

John Watterson (Fake Thackray) - Biography

“Jake would have loved the skill of the performance, the accuracy of the impression, and the affection it contains. Long may John continue to keep Jake’s memory alive so affectionately and skilfully, and introduce more people to one of the most remarkable talents I ever met.”

Sir Richard Stilgoe

John Watterson, an adopted Yorkshireman, was born and grew up on the Isle of Man, which is where he first saw and met Jake Thackray in 1975. He recalls a performance at the local folk club, which had the audience in stitches and also a chat with a very modest and self-deprecating Jake at the interval – ‘a big man and a huge talent, clearly embarrassed by the standing ovation, Jake preferred to have a pint at the bar with the punters and didn’t really see what the fuss was about’.

John took a business degree at Loughborough (‘my mum was stationed at Bletchley Park in WW2 and said Loughborough was quite nice’) and this was followed by a 30 year ‘accidental’ career in the laundry industry (‘I went to an interview in 1979 just for the travel expenses, and the buggers gave me a job!’).

On learning of Jake’s passing in 2002, John decided that the songs were too good not to be kept alive, so he set about learning more of them. ‘Before I had decided what to do when I grew up, it was time for my mid-life crisis. I told my wife, Carol that I wanted to give up the day job and sing Jake’s songs and she said – OK then – so I did!’

A few years ago John had the huge honour of performing at a memorial evening in Monmouth (which is where Jake and his family had moved to) attended by Jake’s widow, Sheila, and two of their sons (who signed the back of his guitar – now a much treasured possession). ‘The scariest gig of my life – but such a privilege!’

Members of the Thackray family are now actively supporting John’s research to write a biography of the great man, and John has, on occasions, been thrilled to be allowed to borrow Jake’s own guitar to play at gigs. “There is a line in ‘Last Will and Testament’ which cracks me up if I am playing the great man’s guitar - ‘....*You can fish your trout with my fly and tackle, you can play upon my guitar...*’ Brings a lump to the throat” John admits.

John's appreciation and love of Jake Thackray's music is obvious to his audience. His performance is a celebration of the man that was Jake Thackray – his life, his work and his genius – a genius which the new age of music lovers are in danger of missing out on. John is a talented guitarist and vocalist and has that engaging quality that makes you want to listen to his performance. When you wrap these ingredients up in the songs of Jake Thackray the result is a highly entertaining, heartfelt tribute to one of the finest songwriters of the 20th century.

John has toured the show with Fairport Convention on their 6 week nation-wide tour, and has performed 20 shows at the Edinburgh Fringe, earning several 4 star reviews. He has also been delighted to support Ralph McTell, Richard Digance, Vin Garbutt and many more of his music heroes.

Radio appearances have included Radio 3s 'The Verb' with Ian McMillan, and Radio 4s 'Great Lives' with Matthew Parris and Isy Suttie.

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/radio4/greatlives/greatlives_20140506-1659c.mp3

Fake Thackray is in increasing demand for clubs, festivals, village halls arts centres and theatres, as well as house concerts and after dinner engagements. 'It is wonderful that Jake still has so many fans across the country, and the younger generation are catching on to a man who should be regarded as one of our greatest national treasures' says John.

John lives in York with his wife Carol and they have two sons, Chris and Alex, who come to heckle their Dad whenever they can. For more details and bookings call 07703 792861 or 01904 785366, visit www.fakethackray.com or Fake Thackray's Facebook page.