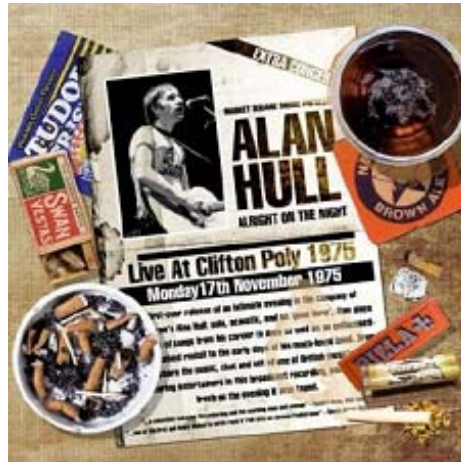


## Alan Hull's "Alright on the Night" – Live at Clifton Poly 1975

reviewed by Craig Johnson



1975 formed an interesting point in Alan Hull's career. To folk-rock fans, *Pipedream* will long be remembered as one of the greatest albums of all time. However, for many reasons, including coinciding with Charisma's release of a poorly recorded Lindisfarne Live album at the time, the LP didn't sell as it could, and probably should, have done. Following this album came *Squire*, one that didn't sell nearly as well, and is generally regarded as poorer in comparison to *Pipedream*.

So when I heard of a release of this live album, following on from the release of *Squire*, I couldn't wait to hear it obviously, but had reservations. A few minutes in, these reservations were quickly forgotten about. The opening track, *Squire*, will never be my favourite Hully song, but it's a great opener for this gig. *City Song* follows, a reminder of what great songs he could write. In my opinion, this is the best version of *City Song* available to listen to. The *FOTT* and early live Lindisfarne performances, for me, tended to be a bit heavy with too much instrumental and harmony in, whilst later Hully versions, such as that at Cropedy and the 1995 City Hall gig, almost showed a song that had been hastily added in for ease rather than performance. This version is simply Hully and a guitar... nothing better!!

On we go with *Dan the Plan*, another track from *Squire*, a great song to hear live. To introduce *Breakfast* we hear a typical Hully speech of how when he attempts to write serious songs, he usually ends up with songs relating to the food and the Daily Mirror!

Next is one of my favourite Hully songs, and certainly my favourite song on *Pipedream*. I've heard one other live version of *Money Game* and I didn't enjoy it all that much, so I was hoping to love this one, and love it I did. As soon as the vocal-only introduction came in, cheers echoed from the audience, and rightly so. Going back to the audience, *January Song* allowed participation from everyone, although sadly most of the audience seemed to assume the song was *Fog on the*

*Tyne*, as most do when this song is played live! *Cheeky Mouse* follows, a merry little instrumental.

This leads into *Gin and Tonix All Round* from *Happy Daze*, before a classic Hully song in *One More Bottle of Wine*. Revived later brilliantly by Lindisfarne Acoustic, this song remains a firm favourite. I must confess to a preference for Dave Hull-Denholm's version just to hear the combination of mandolin and harmonica, but that is not an insult to Hully's version whatsoever.

Following on, we have *Winter Song*, in Elvis Costello's opinion, the greatest song ever written, and who am I to argue? If there is a better song than this, then surely Hully has wrote it. It is played to perfection, and, as usual, has the audience in an awe of silence, until the very end, when applause ring out not just in exclamation, but also in appreciation of true poetry.

To bring the audience back once again to the idea of a gig with alcohol, *Alright on the Night* is sung once again by the crowd as well as Hully, allowing him to harmonise superbly with the choir surrounding him. *We Can Swing Together* carries on the party, although Jacka's harmonica solo is surely a sad miss here!

Perhaps Hully's two most famous songs take us to the end of a great gig. Firstly, *Fog on the Tyne*, played how it should be. No gimmicks, just one guitar and a chorus of voices. Hully playfully teases the audience throughout when he, and they, get the words wrong, as well as praising all of those connected to Nottingham, including one or two that aren't!

To close the gig, we have *Lady Eleanor*. If *Winter Song* is not the best song ever written, then this is. I've mentioned a couple of songs in this review, which, in my opinion, require a band in order to be heard at their very best. With *Lady Eleanor*, it doesn't matter if it's the full band of Lindisfarne or Hully on his own; this song is perfect, quite simply. The crowd join in when it is right to do so, allowing Hully to do the rest.

And so ends *Live at Clifton Poly*. A year later Hully would go on to join Jacka, Si, Rod and Ray at the City Hall, and no one can doubt the great things they did subsequently: *Magic in the Air*, *Back and Fourth* and *The News* to name a few. But with this gig, Hully proves that on his own, he's just as effective, if not more so. It is certainly worth buying, definitely worth keeping, and without a shadow of a doubt worth listening to again, and again, and again.

A big thank you to Market Square Records and Jim Henderson for making it all happen, as always.

*yours Craig Johnson*