairport Convention, sharing vocal duties with Ian Matthews.

She also consolidated her songwriting reputation when American singer Judy Collins recorded and had a hit with her "Who Knows Where The Time Goes?"

The time came, as it eventually does with talents like Sandy's, that she outgrew Fairport Convention and her own band, Fotheringay, became more than a passing idea and more of a necessity.

Fotheringay lasted one album. A good one which promised great things, but the heavy pressures which arose from being fully responsible for keeping four musicians in work, and the unwanted glare of publicity which MM poll win meant, was too much for her.

Not that Sandy was ungrateful for the award, just that she got a bit embarrassed by the ensuing fuss.

So the wheel has turned full circle, and Sandy is on her own again - albeit assisted by some of the friends she has worked with along the way.

She made her solo debut, or re-debut, at the Lincoln Festival with such names as The Byrds and James Taylor.

One reviewer, Robin Denselow, writing in the staid columns of "The Guardian", said of her appearance: "Sandy Denny showed what an extremely fine and original singer she is. Sounding happier than in her other two bands, and performing the sinister, brooding ballads from her forthcoming album, she demonstrated at last the full range and subtlety of her voice, which is equally suited to heavy rock, or her arrangements of traditional songs like "Blackwaterside". Hers was the most encouraging performance of the festival."

In September, Sandy is to make her first visit to America as an artist after playing London's Queen Elizabeth Hall and her solo album "The North Star Grassman and The Ravens" will be released.