



Sometimes they come back (clockwise from far left): Mick Hucknall from Simply Red; Gene Simmons and Tommy Thayer of Kiss; A-Ha's Morten Harket and Magne Furuholmen; Cher



story of the song

REDEMPTION SONG
Bob Marley (1980)

Despite never making the UK charts, "Redemption Song" remains one of Bob Marley's defining songs. The closing track on his final studio album, 1980's 'Uprising', it's the sound of the reggae star signing off with special poignancy. It was written and rehearsed by Marley and the Wailers in the closing months of 1979, during the band's live shows for the 'Survival' album, but kept in the can. When Marley presented Island Records' Chris Blackwell with the tapes for 'Uprising', the following year, Blackwell nodded with pursed lips. Good as it was, he thought it lacked something. Marley took his point and the following day he returned with the outstanding "Redemption Song" which duly completed the album's running order.

The song was recorded by Marley at his own Tuff Gong studio in Jamaica, with the singer



accompanying himself on acoustic guitar. It was this stark solo take, more akin to Bob Dylan's early protest work than the hard-nosed reggae with which he had made his name, that made it on to 'Uprising'. A full band version later appeared as a B-side and a bonus track on the 2001 pressing of the album.

It was the final Marley single, the last song he performed in concert, in Pittsburgh in September 1980, and was brought to the wider listening public when it was included on the first mainstream Marley compilation, 'Legend', issued posthumously in 1984.

BY ROBERT WEBB

Thank you, farewell, see you for the reunion

Every time we think we've said goodbye to a band, we know the comeback won't be far off. **Simon Hardeman** despairs of the bogus final tour

Should a ticket for a farewell tour be a legally enforceable document? There's a slew of valedictory excursions this year, headed up by Simply Red – but can we be sure that it really is goodbye to Mick Hucknall's saccharine-soul outfit, for instance, when the words "farewell tour" carry about as much finality as the closing credits of a *Halloween* film?

Among others whose current partings are supposed to be such sweet sorrow to everyone but the booking agencies are Supergrass, A-ha, The Go-Go's, The Shadows, Scorpions, and even Irish-dancing spectacular Riverdance (freeing hordes of limbo-locked ginger dancers to move their upper bodies). Yet the Go-Go's have already gone once, splitting up in 1985, when music heaven stopped being a place on Earth for the first time for Belinda Carlisle and Co-Co. Ironically they may now even have to

say goodbye to their farewell tour, thanks to an injury to guitarist Jane Wiedlin. No matter: as David Gates wrote, goodbye doesn't mean forever. Say hello (hello, I'm back again) to Kiss, The Who, Frank Sinatra, Cher, and even those Shadows...

Face-painting mega-selling glam-rockers Kiss announced their retirement from touring in 2001. "This is not a game," said bassist Gene Simmons with as straight a gaze as it is possible to muster under a margarine-tub's-worth of black and white slap. "This is the real deal. There will be no other." He went on to stress how important it was to "say goodbye to the fans in the right way". To emphasise the finality of the situation, the band even released a full-sized coffin, the Kiss Kasket (\$4,500 unsigned, \$5,000 signed, no price offered on occupied).

But reports of their demise were as exaggerated as their platform heels: saying goodbye in the right way didn't, apparently,

involve meaning it. All those fans who had shelled out on what they thought was their last chance to see a bunch of middle-aged men with faces like Rorschach tests sticking their tongues out on stage had been deluded. In 2003 Kiss-and-make-up were back for a tour where the most expensive seats cost £1,000 (the package included meeting the band afterwards and, presumably, the chance to ask what "saying goodbye the right way" really meant). Yet no one seemed particularly miffed – the tour made £64m. (Ironically, while the Kasket did not, as advertised, mark the demise of Kiss, it did for at least one musician. When Dimebag Darrell, founder member of Texas heavies Pantera, was murdered on stage in 2004, he was buried in one.)

Evergreen Sixties instrumentalists The Shadows say their latest farewell tour will be their last. Unlike their previous farewell tour in 2004, then? But this time around

they have been supporting Cliff Richard, and the exact nature of the finality involved is difficult to pin down. Whatever it is, it propelled an album of re-recorded hits into the top five. Bill Latham, the manager of the beknighted Peter Pan of Pop, has admitted that the farewell element applies only to the conjunction of the two acts: "Cliff's not saying it's his last tour," said Latham. "It will be the last time Cliff and the Shadows tour together."

This kind of confusion has been used to excuse a variety of not-quite-final farewells. Cher, who has built her career on never having to say goodbye to anything she couldn't get remade by technology and reattached, including at one point her voice ("Believe"), performed an epic farewell world tour from 2002 to 2005, including a TV special that attracted 17 million viewers and gained her first Emmy. She cashed in on the publicity of these "last" gigs by releasing both live and greatest hits albums. But in 2008 she was back for 200 dates in Las Vegas. And perhaps we shouldn't have been surprised – during the final leg (if Cher could ever have a final leg: surely some surgeon somewhere would have a replacement) of the jaunt, she said, "I never really plan anything – something will happen."

A-Ha, another band on the farewell-tour trail, have already had what they called a "hiatus", for several years from 1994. Guitarist Magne Furuholmen says they now "want to leave the party before they get thrown out... this is an opportunity to say goodbye to our fans while people have a good memory of A-Ha." Ah, yes, the fans. "We're going to do this one for the fans," said Gene Simmons about Kiss's farewell tour. Mick Hucknall commented on Simply Red's sayonara: "We want to share this closing anniversary [it is 25 years since they began] with all the people who have enjoyed

our sound throughout the years... We all hope to see you at a show somewhere soon." And Klaus Meine of The Scorpions said last month: "It's for our fans... this is a chance to celebrate [an] outstanding career... we want to celebrate with our fans."

But in what sense is a farewell tour "for the fans"? Are the tickets any cheaper? Do the band give them presents? Big hugs? No. A farewell tour is like a footballer's testimonial, a chance for a last big payday from an act on the slide, with the last-chance element a priceless marketing tool. There was so much interest in Michael Jackson's series of "farewell" gigs at the O2 that 45 were eventually planned. Ironically, the demand from so many people to say goodbye probably helped lead to their never getting the chance to do just that. Unlike so many farewell tours, it was the tour, not the farewell, that went missing.

Sometimes, of course, a band genuinely does believe it has come to the end of its lifespan. Supergrass, who haven't had a top 20 single in seven years, said, "Musical differences have led to us moving on." Well, yes: musical differences with the people who used to buy their records. And before the last concert in America of their farewell tour in 1982, The Who's Pete Townshend told a Cleveland radio station that "the big

dinosaur bands [like The Who] will cease to have a hold on the audiences that they've had in the past." Although the tour was the highest grossing of that year, Townshend insisted he'd had enough: he produced what should be a model mini-epic for all farewells from internally troubled acts: "We're giving up each other for each other."

Except, of course, that they didn't. The Who were back seven years later for a tour that sold two million tickets. "Won't Get Fooled Again", indeed. Some farewell tours aren't even what they seem as they are happening: the Rolling Stones' 1971 UK Farewell Tour was just about them moving to France for tax reasons. That sounds almost as quaint now as a farewell tour that isn't a marketing opportunity. And without goodbyes, of course, we would be denied the amazing comeback – Sinatra's "Ol' Blue Eyes Is Back" in 1973, two years after his retirement, for instance.

Plainly aware of the history of the musical farewell, Phil Collins called his 2003 extravaganza The First Final Farewell Tour. He was still playing years later though: when Genesis announced a new tour in 2006, one fan complained on a messageboard, "It seems that everybody who paid to see his First Farewell Tour, expecting that this would be the last opportunity to see Phil live, has been deceived. Perhaps all the fans who were led to believe that these were Phil's final live performances should sue."

Which brings me back to my initial question. Should tickets for farewell tours be a proper contract? And how could that work – in Simply Red's case, in what sense are we saying goodbye to a band that has no founder member left other than the lead vocalist, especially when that vocalist says he's carrying on and admits he may continue to sing Simply Red songs? There may be only one answer to that. With hope.

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