

# The whole of the MOON

The latest reissue in BMG's Art Of The Album series is a 50th anniversary revisit of The Small Faces masterpiece *Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake*. **Steve Harnell** goes looking for the other half of the moon with Happiness Stan. Are you all sitting comfybold two square on your botty? Then he'll begin...

**O**gdens' *Nut Gone Flake* was very much a double-edged sword for the Small Faces – it's their greatest triumph, but also contained within it the seeds of their ultimate demise.

The record represents the band's entire oeuvre in microcosm. In the space of just 38 minutes, *Ogdens'...* is a perfect summation of the East London four-piece's career, from feisty R&B to psychedelic whimsy, searing soulful entreaties to double entendre-laden music-hall knees-ups, it's all here.

You'll hear the 1968 record routinely described as a concept album, but that only applies to its second half. The opening side finds the band serving up an ambitious selection of standalone rock songs. They're on fire throughout – imaginative, funky and, most of all, impressively mature.

Key to the genesis of the album is Rolling Stones manager and Immediate Records owner, Andrew Loog Oldham. After two years of chart and gigging success, the Small Faces had nothing to show from their disastrous working partnership with notorious pop Svengali Don Arden. By 1967, they were virtually penniless, despite being one of the highest-grossing acts on the scene. When the young band told Arden they wanted out, he kindly informed their parents they were a drug-addled mess. The ruse didn't work and the quartet instead hooked up with Loog Oldham and the promise of unlimited studio time at Immediate. With their sights set on equalling the expansive creative vistas of The Beatles, Stones, Who

and Kinks, it was too good an offer to resist. In an interview about the original Small Faces remasters, drummer Kenney Jones explained: "Immediate Records was like the Virgin of its day. It felt so special for us not to be connected with a giant record company. This was something a bit more off the wall. Andrew realised for us to go forward creatively, we needed more studio time. And that's what we got, endless studio time. We were very fortunate to have Glyn Johns with us, too. He was an engineer in those days. I got the greatest drums sounds of all time from Glyn. He was amazing. Without Glyn, we would have been lost. We were very creative and made a major breakthrough in our style [with *Ogdens'...*]. We were always desperate to lose that teenybop image, although I guess we were destined to stay with it, I suppose."

#### GAME OF TWO HALVES

Small Faces' eponymous album debut with Immediate proved their experimentation was worth backing, but the band pulled out all the stops for their fifth long-player.

The bulk of *Ogdens'* conceptual second side – *Happiness Stan*, *The Hungry Intruder*, *The Journey* and *HappyDaysToyTown* – was written during a week-long cabin cruiser



trip down the Thames between Henley and Maidenhead by bassist Ronnie Lane, Steve Marriott and keyboard player Ian McLagan. In the studio, apart from a couple of days at Pye and some time at Trident, the remainder was recorded at Olympic.

In keeping with the ambitious new outlook, violinists and cellists from the London Philharmonic Orchestra were used during the sessions, led by Ian McCallum, father of *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* star David McCallum. Although the LP may be intrinsically linked with Side Two's psychedelic fairytale, the standalone tracks on its first side are among the band's finest.

Recycling the melody from their flop 1965 single *I've Got Mine*, the opening

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The Small Faces (l to r):  
Kenney Jones, Ronnie  
Lane, Ian McLagan and  
Steve Marriott





## WHAT YOU GET...

The 50th anniversary reissue of *Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake* will be released on BMG/Immediate on 28 September

The anniversary edition's 180g vinyl LP formats have been newly mastered at half-speed and pressed in conjunction with The Vinyl Factory from the original Immediate master tapes, Olympic Studio session multi-tracks, Trident Studios and Pye Studios tape reels, alongside extra material from the archive of Kenney Jones.

A 180g half-speed mastered, white and blue coloured vinyl 3LP boxset (Immediate IMBX012) boasts a new softback 12"x12" 60-page book. In addition to mono and stereo versions of the album, a third

disc will feature unreleased material. The Art Of The Album 180g half-speed mastered black vinyl LP version (BMGAA07LP) features the stereo mix of the album and includes both a six-page booklet and an art card.

All formats include author Jon Savage's new sleeve notes, which tell the story of the players, the craft, the impact and the legacy of this much-loved album, plus many rare and previously unseen photos of the band from the archives of photographers Tony Gale and Gered Mankowitz.

## TRACKLISTING

1. Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake
2. **Afterglow (Of Your Love)**
3. Long Agos And Worlds Apart
4. **Rene**
5. Song Of A Baker
6. **Lazy Sunday**
7. Happiness Stan
8. **Rollin' Over**
9. The Hungry Intruder
10. **The Journey**
11. Mad John
12. **HappyDays ToyTown**



instrumental is a swirling scene-setter, driven by Kenney Jones' skittering drum fills and McLagan's echoey keyboard figure – a world away from their early pared-down R&B pop singles. For the wonderful *Afterglow (Of Your Love)*, a tongue-in-cheek Marriott drawled intro gives way to a thunderous band performance and a showcase for the frontman's full-throttle soulful vocals.

Meanwhile, *Long Agos And Worlds Apart*, written and sung by McLagan, finds the Small Faces at their most wiggled-out before it eventually morphs into something approaching their trademark R&B.

Quite how they got away with the single-entendre bawdiness of *Rene* is anyone's guess. A brilliant Cockney knees-up about a dockside prostitute, it also betrays Marriott's musical-theatre background.

In his autobiography *All The Rage*, McLagan explains: "*Rene* was a real Cockney groover and had some of Steve's funniest lines about 'the Docker's Delight', whose 'ship' came in 'every night'. Cutting *Rene* was easy, but we

were rocking so hard at the end of the song, I ruptured myself and had to take it easy for a while. Minor health problems aside, we had a great time making that record."

*Song Of A Baker*, meanwhile, could be the group's greatest achievement – a superb guitar riff and a vocal masterclass, this time from the usually more reticent Ronnie Lane. Stevie turns his 'cor blimey guv'nor' persona up to 11 for *Lazy Sunday*. Hated by the band and including a cheeky snatch of the (*I Can't Get No*) *Satisfaction* riff, it was never intended to be a single and eventually became a millstone around their necks.

The whimsy of *Ogdens'...* conceptual flipside is an acquired taste and the specifics of its storyline don't stand up well to close analysis. It is, though, an endearingly wonky

flight of fancy that tells the tale of Happiness Stan's quest to find the other half of the moon. He finds it by travelling on the back of a giant fly, only to encounter hermetic sage Mad John, who poetically informs them that "life is just a bowl of All-Bran". That's that settled, then. Modern listeners could perhaps view it as something akin to a CBeebies take on *The Lord Of The Rings*.

### SURREAL DEAL

Spike Milligan was the original choice for narrator on the second side. When that didn't pan out, Stanley Unwin was suggested as a replacement and seemed like the ideal fit. McLagan called him "an inspired choice". "He was 'Stan', after all. As soon as he stepped into the control room and spoke, he had us all

on the floor laughing our heads off. Steve was screaming with pain, banging the sofa and begging him to stop. He'd say something that seemed quite normal, but it would end up as mumbo jumbo," McLagan recalls.

Earlier in his career, Unwin had been a BBC sound engineer. His act had an unlikely genesis. Following a night out with a BBC-producer colleague, the pair drove home and were stopped by the police. When Stanley's mate was questioned by the powers that be, Unwin stepped in and began bamboozling the officer with nonsense talk. ▶

**"Stanley Unwin had us all on the floor laughing our heads off. Steve was screaming with pain, banging the sofa and begging him to stop"**





Eventually, a confused officer let them both go. The producer was so impressed with Stanley's patter that he suggested he make an act out of it, and the rest is history.

"[Stanley] sat quietly while we worked on the tracks, listening to the music and occasionally making notes of our conversations," McLagan explains about Unwin's work in the studio.

"When he came back the next day, he was talking more like us than we did. 'How are you, man? What's bin your hang up? Blow your cool man.' It was brilliant, and it was us, but with a twist, and we were on the floor again. Steve and Ronnie already had an idea of the story, so he tried a few variations on the microphone, and developed it until the segues flowed naturally from one track to the next. We were in fits, because he never repeated himself, like a jazz soloist."

Central to the mythology behind *Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake*... is its innovative design, that upon first release was cut in a circular sleeve that replicated a tobacco tin. Lane came up with the basic tobacco idea and Marriott supplied the title upon seeing a scrapbook of original tin labels for reference, sourced by Loog Oldham. When Steve noticed one



### WORLDS APART

Kenney Jones remembers: "When it went out to retailers, everyone was complaining about it, because it used to roll off. Nobody's shelves were straight in those days. Somebody said: 'Well, lay it flat and it won't roll off'. Then it warped all the records. You couldn't win."

McLagan adds: "For us, *Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake* was our greatest achievement, and it became our biggest-selling album, going to No. 1." A chart-topper it may have been, spending six weeks in the No. 1 spot, but such was the intricacy of the album's arrangements and conceptual structure, it was impossible to replicate live. The band attempted only a handful of tracks from the album at

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titled 'Ogdens' Nut Brown Flake', inspiration struck. "That's it," he screamed. "Ogdens' Nut GONE Flake."

The title was, of course, a nod to the mind-bending powers of dope smoking, although the actual brand being referenced was a traditional rolling variety – Ogdens' tobacco had been produced in Liverpool since 1899 by a company led by Thomas Ogden. McLagan's friend Pete Brown from The Muleskinners painted the psychedelic picture on the inside sleeve, assisted by Nick Tweddell, although neither were given credit.

subsequent gigs and Marriott was resolute that they'd reached an artistic glass ceiling. He walked out of a "horrendously bad" New Year's Eve gig at Alexandra Palace in 1968, throwing his guitar to the floor on stage.

Within three months, the split was official. Marriott would ply his trade – Peter Frampton in tow – with the earthy rock of Humble Pie. Meanwhile, a second Ronnie joined his former band, along with Rod The Mod. Out of the ashes of the band's pyre rose the Faces, but 50 years on, the legacy of *Ogdens'...* remains impossible to extinguish. ●

