

# Judge Smith - requiem mass

## *THE WHOLE STORY*

COMPILED FROM JUDGE'S POSTS ON HIS PROJECT FACEBOOK PAGE

['A LOST PROG-ROCK MASTERPIECE'](#)



[24 September 2015](#) ·

So folks, I've decided that it's time for me to put-up or shut-up about this blessed Requiem. I wrote it in 1973 -75, and it is perhaps my best music, but it is so demanding of resources that I've never before been able to contemplate recording it. Not that it's particularly long; it's not another 'Curly's Airships', which weighed-in at 2 hours 20 minutes. It's just a half-hour piece, but it does require the full, real-world participation of a sizable choir; a two-guitars, bass and drums rock band, a solo singer, orchestral percussion, and an eight-piece brass-section. And they all need to be good. Altogether that's a big undertaking, but I've recently realised that I really don't want to shuffle off this mortal whatsaname without having heard the thing. I would feel a failure. So I'm going to do it now while I still can. This is the story, it's quite interesting if you are into this sort of thing...

In the late 60s I co-founded a band called Van der Graaf Generator. We were one of the first wave of British bands (or 'groups', as they were still called) which were founded with the express purpose of developing some sort of music that went beyond the expectations of the Pop charts. Other established, and somewhat older, bands, who were already global 'pop stars' with strings of massive three-minute hits behind them, were also starting to move in this experimental or 'progressive' direction, and their millions of fans and their attendant, wealthy record companies, always eager to invest in the next big thing, meant that for a brief period of a few years, there was actually a possibility of making a career out of playing peculiar music.

If your band got anywhere, you tended to say you were a 'Progressive' band; if your group languished, playing in the grubby clubs without a recording contract, you could always say you were an 'Underground' band. But these convenient labels in no way defined the kind of music you played. The original Progressive Movement covered an astonishing variety of music; there was no one 'Progressive' style as such. Progressive artists came from every musical world: Rock, Blues, Pop, Jazz, Folk and Classical, they all threw up 'progressive' strands, but they were all utterly different from each other. There was a luxuriant, protean growth of bizarre, weird, and occasionally wonderful music, whose only common characteristic was its many creators' insistence on pushing the boundaries of their particular tradition as far as they could go; incorporating elements from other forms of music, daring to be different, doing something new. The idea that there was a 'Prog sound' or a 'Prog style' would have been thought ridiculous at the time.

I have gone on about all this because, with typical modesty, I have called the page 'A Lost Prog-Rock Masterpiece'. Backing-up the 'masterpiece' claim will have to wait until it's done (but if the recording goes well, the piece, whatever its failings, will possibly be *my* masterpiece.) However, the 'Prog-Rock' bit is less of a moot-point. My Requiem Mass was conceived in the early-to-mid 1970s, at the height of what we might call the first wave of British Prog. However, it displays none of the stylistic tropes of what many people today would think of as Prog Music. There are no keyboards, for instance, and no extended instrumental workouts. It's Guitar driven Rock Music, but it draws on Classical, Choral and liturgical models. Oh yes, and it's all in Latin.

How it came to be 'Lost' for so long is not really surprising. After leaving Van der Graaf Generator, and struggling unsuccessfully to get my next band 'Heebalob' off the ground, I retired to lick my wounds, and I kept my musical imagination alive by writing the Requiem. Although I have responsible for a considerable number of three-minute wonders, I have always been drawn to more extended musical forms. At that time, I was many years away from developing the Songstory as my favourite technique for composition, and the hefty scale and the strict requirements of a musical setting of the Roman Mass were appealing. And, for me, it had to be a Requiem Mass, because the Mass of the Dead features the medieval poem 'Dies Irae', and this is rock'n'roll lyrics of the highest order. Like most artists, I think that every new thing I do is simply dripping with ever-more fabulousness than anything I've ever done before. However it's obvious to an objective observer that much of the real gold appears early-on in a songwriter's career. I was in my late twenties, and I was getting some of my best tunes, and these tunes were going into the Requiem. I can't believe that I actually imagined that the work would ever be performed or recorded, but I suppose at the time I must have done. Perhaps I anticipated that some record company would discover me and pay for everything. Well, I was young and stupid.

In many ways, I am a musical primitive. I can't read or write music, I can't play the guitar and my keyboard has the names of the notes on it. I can sing and I was a very poor drummer, and that's the extent of my musical motor-skills. However I have always been able to imagine quite complicated music in my head, and in considerable detail. With the advent of cheap synthesisers and sequencers in the late 70s, I was able to make simple demos of the music bouncing around in my brain, demos that real musicians were able to turn into real music. It was a wonderful liberation. Before then I had to sing everything to a sympathetic muso, one part at a time, a process both slow and humiliating.

That was the position at the time I wrote the Requiem, and it was not until meeting Michael Brand, then a young music publisher and Brass arranger, that the piece entered the

physical universe. Michael's family publishing company was going to publish my other music, and, rather than pay me an advance on royalties, Michael, a highly talented and sympathetic musician, would transcribe my Requiem.

In a laborious process, I sang the music to him, note by note and bar by bar. Utterly ignorant of any form of musical language, as I was at the time, this was all I could do to help him. Nonetheless, amazingly, it worked. We somehow created the orchestrations, and by 1975, the result was a complete manuscript score in pencil and paper. (I have since then become slightly more adept at the nuts and bolts of music, but back then I was as helpless as a baby.)

A couple of years later I had another band, and with 'The Imperial Storm Band' I recorded a stripped-down 'band-only' version of the 'Dies Irae' as a demo (issued many years later on the discontinued CD 'Democracy' and performed it as a number at clubs and gigs around London. But the band foundered with the advent of Punk, and the Requiem went back into hibernation.

And so it stayed, for year after year. Every so often, it seemed that it might get performed. One choir-master was very keen, but then suddenly he was sent to prison. On another occasion, a famous and fashionable London church seemed about to take the plunge, but they wanted me to dedicate the work to a recently deceased political activist, and I demurred, foolishly perhaps. Then in the mid 80's Lloyd-Webber put out his own 'Requiem', which totally killed any commercial interest in my version for years. But truthfully, I have only myself to blame for my less-than-brilliant career. I always take 'no' for an answer. I am a hopeless salesman; I couldn't sell a lifejacket to a drowning man.

Composers are like magpies; they pinch stuff. From other composers sometimes, from traditional music often, and from themselves all the time. Good tunes are far too rare and precious to waste, and if you've used a tune in a piece that has run its course and had its time, then why not use it again for something else? Most people won't notice. I've done it as much as anyone, but I have never recycled anything from the Requiem. I have always felt it was inviolate; one day it would get done, and those tunes had to be kept fresh and new.

In 2009 I was contacted by Ricardo Odriozola, an Associate Professor at the Grieg Institute (the music conservatoire attached to Bergen University). Ricardo is from the Basque country in the North of Spain, but has lived in Norway for many years. He is a concert violinist, conductor and composer, and works extensively in the field of Classical and Contemporary Serious Music. However, very unusually for a senior academic musician, Ricardo also has a great love, and an encyclopaedic knowledge, of the best of progressive rock and folk music.

Ricardo likes my music and had heard me talk about the Requiem, and he now wanted to see the score, so I duly wrapped it up in a parcel sent it off to Norway. Ricardo seems to relish a challenge, and finding the work to be of some interest, he transcribed the whole thing onto a digital score-writing program. It was now ready to be discussed and edited.

I travelled to Norway in April 2009 for two weeks intensive work with the indefatigable Ricardo on no less than three of my music projects, and I have written about this remarkable experience in an illustrated blog on my website <http://www.judge-smith.com/theclimber/storyBergen.php>

Working on the Requiem Mass with Ricardo was frankly a rather spooky experience. It could be described as a piece of musical necromancy, in the sense of bringing back to life

something long-dead. Because I wrote the Requiem before I started making even the most basic demos of my compositions, I had completely forgotten quite a lot of the music, and to suddenly hear it, played back from this thirty-five year-old score was quite eerie, and a rather emotional experience for me. Ricardo's notation program will actually play back the written music using the basic set of musical sounds that are inside every computer. It doesn't sound particularly good, but for someone who can't read the written score, it's a godsend.

Back in 1975, one of the movements of this thirty-five minute piece was obviously not up to the standard of the rest, and I had written a much better substitute quite soon after the score was completed, but there had never been a pressing reason to formally update the work. Now we were able to do this, and to go through the whole piece, bar by bar, making numerous other corrections and improvements along the way. It's a tribute to Michael Brand that he had been able to interpret my wailings and croonings as accurately as he did, but by the time I came home from Norway, Ricardo and I had completed an improved, lean and powerful score for a half-hour Choral Rock-Monster.

[3 October 2015](#) ·

I am very happy to tell you that things are about to start moving on the project. Because of the numbers of performers involved, the logistics of the recording are going to be pretty complex. The first stage of the project will be to record the Rock Band track, then the mighty Brass section will be added, then the Choir will sing to that accompaniment, the orchestral percussion will be added at some point, and finally the solo vocalist will do his stuff.

The Band sessions are set for the 19th and 20th of November. The band is a classic two Guitars, Bass and Drums, Rock line-up, to be recorded 'live' in the studio, without overdubs, except for a few guitar solos.

I have always been certain that the Requiem could not be brought to life properly if my Classic Rock Band was created with overdubbery, recording one instrument at a time (a technique that can work perfectly well with other kinds of music) and because I don't have a band, this presented problems for me. However, meeting Daf Lewis, celebrated Bass player, early in 2014, made the entire project seem rather more feasible.

Daf is one of the elite group of session musicians who, among other things, make up the bands that play for West End musicals (Daf can currently be heard in 'Wicked' at the Apollo Theatre, Victoria.) <https://www.facebook.com/daflewis> & <https://uk.linkedin.com/pub/daf-lewis/71/799/3a4> He has now recruited a drummer and guitarist, of the same calibre as himself, who share his interest in Progressive music, and this trio will be joined by John Ellis, who has worked with me on most of my projects in recent years. This then, will be the Requiem band.

Drummer Gordon Wilson, is the drummer with Glasgow band Love & Money, and has toured with The Blue Nile, and Jim Kerr among many other artists.

<https://www.facebook.com/gwilsondrums?fref=ts> & <http://www.gwdrums.co.uk/>.

Guitarist James Pusey has played with an extraordinary variety of artists; from Paloma Faith, to Robin Gibb, Dionne Warwick to Donny Osmond, Andrea Bocelli to Shakin' Stevens.

<https://www.facebook.com/Jamespuseyguitar?fref=ts> & <http://www.jamespusey.com/>

Guitarist John Ellis formed legendary bands Bazooka Joe and The Vibrators, has performed and recorded for Peter Gabriel and Peter Hammill, and was a member of the Stranglers for 10 years. <https://www.facebook.com/john.ellis.75> & <http://www.chanoyurecords.com/>

[28 October 2015](#) ·

I have some news for you. Drummer Gordon Wilson will now be unable to take part in the project for family reasons, but his chair will be taken by someone Prog fans will know, and I hope approve of. Chris Maitland was the drummer with Prog legends Porcupine Tree from 1993 - 2002. He is a stunning musician, and I am really delighted that he has agreed to be involved in the project. [www.chrismaitland.com](http://www.chrismaitland.com)

I have not posted much here recently, but things have been very busy behind the scenes; a project of this size takes some organizing, with scores and instrumental parts flying around in all directions. A scary undertaking for me, since I don't read music.

I hope to have photographs of the up-coming sessions for you, and once these all-important sessions are done, I will tell you about our amazing Choir and the mighty Brass ensemble. Wish me luck for 19th & 20th and thanks again for your interest and support.....Judge

[12 November 2015](#) ·

Only a few more days, and I will be in the Producer's hot seat for the two days rehearsal/recording of the Rock Band tracks for the Requiem. This is going to be scary for me, because, unlike the wonderful musicians that I have somehow inveigled into playing for me, I can't actually read the score of my own music!

I have always said that there are two ways of getting the best from a musician. The first is to be better than they are, so you can seize the guitar, jump to the keyboard, or push the drummer off his stool, and show them how to do it.

The second way is to admit to being helpless and incompetent, and rely on musicians' inherent kindness and good nature. You can guess which option I have been obliged to go for, all my life. And I've seldom been disappointed.

I hope I will have a story, and some good photographs, for you the week after next, plus the promised news about the all-important choral element of the project. Meanwhile, wish me luck! I'm going to need it...

[22 November 2015](#) ·

Hi there Requiempathisers,

I am just surfacing after two seriously full-on days of recording the rock-band tracks of the Mass. We were working at Perry Vale Studios in Forest Hill, South London, owned and run by Pat Collier, Recording Engineer par excellence. Effortlessly assured and unflappable, I hardly had to say anything to him to get exactly what I was looking for, leaving me to engage with the band.

This was a new experience for me, 'directing' such high-end musicians, particularly as your composer doesn't read music, and couldn't really tell if the written parts actually reflected the music in his head.

Our line-up comprised Daf Lewis, Bass; Chris Maitland, Drums; James Pusey, Guitar and, of course John 'Fury' Ellis, Guitar. I split the nine-movement score into fifteen separate sections for recording purposes, and we recorded them with everyone playing 'live' in the Studio with big amps; and a bloody great joyful noise it made.

As I explained in an earlier post, the band (apart from John) is made up of session guys specialising in West End theatre, and their level of musicianship is pretty damn awesome. Essentially, they are classically trained musicians who happen to play rock

instruments, but the great surprise for me was how flexible and creative they were in moving away from the written score and trying other stuff to get the right effect.

It also helped that they are all friendly, helpful, altogether thoroughly good-eggs, and patient, both with Fury, who, great musician though he is, is no sight-reader, and with Judge, out-of-his-depth as usual. They can also Rock Like Hell, which is of course the general idea.

Interestingly, it turns out that Fiona & I had seen Chris Maitland playing with Ray Davies at Glastonbury Abbey three months ago, and a very fine gig that was.

By the end of the first day, I had relaxed considerably, as it was apparent that, barring disasters, we were going to get the job done, and the second day brought two visitors to the studio. Seán Kelly, music photographer extraordinaire made a comprehensive photo-record of the whole proceedings, and we were also visited by the conductor of our choir...

I think I will write about that separately tomorrow, but for now I can confirm that the Requiem now exists in the physical universe. It is incomplete, certainly, but the foundations have been well and truly laid. And these foundations Rock... but in a good way!

#### [25 November 2015](#) ·

On Friday the 20th Nov, the second day of recording, we were visited in the studio by David Temple. He is the conductor of the Crouch End Festival Chorus, and I am now very happy to tell you that the CEFC is our choir for the project.

The CEFC has a 30 year-plus history, (see <http://www.cefc.org.uk/aboutus.aspx>) and is one of the country's major symphonic choirs, performing regularly at the Barbican and other prestigious venues. In recent years they have also become the 'go-to' choir for projects involving a choral element with rock music, often performing with Ray Davis and with Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds, as well as presenting works by David Bedford and Robert Fripp.

So, altogether I am delighted that such a distinguished ensemble have chosen to become involved with the Requiem project. On the 9th of January 2016, a forty-five strong contingent from the Chorus will be recording the choral elements of the Requiem to the rock tracks we have just completed (as described in earlier posts).

#### [10 December 2015](#) ·

There is now a rough mix of the rock band 'backing tracks', as I suppose we should call them at this stage, and by Jove they sound pretty bitchin'. These are the tracks that the Choir are going to rehearse and record to.

They are also going to be added to by our newly appointed Orchestral Percussionist, Matthew Whittington who performs with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (no less) in the studio and all over the world, and works on numerous West End musicals.

The Requiem features important parts for Tympani, Tubular Bells, Tam-Tam and Big Bass Drum, among other things that go Bang and/or Crash, and you will be pleased to hear that we will be in compliance with the by-law that requires all composers of Requiems to feature massive Big Bass Drum thumps in the 'Dies Irae'.

Seriously, folks, my Requiem actually IS in compliance with the Catholic Church's requirements for a musical setting of the Mass of the Dead, while several other famous Requiems are not. (There are rules about which bits of the Liturgy must be set to music, and

which bits can be left out.) In theory, it could be done in Westminster Cathedral. Don't hold your breath.

### [1 January 2016](#) ·

A Happy New Year to all Requiempathisers!

I am happy to report that Matt Whittington's percussion tracks are now complete and add amazingly to the atmosphere and overall grandeur of what we've done so far. He did a great job.

Now for the big one... I'm off to London next week to attend the final Choir rehearsal, and then take the Producer's chair again for the Choral recording sessions. I've never done anything like this before, but I have great confidence in my Conductor (see my post of 25th Nov) and in the Studio we're using, where I have not worked before, but which has a great reputation. At this level, a complete disaster is unlikely, but Judge is going to have to be on the case.

I will try to post a report after the rehearsals, and I will write a full up-date once this phase of the work is complete. I also hope to have another stunning photographic record of what happens from Seán Kelly, Snapper of the Stars.

There are many more steps to go before the Requiem is done and dusted, most of them pretty interesting, and I will be writing it all up as I go. 2016 will be an interesting year, I think.

All Best Wishes  
Judge

### [10 January 2016](#) ·

Well, that was an experience!

For the last few days I have been in London for the Requiem choir recording, and unable to post on FB due to being a grumpy old technophobe who has no 'mobile devices'. However, I now have access to someone's computer and am in mystic union with the Interweb for a short time to report my progress.

The Crouch End Festival Chorus, are one hell of a choir. I attended their final rehearsal on Thursday evening, held in a huge church in North London. Their conductor, David Temple had booked extra singers for the project, in case the beastly coughing virus that is currently going the rounds was going to decimate the ranks, but miraculously everyone was fit and able, and so I had a choir of, I think, 48 people. The sound that this number of really good singers can produce is quite amazing, and when they open up the throttle, it's loud!

This requiem choir was exactly the right size for an in-yer-face, rock'n'roll project like this, but, on occasion, the CEFC can field a chorus of 130. And all of them highly skilled musicians who sight-read complex scores at the drop of a hat.

I confess that when I first heard my tunes coming back at me, so beautifully, and after so many years, your composer had tears running down his face. As one of the singers said to me later, 'That's what we do, we make grown men cry.' It's a sign that they are doing it right.

Due to some weird computer glitch between the files of the full-score and the choral parts, one movement had sections of completely the wrong chords (still sung beautifully, of course) but this potential disaster phased no-one except me. New parts would be generated overnight. Sorted.

Saturday's recording was another mind-blowing experience for me. I have never worked in a such a big, top-end studio before, and it's very impressive indeed. British Grove Studios did me proud; fabulous vintage equipment, a mixing desk the length of the M4, colossal monitors, bowls of fruit. I done died an gon' to heaven...

Really Good Recording Engineers all seem to have that air of quiet, laid-back, effortless competence that is just perfect for putting clients at ease, and Jason Elliot, Engineer du jour at British Grove, had this in spades (rather like Pat Collier - see below).

It was an education to watch our Conductor David Temple at work. As the putative 'Producer', I had to do very little. David and Jason, between them had it covered. David is a perfectionist. Time after time, the Choir would do a take that I, and even the Engineer, thought was perfect, only to hear it rejected and a new one commanded. This kind of dedication to detail pays off. As David says, the slightest mistake will, on repeated listenings, become irritating, and then intolerable.

The days recording was divided into two, three hour, sessions, and it is a measure of his skill and experience that that these started and ended exactly on time. The last take being completed a few seconds before the formal end of the last session.

I had the chance to meet quite a few of the singers, and a nicer, more interesting, bunch you could not wish to meet. Thank you, All. Your Composer is currently one Happy Bunny.

More from me very soon.

#### [20 January 2016](#) ·

Spent another day at Pat Collier's groovy studio (Perry Vale Studios, London SE23). John 'Fury' Ellis added some fresh guitar work, in his inimitable style, to a couple of tracks before we were joined by CEFC Choir Conductor, David Temple. We went through all the choir recordings from the 9th January, refining the whole mix as we went along, and he was able to make numerous small edits and adjustments to the Choir tracks; a painstaking undertaking, but well worth it. Why settle for 'really good' when a few hours extra work would bring it, in his words, 'so close to perfection'?

In a couple of weeks time, I fly off to Bergen, Norway, where Ricardo Odriozola (who transcribed the original manuscript of my piece into digital format, and added his own orchestrations, as well) will be conducting the Brass players as they add massed trumpets and trombones to the mix. It's gonna be a monster, Folks!

Your Composer Chum, Judge

#### [4 February 2016](#) ·

Hello again Requempathisers,

I am checking-in to tell you that I'm packing my long-johns and winter boots, as I'm off in an hour or so, bound for Norway. I am going to Bergen, a delightful city, though chilly this time of year, where I am going to record the mighty Brass section, of trumpets and trombones, for the Requiem.

I will be meeting up with old friend Ricardo Odriozola, who will be conducting and directing the ensemble (see earlier posts for more information about the amazing Ricardo). We will be recording in the prestigious Grieg Academy, the city's Conservatoire, where Ricardo is an Associate Professor of violin. We haven't met up in person for around seven years, and I am much looking forward to seeing him again.

We record all day Saturday, and I will be back, God willing, and with tales to tell, late on Sunday night. I'll post again next week.

Thanks for your interest,  
Judge

### [8 February 2016](#) ·

Well, I'm back. Bergen, on Norway's west coast, is a fine place; fjords, skiing, lovely Nordic Blonde people; all present and correct in high volume. Also rain. I was dressed for snow, but I got rain. Here is one of those beastly selfies, just to show I was there...

But despite the look on my face, I return one Happy Bunny. The Brass recording was a success, and I think we have some music now that is starting to sound thoroughly bitchin'. Recording music from a score requires a different set of skills than getting together with your muso mates to lay down some tracks, man. As well as needing sight-reading musicians to start with, you need a proper conductor, and preferably a recording engineer who reads music as well. Maybe I should have thought all this through a bit more!...

Fortunately, my friend Ricardo Odriozola came to the rescue. Ricardo, as earlier posts explain, is primarily responsible for my Requiem rising from the grave so many years after it had been consigned to its Eternal Rest in the land of Projects-That-Will-Never-Happen, and he was able to sort out the Brass Ensemble aspect of the piece, but this would need to take place in Norway, where he lives and works.

Ricardo found and hired the top class trumpeters and trombonists we needed, along with a great, musically literate, recording engineer. We recorded in a cavernous TV studio belonging to the University and, with Ricardo wielding the baton in a concentrated and carefully prepared session, recorded the extensive and demanding Brass parts in little more than five hours. All the guys were great (and of course everyone speaks immaculate English). We were a pretty international bunch in fact, including an American, an Italian, a Brit, and a Basque, as well as Norwegians.

They 'played a blinder', and the sound of four trumpets and four trombones blasting out my tunes put a smile on your composer's face. I expect the audio files to be with me by the end of this week, and then the focus will turn to finding the Voice, the wonderful Voice, to be my soloist. But that will be another story...

### [12 March 2016](#) ·

Hi Folks, Another full day's work in Pat Collier's South London studio earlier this week, and we now have a Requiem recording that includes:....

The Band  
& The Choir  
& The Brass!

We now only need The Voice & The Guitar Solos, and, rest assured, as far as these are concerned, I am on the case...

It's all starting to sound pretty damn wonderful, frankly (to my ears anyway) and, as far as I can remember, just like the music that the 25-year-old Judge imagined in his funny, naive little head all those years ago.

There are also rumours (nothing more at this stage) of a LIVE PERFORMANCE in 2017. More from me on this, as it develops, and an update, soon, I hope, about our Singer. Cheers, My Dears....

[11 April 2016](#) ·

Hello Folks,

Things have gone smoothly so far on the project, but now I must report a problem. I have spent the last month WOOING a fine lead singer for the Requiem, and I thought all was well. However that is now not going to happen, and your Composer is back at square one; looking for a Voice (and well fed-up about it).

And it is quite a specific voice I'm looking for.

I don't want a Rock Singer...

I don't want a Folk Singer....

I don't want a Pop Singer...

I don't want a Soul Singer...

I don't want an Opera Singer...

I'm looking for the sort of guy who could sing the lead in a West End musical, a lovely clear voice, with a range from low B to high C, who won't freak out at having to sing in Latin.

Please form an orderly queue at the door.....

[15 April 2016](#) ·

Hi to One and All,

My thanks are due to all those who sent in suggestions for a solo vocalist for the Requiem. I am very grateful for your interest, and there were some fine voices to listen to. I am particularly grateful to Tim West

<https://www.facebook.com/TimboidWest?fref=ufi&rc=p> for introducing me to a wonderful baritone called Nigel Richards <http://nigelrichards.org/> and I am very happy to tell you that he has agreed to be our soloist. We are planning to record his part in May, and of course I will keep you fully posted. I am very excited about this.

Now I must prepare for the Coming of Fury. John 'Fury' Ellis is coming to the West Country to record some guitar solos, the last remaining missing pieces of the puzzle. Expect loudness...

[28 April](#) ·

Hi Folks,

John 'Fury' Ellis has been with me in Somerset for a few days, recording the last pieces of Guitar work for the Requiem, including some killer solos...(well, you would expect nothing less.) He returned to London this morning leaving me with many hours of work to shoehorn his boundless creativity into the confines of the Requiem tracks.

We also did a bunch of work on ANOTHER project of mine, which I will 'keep schtum' about until the Requiem is done and dusted.

The next big Requiem event will be recording the wonderful voice of Nigel Richards at the end of May, with the final mixing days happening a couple of weeks later.

Keep the Faith Compadres!

[30 May 2016](#) ·

I haven't written much for a month, and that's because there hasn't been very much happening Requiem-wise. Until Now!

I am about to board the train for London where tomorrow we will be recording our solo vocalist, the splendid Nigel Richards (see earlier post below). I will of course report our

adventures, here, in full, and with luck, I will be able to include some photography, courtesy of fab snapster Seán Kelly.

I can also tell you something about the cover image that has been settled on (the cover image for what, is not exactly as easy to predict, but whatever it is, it will certainly have a cover, and you will certainly be able to get hold of whatever's inside it.)

A Requiem Mass is traditionally written in memory of one particular person. My Requiem wasn't. At the time it was written, I was a young man who had lost no-one who was precious to me, so it has no particular Dedicatee. Accordingly, my girlfriend Fiona suggested that we invite all the participants in the project; musicians, conductors, arrangers and producers, to submit photos of departed loved-ones which will be shown as a 'picture-wall'. Good call. The rough, proof-of-concept, graphic looks great, but I won't include it here. The real thing will not be long in coming.

I must away. Wish me luck. Allons Mes Braves!

[2 June 2016](#) ·

Hi there.

Well, I'm back, as of yesterday. Sorry I'm a bit 'en retard' in posting, but I can't get on with doing this writing stuff on a phone. I'm old, and in my mind a phone is a PHONE, for talking on, and is preferably made of black Bakelite and sits on a small table in the hall...

However this trip was a particularly good event. The cosmic Powers-that-be seem to have a soft spot for this project, and the crucial solo singer came to us by chance, and through the kind recommendation of Tim West.

Nigel Richards <http://nigelrichards.org/>, who I had never met before, turned out to be a great guy; a complete professional who has sung with the like of Nick Cave and Tom Waites, and has voice like Calvados and honey. He is also a hoot, and we had a lot of laughs throughout the day.

Photographer Seán Kelly kindly travelled a considerable distance to document the proceedings, and a few of his images (ones that are not destined for the CD/LP artwork) can be seen here in a hour or so.

We were recording in Pat Collier's other studio, as the great man himself is in such demand, but Engineer Tucker Nelson (from Idaho) was brilliant. The best Recording Engineers seem to combine amazing technical skills with a sort of Zen calm, that this jumpy rabbit finds very therapeutic. The rabbit has been particularly jumpy on this project because it's PROPER music, written down in black dots which I can't read! The eight-hour day concluded with a couple of hours of 'comping', compiling sections of the different takes into the perfect performance, a process in which Tucker's advice and musical discernment was crucial.

A good day! More from me this afternoon....

[13 June 2016](#) ·

Well, here I go again, off to London for a couple of days of mixing, stirring, simmering and adjusting the seasoning of the Requiem pie. If all goes well, it will be completely finished, and it can go straight in the oven. (I have no idea what I'm talking about...).

There will, I hope, be more sense from me at the end of this week.

All Best Wishes, Judge

[16 June 2016](#) ·

I've just returned from the generous hospitality of John Ellis & Elaine McIntyre in gritty London Town, to the relative peace and tranquillity of Glastonbury, clutching, in my hot little hand, the final mix of the Requiem Mass. I had booked two days mixing in the Forest Hill studio of the amazing Pat Collier, original bass-player with the Vibrators, and longtime production wizard. [www.perryvalestudios.com](http://www.perryvalestudios.com).

However, such is his speed of work that, despite the complexity of the project (four-piece Rock Band, full Choir, eight-piece Brass section, solo Vocalist, Orchestral Percussion, plus sundry guitar solos and overdubs, and all of these instruments with multiple takes) by the end of Day 1, we had an excellent mix of the whole thing.

Nonetheless, On Day 2 we were expecting the presence of David Temple, Conductor of the Crouch End Festival Chorus, who has taken a keen interest in the project, above and beyond his role of conducting the Choir. (Check-out his distinguished career at [www.cefc.org.uk/musicdirector.aspx](http://www.cefc.org.uk/musicdirector.aspx)) His recent work with the CEFC includes gigs with Ray Davies, Noel Gallagher, Ennio Morricone and Hans Zimmer, but yesterday he was helping me, and jolly glad I was about it.

His detailed and legendary attention to musical detail uncovered numerous small discrepancies and less-than-perfectionisms on the tracks. My reasonably good ears couldn't even detect some of these, but Pat seemed to be able to correct and improve them almost effortlessly, and, once corrected, lo! The track sounded sweeter. Other improvements occurred to all of us as the day continued, and a new mix gradually emerged. If Mix 1 was good, then Mix 2 is very good. And it doesn't half rock...

The initiative for the cover image (see my post of 30th May) has gone very well and we have received some lovely and touching photos. Now begins the graphic design process proper, and I fear there will be a short delay before I am able to tell you when you can actually hear the thing. However, I want to get it released as soon as possible, and I will certainly keep you up to date with developments.

Thank you for all your interest and support since the project began. It is much appreciated.

All Best Wishes, Judge

### [2 July 2016](#) ·

Hello all you Requiempathisers, and very special thanks to all those who wished me Happy Birthday on my homepage. The Requiem is now 99% done-and-dusted, but on further listening, a few small Tweakments, have suggested themselves as being desirable, and we want nothing less than perfection, don't we?

Fiona and I are just about to leave for our Summer holiday (am I looking forward to this - it's been quite a year) and that final bit of acoustic spit-and-polish will be applied on my return. However, the all-important artwork will be underway while we are off, sunning ourselves, so things will not be delayed unduly.

I really think that you're going to like it when it finally gets here (released and shipping around the end of August, I hope) and meanwhile I thank you for your continued interest and support.

All Best Wishes

Judge

### [3 August 2016](#) ·

Back from our Hols on the Greek island of Lesbos, lovely place and absolutely not infested with feral migrants (poor devils) whatever the papers might say, and the lovely Greeks really need visitors to keep coming. Anyway, I'm off to Lunnun Town tomorrow for the absolutely last tweakments to the Requiem, then on to Eastbourne to see how the graphic design is coming on. Last Lap coming up!

[15 August 2016](#)

This is a sort of Dead Time. Now I have to sit around and wait.

I have been working on the packaging, and the graphics are now virtually complete (and compiling a twelve page booklet is quite a serious business). I happen to believe that the packaging of a CD has become ever more important as digital availability has spread uncontrollably. The package has become one of the most important reasons why anyone should buy the actual CD rather than downloading the music on it for free from some lousy Russian website, and I'm glad our package looks the business; classy and sophisticated (all thanks to Paul Clark of Glide Design of Eastbourne, who's done quite a few of my things).

More from me when I have a release date fixed (i.e. when the pressing plant are able to deliver the CDs to me.) In a few weeks time, I would think.

Toodle Pip  
Judge