

Bio information: **ROBERT WYATT**

Title: **SOLAR FLARES BURN FOR YOU** (Cuneiform Rune 175)

Cuneiform promotion dept: (301) 589-8894 / fax (301) 589-1819

email: Cuneiform2@aol.com [publicity & promotion]; CuneiformRadio@aol.com [radio]

http://www.cuneiformrecords.com

**FILE UNDER: ROCK**

British artist **Robert Wyatt** is one of the most brilliant and singular figures in the world of rock. A vocalist, multi-instrumentalist and composer as well as a painter and writer, he began his musical career as a drummer for some of the most innovative bands of the 1960s-70s, including the legendary **Soft Machine**. His career as a solo artist began over 30 years ago, with CBS's 1971 release of *The End of an Ear*. Since then, Wyatt has released numerous highly acclaimed albums and singles on **Dutch East, Gramavision, Rough Trade, Ryko, Thirsty Ear**, and **Virgin**; balancing a hit pop single among his solid avant garde credentials. He has produced a body of work uniquely notable for its accessibility, purity of artistic vision, and political responsibility, untempered by commercial concerns. As stated with elegant simplicity by the *All Music Guide*, "he has recorded some stunning music, full of wonder, possibility, and pure emotion."

Born Jan. 28, 1945 in Bristol, England, Wyatt was raised outside London (including a stay in South London) by his mother, a BBC journalist. His father joined them when Wyatt was 6. Wyatt recalls being impressed by family trips to the ballet (**Katherine Dunham's** 'African' ballet), opera, and art museums (i.e. Mexican Art show at the ICA). During his formative years, he was also greatly impressed by his older brother's collection of **Danny Kaye** records. For those unfamiliar with the man Wyatt calls his early childhood hero, Billy Wilder describes Kaye (1913-87) in PBS' American Masters Series/ pbs.org as:

*"a great American entertainer with an enormous creative range, encompassing dance, popular song, classical music, complicated verse, impersonation and improvisation, which melded together into an utterly unique, signature style... Kaye displays the vocal talents which made him famous when he says simply, "The pellet with the poison's in the vessel with the pestle, the chalice from the palace has the brew that is true." Kaye's comedies were often intricate, with Kaye playing more than one role"*

Not long after returning to the family, Wyatt's father was stricken with MS and the family moved away from metropolitan London to a tiny village in Kent. Wyatt commuted to boy's school in **Canterbury** before dropping out and working to support himself. He became the drummer for several of Canterbury's prominent progressive bands, including the **Wilde Flowers** and **Soft Machine**. After leaving Soft Machine in 1971, Wyatt formed his own band, **Matching Mole**, in which he handled both drums and vocals, and began to develop his solo career. In June 1973, Wyatt broke his back, an accident which left him paralyzed from the waist down and effectively ended his drumming career. Wyatt's first solo release following his accident was the renowned *Rock Bottom*, a masterwork that launched his solo career as a vocalist and multi-instrumentalist.

This CD, *Solar Flares Burn for You*, consists of previously unreleased recordings spanning (1972–present) Wyatt's solo career. The CD includes two BBC radio broadcasts, from 1972 and from 1974; a 1973 film soundtrack and the actual corresponding film (in Quicktime video format); studio projects done with Hugh Hopper 2002-2003; and a solo studio demo of a previously unheard work, "The Verb". The earliest tracks are from a Dec. 5, 1972 BBC radio broadcast that Wyatt did with keyboardist **Francis Monkman**, a member progressive rock band **Curved Air**. These tracks range from an ethereally beautiful, semi-abstract tract, to directly politically oriented works, to a tribute to Danny Kaye. In a later, Sept. 10, 1974 BBC broadcast, Wyatt sang two songs, "Alifib" and "Sea Song", from his *Rock Bottom* lp; "Soup Song", which later appeared on *Ruth is Stranger than Richard*; and his hit single, a cover version of "I'm a Believer", a **Neil Diamond** song popularized by **The Monkees**. In another instance, live performance of his hit had assumed political significance, a case for handicapped rights. The *All Music Guide* notes that "Controversy ensued when the BBC's long-running weekly pop music program Top of the Pops refused to allow Wyatt to perform the song in his wheelchair. After a significant protest played out in the music trade papers, Wyatt did perform."

The CD derives its name from the soundtrack Wyatt did for *Solarflares Burn for You*, a film by experimental filmmaker **Arthur Johns**, best known for the special film effects on *Superman* and *Superman 2*. Because Wyatt and Johns did the film and soundtrack in true collaboration, both media are featured on this CD. Autobiographical in nature and non-narrative in format, the film - "a painting that moved in time" - juxtaposes urban and rural landscapes, scenes from industry and agriculture, and images of the artist and the workingman. To quote Johns, it is "a film about landscapes...inner landscapes".

Recent work on *Solar Flares Burn for You* includes two tracks Wyatt did in 2002-2003 with **Hugh Hopper**. The musicians first worked together in the Wilde Flowers and Soft Machine; here, Wyatt contributed music to two of the loop pieces that have occupied Hopper in recent years. The CD closes with the premiere of a new song: Wyatt's 2003 demo recording for "The Verb".

*Solar Flares Burn for You* is Robert Wyatt's first solo release with Cuneiform. Cuneiform previously released two archival CDs by Matching Mole: *March* (2002) and *Smoke Signals* (2001). Wyatt first appeared on Cuneiform on its 1996 **Gary Windo** CD, *His Master's Bones*, and on the label's Soft Machine archival releases: *Backwards* (2002), *Noisette* (2000), *Virtually* (1998) and *Spaced* (1996).