

PAUL YOUNG

In the middle of the 1980s, Paul Young became one of the biggest pop stars in the world, creating a body of work that endures to this day. A blend of the old school and new school, he was the epitome of someone who had worked his way up from – quite literally – the factory floor to become a superstar, scoring number one singles on both sides of the Atlantic. When he broke through in 1983, his Anthony Price besuited look was one of two iconic pop images in the UK that year. The other was David Bowie, then under his serious moonlight.

Paul Young was born in the rock'n'roll era and grew up during the beat boom. Born in Luton in January 1956, he took piano lessons, was a self-taught guitarist, and as a teenager, fell under the thrall of Island Records. Young loved Free and because of them, he began listening to things around the margins, things that they listened to. He wanted to play bass like Andy Fraser and sing like Paul Rodgers. "I was always drawn towards to blues and soul." Young recalls. "Even though Free had had a hit with 'All Right Now', they were a blues band, they knew they needed a pop song, so they wrote a pop song, and it was a hit. But when you look at their other stuff, they went straight back to the blues."

In 1972, aged 16, Young took up a position at the Vauxhall manufacturing plant in Luton, serving an apprenticeship just like his father before him. In his spare time, Young played in local bands. His first gig was as a hired-in bass player for Moss Wreck, but it was in his next outfit, Kat Cool & The Kool Cats, that he began to draw inspiration from those around him. "They were a mish mash," Young says. "However, their leader, Mario Tavares, was the first musician I came across who liked anything and everything. He turned me on to Bruce Springsteen, Van Morrison, and yet he was still a big Led Zeppelin fan and played like Jimmy Page. He loved all this other stuff." It was clear that eclecticism was to be the way to go for Young, and would prevail in his choice of material as his career got underway.

Unlike many musicians of a similar age, punk, however, did not have a profound effect on Young. "I saw the Damned play at Luton's Royal Hotel in October 1976, but I was in a band and all my money was going on equipment – I couldn't afford to go to gigs, so I missed a lot of it. I didn't quite understand it, either, because I liked a lot of the music that had gone before that they were rebelling against." However, what Young *did* like was the fact it focused on live music again; "I got off on that side of it, the energy and the attack."

Young's first signed outfit, Streetband, had boundless energy and attack. They recorded for Logo, the recently-founded UK label that

had purchased the Transatlantic catalogue. Although Streetband started in a jazzy direction, they morphed into a hard-edged pop-rock combo. Logo suggested that Chaz Jankel, then established as a multi-talented writer and producer for Ian Dury and the Blockheads, work with them.

It didn't work out quite how they planned it. When Jankel first went to see them play, "the rhythm player broke a string and had to change it," Young sighs. "The band started playing the old Lorenz and Hart song 'Lover' while we were waiting for him, and I started singing over the top, adding the word "Toast" at the end of chord sequence. Chaz, being a Blockhead, thought it was all worked out – half-talking over a rhythm appealed to him." It proved a blessing and a curse. Released as the B-side of their debut single, 'Hold On', it was flipped over by DJ Kenny Everett and soon a Top 20 UK chart placing and *Top Of the Pops* beckoned, negating all the fine songs on their album, *London*, to which it was hastily added. Then, everyone was expecting witty songs, especially people now turning up at gigs. As a result, everything they played became faster and louder.

Before long, Young and bassist Mick Pearl hot-footed it to form Q-Tips. "There's always a mod revival every couple of decades, so it was on the back of that," Young says. "It felt very comfortable to me to sing this stuff and I was having a ball. We were an engaging bunch." Q-Tips were the ultimate live band. The soul revue of the Q-Tips went on to support the Who and other luminaries, and played over 700 gigs in three-and-a-half years. Their debut album on Chrysalis reached number 50 in the UK charts in August 1980.

On one Q-Tips tour, there was a wonderful moment of serendipity. Jools Holland, recently departed from Squeeze asked if his new band, the Millionaires, could support Q-Tips: "We could fill places, universities, and they wanted to wear themselves in a bit," Young recalls. In Holland's group were Welsh bassist Pino Palladino and vocalists Maz Roberts and Kim Leslie, soon to be christened the Fabulous Wealthy Tarts by Holland. All three would go on to play a key role in Paul Young's early career. "We went out to watch them and we spotted Pino and the Wealthy tarts and thought – OK, *they are good.*"

As the 80s truly got underway, things were changing: record companies were no longer looking at signing huge ensembles, as the synth duo seemed to provide a perfect and relatively inexpensive – way forward. Q-Tips manager, Ged Doherty was looking for a new deal for them. "He went to three or four record labels and most of them were saying that they would have me alone." Young says. "He knew I'd been working on some stuff with Ian that the others were not so keen on. So he suggested it was time I tried something different." The

Ian in question was 'Rev' Ian Kewley, the keyboard player with Q-Tips, who would for the next five years, be Young's right-hand man. The song called 'Broken Man' would play a key part on what was to become Paul Young's debut album.

Paul Young signed a solo deal with CBS in 1982, under the auspices of Muff Winwood. "I always had it in mind to do a Rod and the Faces – go off and do the Paul Young album and then go back on the road with Q-Tips," Young suggests. "But the drummer never spoke to me again and the brass section had to go off with Adam Ant to earn some money. We never really got back together because my first album became massive!"

There were final pieces in the jigsaw to be fitted before that. There was also one last, surprising diversion: Young became the touring guitarist and keyboard player for number one hitmakers, Tight Fit. "I got the record deal which wasn't enough to put Rev on a retainer, so he had to earn some money." Knowing they needed time to write and arrange together, Tight Fit MD Kewley got Young a job, and the ideas for the album formulated while they were playing songs like 'Fantasy Island' to party loving crowds.

Aside from the songs they had written, Young knew his project would stand or fall on the other material selected. Disenchanted with publishing companies playing him Pat Benatar songs, Young dug deep and came up with an eclectic bunch of material.

Young also found a producer in Laurie Latham, who had worked with Ian Dury on *New Boots and Panties!!* "Laurie Latham came along because Nick Lowe and Trevor Horn priced themselves out of the market." Young laughs. It was a fortuitous meeting. "One of the first ideas we had was to get the girls do some answering parts on 'Love Of The Common People'," Young recalls. "Maz was going out with Pino, and he was fortunately up for anything. We immediately thought that 'Wherever I Lay My Hat (That's My Home)' would be a great one for Pino, too."

Young's new backing band, with Kewley, Palladino, second keyboard player Matt Irving and Maz and Kim were to be called the Royal Family. "We got Steve Bolton on guitar, a very unorthodox player. He played like Adrian Belew with a lot of feedback control and then he could funk like a mutha. Mark Pinder was a very four-on-the-floor drummer. We had all this weird stuff going on."

Success, however, was far from meteoric. His debut single, a version of

Don Covay's 'Iron Out The Rough Spots', was released in November 1982, and failed to chart. As did his second single, an uplifting cover of the Nicky Thomas reggae classic, 'Love Of The Common People', although it was a huge radio favourite.

Young, Kewley and Latham were too busy to worry. Material was coming thick and fast. Steve Bolton had 'Ku Ku Kurama', Young and Kewley had 'Tender Trap' and 'Broken Man'. "We had 'Iron Out The Rough Spots' and 'Love Of The Common People', but I said to Laurie that we needed some more contemporary material to balance it out," Young recalls. "He came up with 'Love Will Tear Us Apart' – and then we had Anthony Moore's stuff as well." Many may be surprised to find the old Slapp Happy musician contributing to a Paul Young record, even more so perhaps, his wife Dagmar Krause singing on 'Love Will Tear Us Apart' as well. "Mark Pinder and Matt Irving had worked on Anthony's stuff with Laurie, and so it had all these connections that began to come together."

It was with the release of his cover of an old Marvin Gaye B-side, 'Wherever I Lay My Hat (That's My Home)' that Paul Young became a star. From the sound of Palladino's fretless bass to Young's mournful delivery, the record sounded like a number one. Young's version introduced a dimension of regret to Gaye's jaunty caddishness. "Boys will be boys, perhaps, but you realize that you are such a fool," Young says.

Young's breakthrough was abetted by his appearance on the new TV music show, *The Tube*. Booked at the last minute, his performance tore the playhouse down. With the Royal Family and the Fabulous Wealthy Tarts, Young had switchboards jammed. He appeared three times in quick succession, with his alluring gaggle of musicians and two female vocalists with dance routines that were so overtly unusual, you simply could not take your eyes off of them. To put it bluntly, the Royal Family looked *strange*. "Pino was 6 foot 4, I was six foot, Bolton looked odd, Rev on keyboards was a bit on the short side – it was like something out of *Lord Of The Rings!*," Young laughs. But somehow it worked.

'Wherever I Lay My Hat (That's My Home)' entered the UK Top 30 at number 30 and reached number one on 23rd July just after Rod Stewart's 'Baby Jane'; this was the chart of Heaven 17 and the Lotus Eaters; of 'Moonlight Shadow' and Eurythmics; and here he was. Paul Young was number one.

No Parlez was released on 18th July. It rose to number one for what seemed an eternity that summer. It was perfect happenstance, the times, the players, the look. "It seemed like it was meant to happen, as every musician I pulled in to be on *No Parlez* stayed," Young says.

“They all said that if this comes off and a touring band came together, they would want to be in it, as they were really enjoying the sessions.”

A couple of sizeable follow-ups, a re-release of ‘Love Of The Common People’ and the majestic Jack Lee-write ‘Come Back And Stay’ saw Young dominate the charts. *No Parlez* remained on the UK listings for 119 weeks, spending five weeks at number one. *No Parlez* was everywhere. Girls liked it, boys liked it. “Kim from the Fabulous Wealthy Tarts told me that even her gran liked it, and she was 60!,” Young laughs.

Although Young took time off to rest his voice during 1984, he needn't have worried, as in the world outside America, *No Parlez* and its attendant videos kept doing the work for him. *No Parlez* sold seven million and became the biggest selling UK-signed album on CBS.

The first new Paul Young material arrived in autumn 1984 with a stomping fretless'n'fairlight version of Ann Peebles ‘I'm Gonna Tear Your Playhouse Down’ which reached number nine in the UK charts. The first indication that his follow-up album would be huge was his first self-penned A-side, ‘Everything Must Change.’ “I didn't have that many of my own songs, but then it took me a long time to sit comfortable as a writer.”

The one final bit of business for Young in 1984 was to cement his fame. Young was one of the featured vocalists on ‘Do They Know It's Christmas?’ by Band Aid. Bob Geldof was later to say that Young had the ‘horrendous task’ of going first, but Young “rose to the challenge.” “It was an afterthought on the day,” Young says. “Then it became much more of a big thing, because it was a big thing to be that first voice.” In the charts of Christmas week 1984, Young was at number one with Band Aid and at number nine with ‘Everything Must Change.’

1985 was a remarkable year for Young, a vindication of the hard work he had put in. If America had remained impervious to his charms, that was about to change. In the US ‘Hat’ had only grazed the bottom of the singles chart. ‘Come Back and Stay’ got into the *Billboard* Top 30. But the eclecticism of its parent album saw it stall at number 79.

“I was frustrated as I couldn't fathom out what they didn't like about it as it had been so successful everywhere else,” Young says. “But, I didn't set out to address it. ‘Every Time You Go Away’ wasn't even on the album at that point. Ged heard it and said that it was all so dark, and we needed some lighter stuff. Ballads like ‘Standing On The Edge Of Love’ are very sad, very haunting. There was nothing that had that

warmth on it. We needed a couple more pop songs, so we went back and recorded 'Every Time You Go Away.'" A cover of the Daryl Hall and John Oates album track from *Other Voices*, this proved to be one of the best decisions Paul Young ever made.

The Secret Of Association was released in April 1985 and was soon at the UK top spot. With its broad selection of material – including a fabulous take on Tom Waits' 'Soldier's Things' and five Young/Kewley co-writes, it spent just under a year on the UK charts.

Young's touring and promotional schedule was broken in July 1985 for his appearance at the Wembley leg of Live Aid. "At one point, we tried to get on the American leg as we were touring out there at the time, but Bob had already decided that I was on the English stage. In retrospect I think that was meant to happen, as the English side was the best side. I didn't want to be involved in all that ladder jumping stuff that was going on in America. I was playing the moment that the concert went live around the world." Young's performance began with 'Do They Know It's Christmas', before segueing into 'Come Back And Stay'; he duetted with Alison Moyet on 'That's The Way Love Is', before culminating with his recent single, 'Every Time You Go Away', which was, by now, heading up the US charts.

"I'd lucked in with Band Aid as America knew virtually everyone else on that record apart from me. I toured America; I did my Live Aid appearance. I went on holiday the day after Live Aid and my manager joined me." 'Every Time You Go Away' reached US number one on 27th July. "It went to number one when I was in Antigua. There was hardly anybody there in this place – there were the four of us, Stacey, myself, Ged and his wife and a smattering of other people. And we were celebrating an American number one!"

"*Between Two Fires* was a very different experience." Young remembers of the 1986 follow-up album to *The Secret Of Association*. "America was constantly complaining that they couldn't pigeonhole me. That to me was a compliment, but it's a very British compliment. Part of the problem had been that I'd pull songs from everywhere but it didn't give it any coherence to the Americans. 'Every Time You Go Away' was number one, but they had a problem with 'Tear Your Playhouse Down' as that was not MOR, so US MOR radio wouldn't play it. The rock stations wouldn't play 'Playhouse' either because there was no guitar playing the riff."

So Young decided to make an album for America, which ultimately backfired. "We didn't use Laurie. There'd been a bit more friction on

the second album between Laurie, Rev and I, and it had been harder for me to get my point across because each person felt their contribution was probably bigger than it was."

The largely self-written *Between Two Fires*, as a result, was made by committee, and all of its rough spots had duly been ironed out. "It didn't please the Americans, and it didn't please the Europeans," Young says ruefully. However, it contained 'Wonderland', arguably, the overlooked gem hidden in plain sight at the summit of his career. "That is a great record; at the time it was compared to what went before, now, you can judge it on its own merit." That said, it was far from a commercial failure. Finally released in November 1986, it went to number four in the UK in a busy pre-Christmas chart and stayed on the listings for 17 weeks. During the recording of the album Young struck up a friendship with Italian singer Zucchero, who told Young he had finally been able to get a deal thanks to the door *No Parlez's* eclecticism had opened for him.

Although he performed a marvellous, spirited rendition of 'Don't Dream It's Over' at the Nelson Mandela concert at Wembley in 1988, Paul Young had taken time away from the music business to marry and celebrate the birth of his first daughter, Levi. When he returned in 1990, he came back with one of his best albums. *Other Voices* was almost a complete break with the past.

With only Palladino and Young intact from the first album, the credits for this album make for dazzling reading – five producers including Nile Rodgers and Peter Wolf, and a host of players from Stevie Wonder to David Gilmour. It's an expensive sounding record that is as upbeat as its predecessor was down. Young called in all the offers of assistance from musicians that he had garnered over the years: Gilmour contributes an unmistakable solo on 'Heaven Can Wait'. Chaka Khan sings backing vocals on 'Stop On By'. "It all fell into place. Chaka was serendipitous – I ran into her at Stevie Wonder's concert at Wembley. When I was recording 'Stop On By', I called Warne Livesey, as I was doing the English sessions on the album – I told him that I'd met her and that she wanted to sing it with me. That was marvellous."

Other Voices was released in June 1990, its title reflecting that he was now working with other writers and performers. Young's smile on the cover says it all. "I came up with the title, and I wondered if anyone else had used it," Young says. "I found out there was one other; Errol Garner. I thought that wasn't such a bad place to come from!" *Other Voices* also contained a brace of hit singles, from his reading of 'Softly Whispering I Love You' to his US Top 10 cover of the Chi-Lites 'Oh Girl.'

In 1991, *From Time To Time* gathered together all of his CBS singles and also featured a personal favourite of Young's, his duet with Zucchero, 'Senza Una Donna (Without A Woman)'. CBS had tried to pair him off with many singers over the years but Young had resisted until this recording. "The record company were dumbfounded," Young says. "They were thinking more of a 'superstar to superstar' duet; I was looking at it from the artistic side." Whatever, the record was an enormous hit reaching number five in the US and number four in the UK, and remains a much-loved radio staple

Paul Young's final Sony [as CBS had become in 1988] album, *The Crossing*, released in October 1993, is also one of his very best. Like *Other Voices*, it has a warm-sounding unity, and is a real musicians' album. If *Other Voices* was about finding and dialling up the best contacts in an address book, *The Crossing* has an organic feel, with some incredible players on it. A great deal of this was down to producer, Don Was. "We had Billy Preston on it; Jeff Porcaro on drums," Young recalls. "I discovered all these people, with their big names and reputations, were just all regular people making music and lovely to be with."

And *The Crossing* finally saw Paul Young duet with a female performer – albeit one who was an actor, not a soul diva. "Don asked me to write some lyrics for a musical idea he had," Young recalls. "I asked Drew Barfield, who's got a good turn of phrase, to come up with some ideas with me. He was so inspired that it had come from Don Was, he wrote a film noir murder story. Don liked it but said that all of his life he'd been trying to get away from the whacky lyrics of David (his partner in Was Not Was) and now he had some more. He was hoping for a straightforward love song!

Was declared, "If its film noir, we should get Kathleen Turner to sing it with you," Young added "I thought it was wild, and enquired if she could sing. Don laughed and said she'd never tried, but let's get her in." As a result, 'Down In Chinatown' is one of the most interesting recordings in Paul Young's career, and fits the mood of this often surprising and soulful album. "I have a very English view of American soul music," Young adds. "If you look at the Al Green stuff, it's weird. Al Green is like a folk version of American soul music." Even though *The Crossing* boasts a big production, a big hit in 'Now I Know What Made Otis Blue,' it's a warm album of folky, soulful songs.

After leaving Sony, Paul Young's status as a household name remained intact, receiving *This Is Your Life* treatment in 2001 when Chaka Khan

and Bobby Womack added praise and thanks for his body of work. And that work very much goes on, whether playing live and recording with Los Pacaminos, the Tex-Mex band he formed in 1993 as an antidote to his stadium capers, as a solo artist, or in his other life as a credible TV personality showcasing his incredible culinary skills on *Celebrity Masterchef* and *Hell's Kitchen*.

But it is the serious business of music making that thrills Young the most. "That's what I love as I get older; real players and musicians are the best people to hang out with. They just seem to have a very balanced view of life. Musicians are in touch with their emotions more than just the regular guy in the street. I'm really glad I'm in this industry." Young is one of the greatest curators of music, songwriters and interpreters to emerge from the UK over the past 30 years. "If people only look at the surface of what I have done, they can easily get the wrong impression of me," Young concludes. "Hearing *Tomb Of Memories*, you realise that I was always trying to push the envelope and the record company were always trying to keep me on the straight and narrow. My spectrum of music has always been very wide."

Open the Tomb, and step inside.

Daryl Easlea
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