



In the middle of last year UK women-only imprint, Angelic Music, launched a competition to track down the best in female song-writing talent with the promise of a single release and a place on a prodigious compilation album. Imagine their surprise when they discovered that the quirky rap-rock ditty they chose as winner originated from no ordinary muso but the progeny of Britain's most well known bird-watcher. Wears the Trousers' Trevor Raggatt wandered down to a hostelry in Camden Town to tempt Rosie Oddie and her hangover with some hair of the dog, hoping to get the low down on her music and growing up with a Goodie. Despite her apologies and protestations of untogetherness the first question draws out a surprisingly perky response. So, how did you get involved in the Angelic Music competition in the first place?

'Ha! My Dad told me about it! He'd read about it in a magazine and then bumped into the girl who ended up coming second who also mentioned it. So he was really quite adamant that I enter and, of course, me being lazy I didn't get round to doing it until like two days before the closing date. I sent in a couple or three songs and then completely forgot about it... completely! Until we got a phone call saying that I'd won. So it literally wasn't my idea at all – 'coz I'm normally not into doing things like that, just do my own thing – but thanks to Dad I did it.'

One gratifying aspect of the win was that it wasn't until after they'd chosen the winners that any connection was made with Rosie's famous father. 'No, I don't think they knew. When they were listening to the songs they didn't have the names or anything so the judges didn't know anything about the artists. I mean, it's good for them with the publicity that it turned out like it did. And of course its good for me

too with a single and everything but it wasn't anything to do with my name or my Dad. I'd hate that.

The Angelic Music compilation *"In Her Own Words"* which features contributions from Janis Ian, Katie Melua, Amy Wadge, Karine Polwart and the like alongside Oddie's prize-winning tune was released as this issue of *the Trousers* went to press. Further plans are for *Genni's Song* to be the lead-off single release from the album. 'Funny thing was, of the three songs I sent in, *Genni's Song* probably isn't my personal favourite. I suppose it's quite epic... well, not epic, but I suppose it's a bit of a "Rap-sody" and it was a bit different. I wrote it when I was travelling on my gap year with my mate Genni. We were in New York, and she just didn't want to come back so the song was about that. I just worked out the chords on the guitar I was carrying around, came back to England and finished it all off. The song's being hanging around for around a year in its entirety.'

And with its mockney rap-rock style *Genni's Song* has been garnering some flattering comparisons in the press and perhaps some of a rather more dubious nature... 'The Ian Dury comparison's wonderful; love it, totally love it... Lily Allen? That's fine, I don't mind it. You know, the song is what it is and you're always going to get comparisons. She does what she does and that's really great, but the funny thing is... it kinda pushed me! You know, I was doing that speaky, Cockney-accent thing for a while but then she started doing it and got known for it. But to me that was a good thing because I had to re-evaluate what I wanted to do. And actually, that probably wasn't really what I was... it wasn't really real because, you know, I'm a middle-class girl from Hampstead – which of course she is as well! So I decided that maybe I've got to find a new edge. So actually it ended up pushing me to be better, which I think is a good thing, 'coz I am middle-class, and I guess I need to be true to myself.'

So the winning number isn't necessarily typical Rosie Oddie (or her musical collective, *The Odd Squad*) output? 'Yeah, every song is really different. We did a gig at the *Betsy Trotwood* a couple of days ago and the set list started with an acoustic number; just me on the guitar. Then you got this big reggae song called *Bob Marley*, and then there's a punky one called *Uncle Fred*. We've got loads and loads of different styles, like indie and funk... really different. And I guess it's because as a writer as I'm listening to lots of different types of music that influences me a lot because I kinda want to do everything. I don't want to be like, "well, I just do rock, I just do indie". I love all sorts of different kinds of music. And I love doing it all. So yeah, everything is very different, which I think is a strength, but the same time it can also be a weakness... because it means that people don't really understand what's going on or whatever. I've been told to kinda tone it down by a lot of people but when it comes down to it... I do what I do!' That moment of self-realisation prompts a suitably self-directed chuckle. 'Funny thing is, I find that when I go to a gig sometimes you hear a band and they're great for the first two or three songs but after that it's all pretty much the same... you couldn't really split each song apart. So I think I want people to find the whole gig experience a sort of musical journey. I just love that. And now it's just sort of what we do.'

Having brought up the subject of *The Odd Squad* I suppose it's only polite to ask for the run-down on its ever-changing form... 'Well, we never

really had a proper sort of band so we've had lots of different musicians coming and going; loads of different people. *The Odd Squad* came about because I wanted some sort of name for it all. I didn't want to be *Rosie Oddie* and her backing band. So we've got *The Odd Squad*, which is a sort of umbrella title for anyone who's involved at that time. And it could be anyone, because it's so constantly changing. It's not actually like a band, just a title. And I mean I'm an illustrator; I'm studying illustration at university and all of my stuff goes under that name as well. So it's kind of like my "business" or "brand" or something.'

Now that's out of the way it's only proper to grill her about the nation's favourite twitcher. Our younger readers may only know Bill Oddie for his ornithological activities but it's a well known fact that he's also a hero of British comedy and a top 10 hit-maker in his own right. I suggest that he must have been an influence and encouragement, 'Oh yeah he has, he's amazing. He loves it; really loves it. And it's good because he's really critical too because he wants me to be better. That's great because I think you always need somebody to do that. And he always comes along to gigs when he can. So yeah, he loves it because I'm living the dream. And he's playing loads of guitar himself now as well...'

This also explains why a musical passion has been passed from Oddie generation to Oddie generation. 'Yeah! Just from being brought up in a really musical house where there was always music on. My Dad's so insanely into music, which is brilliant. So music was always just there. And my Mum, she's amazing too... really great singer and really musical. They used to write

together and do loads of really amazing creative stuff. So yeah, it was always kind of there. I guess I started picking up the guitar when I was around eight. There were always loads of guitars and stuff around at home. So it was really easy to just fall into it. Amazing house; amazing place.'



I comment that she's already mentioned her artwork and the academic study she's currently undertaking. This provokes a wry chuckle, 'Yeah, in theory! I must admit I'm finding it quite hard to balance the two at the moment – although that's more of an excuse than strictly true!' Another laugh, 'No, I wanna keep on doing it because I don't want to just rely on this and it would be a bit of a lonely existence if I wasn't doing anything else. And it all ties in because ultimately I want to do all the illustration for *The Odd Squad*, to do the T-shirts, the flyers, design the sets and the covers and stuff. So it's all sort of like relevant as long as I keep telling myself that and keep doing it. But it's really good and loads of opportunities.

And it's something to fall back on as well.' This amuses her – how un-rock 'n' roll, how practical – and before long she's back on message, 'But music's really my focus now. I mean, I'm on it, been doing it to so long now... singing and stuff and doing gigs since I was 14. And I guess, back then, I was always putting it off and saying I wasn't ready and needed to be a bit older, finish school. Now I kinda feel like it's really time when I could really do it and if I "get there" it wouldn't mess me up or make me a weird human being or something. Yes, so I'm ready to do it now, definitely, really determined. I'd hate to have been like 14 and trying to do it... you'd just burn out. That young I guess you just wouldn't have an understanding of life and anyway your life would be all weird and different. No, I think it would really of screwed me up if I'd tried it all that early. You need to be quite solid in who you are to do something like that.'

Looking to wind up the interview and let Rosie get home for a well earned cup of coffee I steel myself and – apologising profoundly for the question – ask whether she'd ever be tempted to chuck a cover of *The Funky Gibbon* into an *Odd Squad* set? This causes her to almost choke on her drink and then produces a huge belly laugh. 'Oh yeah, definitely at some point! Definitely! I'm going to do a duet with my dad at some point if I ever ever get the opportunity. So don't be silly about the question I would absolutely love to get him up on a stage sometime. And he'd definitely do it, he'd just love it!' And turns out he fully intends to as well. It was soon after our interview that Bill temporarily set down his binoculars to sign up for the BBC's *Play It Again* series (shown in the UK in late April) and took on the challenge of brushing up his lead guitar skills so that he could join Rosie on stage under the camera glare! A dedicated muso indeed! I wonder aloud whether he's really been properly credited as the man behind *the Goodies* tunes, the singles and albums. This brings emphatic agreement. 'Yeah you're right. And I think he doesn't get much recognition for that. But I think that he was really... well, not proud of it... but it's something he really loves; music. Maybe even more than doing *The Goodies* writing and acting. The music was like his thing, his "vent". And he wrote some good songs too, some really good songs.'

"In Her Own Words" and *"Genni's Song"* are available now on Angelic Music Records.

