



part one

# The Walker Brothers

## 1965 - 1967

The Walker Brothers released three LPs, ten singles and two EPs in the UK between 1965 and their split in 1967. Happily, the tracks from all these records are now easily found, with them all being included on the *Everything Under the Sun* 5-CD box set.

### 1965

1. *Pretty Girls Everywhere* (Church/Williams)

Original release: single A-side 1965

Hardly an essential item, the Walker Brothers' first single doesn't have too much in common with the successes that followed it. For one thing, in place of majestic heartbreak or any deep emotion, 'Pretty Girls Everywhere' finds John and Scott singing a cheerful ditty that is slight in the extreme. There are, you guessed it, pretty girls everywhere, and the lyric does nothing more than tell us where the singers have found them - on the beach, in the park (long after dark) and at the rodeo on horses!<sup>1</sup> 'Pretty Girls Everywhere' had originally been a US Top Ten R&B chart and Top 40 pop hit for its co-composer Eugene Church in 1958. For the Walker Brothers' version, the song is given more of a contemporary 'beat' feel and a brassy arrangement to replace the call and response backing vocals of the original. The result is not a bad record, just not a great or original one and not a success. It is John's rather than Scott's voice that dominates the record. In retrospect, given Scott's outstanding vocal talent, that might seem odd - a bit like having Jimi Hendrix in your group and having him play the drums on your debut single. But the instatement of Scott Walker as the A-side lead singer had yet to occur - it had to wait but a short while, until 3 'Love Her', the second single. In 1964, when this track was recorded in America before the group's relocation to the UK, and even before Gary joining, John was very much the Walker Brothers' leader. It was from his assumed surname of Walker that they took their name.<sup>2</sup> It was with him as lead singer and guitarist that the group secured both a residency



part two

## The 'God-Like Genius' Years

1967 - 1970

'I'm for permanence.' – Scott Walker, German TV Interview 1969

Following the split of the Walker Brothers in the spring of 1967, all three of the erstwhile 'brothers' planned to pursue solo projects. Scott Walker, though, was always the favourite to succeed. The owner of a singing voice described as one of the all-time greatest in popular music, had he decided to direct his career toward commercial success, there is little doubt he could have sold vast amounts of records well into the 1970s. Maybe he could even have persuaded America to fall for him. If and when record sales ever did dry up, there would have been lucrative live work. Perhaps Scott might have been, like Tom Jones, one of the highest paid vocalists in the world.

Indications that commercial success would not be the *raison d'être* for Scott's solo career can, with hindsight, be detected back in the Walker Brothers days: the *outré* Scott Walker compositions on *Images*, the love of European culture, lack of interest in money and the trappings of the pop-star lifestyle, abhorrence of live performance and fan mania. However, what was impossible to predict from the Walker Brothers' days, even on the strength of songs like 53 'Orpheus' or 59 'Genevieve', was what a breathtakingly wonderful series of solo albums he would go on to record. No one else in the pop music universe has filled five LPs with such desolation and beauty as on *Scott*, *Scott 2*, *Scott 3*, *Scott 4* and *'Til the Band Comes In*. These are extraordinary records, made all the more so by a lyrical frame of reference that includes prostitutes, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, strippers, ageing transsexuals and sexually transmitted disease, along with the recurring themes of lost love, loss of hope, old age and mortality. The fact that these albums don't regularly appear in the top ten of those best-of-all-time lists says more about the media and the public's lack of imagination than it does about the undoubted brilliance of Scott Walker between 1967 and 1970. You *need* these albums.

Earth'. Scott's song has a strong chorus which makes literal sense, even if it's not spelled out what exactly the singer is putting behind him. The verses are fairly impenetrable, but there are hints that maybe the singer is addressing the darkest thoughts in his mind, or possibly the vision of a woman, maybe even the ideal woman? Some words even hint at a straightforwardly religious answer, evoking the biblical quotation, 'Get thee behind me Satan.' Scott was hardly alone in 1969 in writing poetic rather than literal lyrics. True, 'Sugar Sugar' by the Archies, which was a huge hit, was pretty literal, but 'Windmills of Your Mind'<sup>35</sup> or the Beatles' 'Come Together' made little or no literal sense at all. In a parallel universe not too different to ours, 'Get Behind Me' could have been a hit single. As it is, it remains a unique and rather wonderful track on *Scott 4*.

### 137. Rhymes of Goodbye (S. Engel)

Original release: *Scott 4* 1969 LP

*Scott 4* ends fittingly on a goodbye note, with the gorgeously country-tinged 'Rhymes of Goodbye'. The pedal steel guitar at the start hints at a melancholy closedown, but it's so much more than that. An uncomplicated song, its lyric is poetic but far from inaccessible. The notion of the 'night children' who fly is particularly evocative, evoking both a dreamlike Peter Pan world of innocence and the world of young socialites flitting through the city's nightlife, from one hedonistic distraction to another. However, amongst the imagery can be found a clear declaration of personal freedom, hope and passion, delivered not with arrogance but with humility. (The singer builds his figurative 'empire' from 'nakedness' and 'makeshift designs'.) But what makes it ultimately so touching is that it is a love song, as well as a declaration of the singer's belief in himself. The song's most poignant moment is the declaration of love in the lines, 'I'm seeking a star . . . I turn and it's gone, you smile and it's born.' 'Rhymes of Goodbye' makes for a wonderful end to an LP that, like *Scott 3*, truly does not have one bad track on it.

Arguably the artistic equal of *Scott 3*, and many would say its superior, *Scott 4* did not sell well and failed to chart at all. With its release, Scott Walker, who had had two Top Ten hit albums, one hit single and his own BBC TV series during 1969, effectively disappeared from the public consciousness. Why? To say that it was due to the album's content, which is anyway more musically accessible than *Scott 3*, is not very convincing. In truth, the commercial failure of *Scott 4* was undoubtedly a combination of the following factors. Firstly, there was Scott's frankly silly decision to release *Scott 4* under his real name of (Noel) Scott Engel, rather than Scott Walker<sup>36</sup> – having an audience for these songs was a hundred times more important than the name on the record. Secondly, there was the fact that *Scott 4* was the third album of new Scott Walker material to be released in the same year – even the Beatles, who by anybody's standards were prolific, never released more than two new LPs during one year. Thirdly, by the time of *Scott 4*'s release Scott found himself without a manager, having dispensed with the

services of the commercially-minded Maurice King earlier in the year. Fourthly, the record company didn't back the record very strongly. Fifthly, Scott was by now widely perceived as behind the times – fashion mattered in the Sixties, in a way that it doesn't today (at least not in the same unified manner). Whilst Scott had managed to ride out the flower-power of 1967 and the back-to-basics rock of 1968, he couldn't continue to let fashion pass him by and retain his popularity in the face of late 1969's post-Woodstock hairy hippieness. To use a further Beatles comparison, Scott's image hardly changed at all between 1967 and 1969 (compare his hairstyle on the front of *Images* with the *Scott 4* cover and it's virtually the same), whereas the Beatles clearly had a different image for each year (compare their 1967 'shortish hair with optional moustache' look to 1969's 'very long hair with optional full beard' look). Finally, Scott's recorded output had long had a split personality – on the one hand, there was the singer (one hesitates to say crooner) of middle-of-the-road ballads that could offend nobody, and on the other hand, there was the Jacques Brel-loving existentialist-artist who sang about whores and bordellos. Thus one could say we have the Scott of 112 'Joanna' versus the Scott of 99 'Jackie', or the Scott of *Scott 3* versus the Scott of *Scott Walker Sings Songs from His TV Series*. To the Walker fan today, the diversity of his records doesn't matter a bit – we can enjoy both 127 'The Lights of Cincinnati' and 128 'The Seventh Seal' without feeling the slightest bit schizophrenic. But let's say you're a potential buyer in 1969, you're an older fan who prefers the nice songs and



Rare promo pic of 'Scott Engel' of the Walker Brothers. When Scott reverted to his real name for *Scott 4*, it may have undermined sales.

enjoyed Scott's TV series. Do you go out of your way to buy *Scott 4*? (It's badly marketed, don't forget.) Well you probably don't, because you've only just bought the *TV Series* LP. Then let's say you're a younger fan who is interested in what's happening at the cutting edge of music. Do you go out of your way to buy *Scott 4*? You probably don't, because Scott Walker's got unfashionably short hair and he's somebody your mum and dad like watching on the telly, so you go out and buy something by Iron Butterfly or Jethro Tull instead. Doubtless we are painting caricatures here, but something like it happened to seal the tragic commercial fate of *Scott 4*.

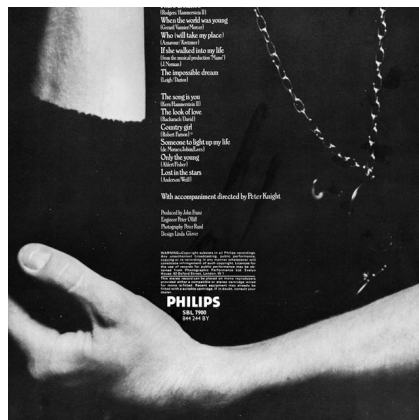
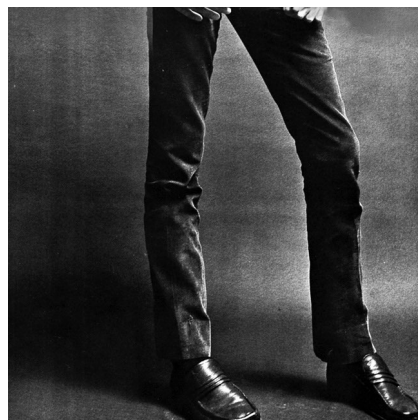
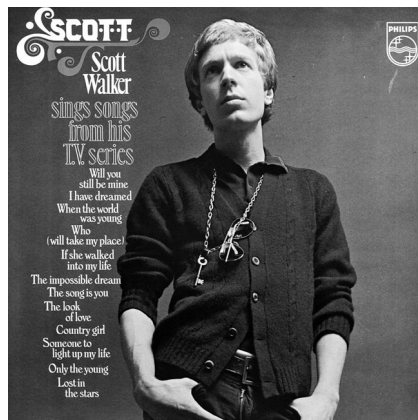
albums regularly come up for sale on Ebay, and it would be foolish to pretend that unofficial CD copies don't exist, or that the missing songs are not easily available to listen to on, or download from, the Internet (albeit unofficially).

## Scott Walker Sings Songs from His TV Series 1969 LP

153. Will You Still Be Mine (Dennis/Adair)

Original release: *Scott Walker Sings Songs from His TV Series* 1969 LP

Not currently available commercially.



*Scott Walker Sings Songs from His TV Series* was released in the summer of 1969, housed in a handsome gatefold sleeve.

*Scott Walker Sings Songs from His TV Series* was released between *Scott 3* and *Scott 4*, but is dealt with here because it contains no Walker originals and is a lost LP to the extent that it's never been available on CD. Strange as it may sound today, in 1969 Scott did have his own BBC1 series. Back in 1968, the BBC had

invited him to record a television special. Mindful of his reputation for disliking publicity and live performance and generally being 'difficult', they actually recorded enough material for two half-hour shows, supposing that they could make one composite show out of the recorded material.<sup>1</sup> As it happened, Scott exceeded their expectations and both shows were broadcast, the first on 16 August and the second on 30 December 1968. Satisfied, the BBC commissioned a series of six 25-minute programmes simply billed as *Scott Walker*, broadcast at 9.55pm on six consecutive Tuesday nights between 11 March and 15 April 1969.

The bad news for anybody who might like to see them is that no video copies are known to survive. The BBC simply didn't keep the original shows and no one had a video cassette recorder in their home in 1969.<sup>2</sup> All that is known to survive of the TV series is its audio soundtrack which, through homemade recordings by fans, can be heard in its entirety.<sup>3</sup>

The six TV shows that comprised Scott's TV series proper each followed a fairly set formula. After an instrumental burst of 'Joanna' as the show's theme tune and the announcer's words, 'Ladies and gentlemen, this is Scott Walker,' the show would typically run like this: an up-tempo opening number sung by Scott; another song by Scott; another by Scott, this time with the regular feature of an accompaniment by Johnny Franz at the piano; a performance from the show's first guest; another song from Scott; a song from the second guest; then a big number from Scott to finish. That's it – no jokes, no sketches, no big money prizes, no phone-in competitions, just (very nice) songs and one or two words of introduction between them. It's impossible to imagine any TV company commissioning a show like that today, but it would undoubtedly be fascinating to be able to see it.

The first thing to note about the album is that whilst it does indeed contain songs that Scott sang on his TV series, it isn't at all representative of the series as a whole. In addition to the kind of songs that fill the LP, Scott used his TV series to perform his own songs and to further spread the gospel of Jacques Brel. Over the six shows he performed a total of seven of his own songs (all from *Scott 3*) and a total of five Brel songs. Notable among the latter is the Shuman-translated 'Alone', which, despite Scott declaring it to be 'probably my most favourite song to sing,' has never been released on record. Had it been included on *Scott Walker Sings Songs from His TV Series* it would have changed the whole tone of the album.

As it was, no Brel or Scott Walker songs were included on the LP. Record companies back then weren't perhaps quite the big cynical marketing machines they are today who are more than happy to sell people the same thing twice, and so the *TV Series* LP offered all and only 'new' songs. The first of these is the song that Scott actually used to open the final TV show in the series, 'Will You Still Be Mine'. As an opening number, it's up-tempo and very enjoyable in a 108 'The Girls and the Dogs'-type way.

Given that the song contains a lyrical reference to actress Julie Christie, then a sex symbol of the day, it's perhaps surprising that the song actually dates from

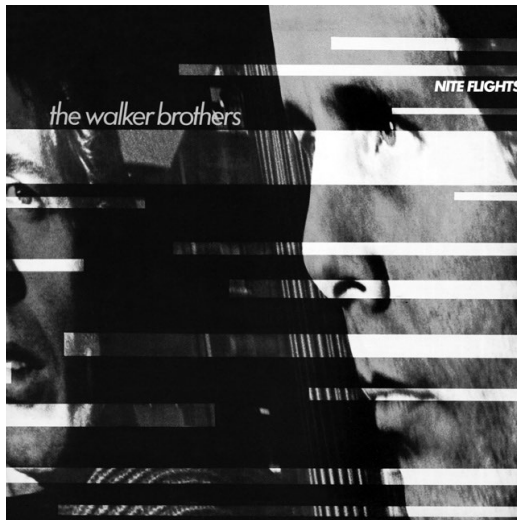
pleasant enough. The original version of the song was recorded by Richie Havens on his 1976 LP, *The End of the Beginning*, on which the song's co-writer, William Smith, was keyboard player. The song was later covered by Blood, Sweat and Tears in 1977 and the Pointer Sisters in 1979.

Like the *No Regrets* LP, *Lines* is a hit and miss affair – although the misses, when they happen, are wider of the mark. With *Lines*, the Walker Brothers had in effect recorded *No Regrets Part Two*, following the same formula and style. It also followed the *No Regrets* LP's lack of commercial success. In the case of *Lines*, sales cannot have been helped by the curious yellow artwork the LP was given.<sup>5</sup>

## Nite Flights 1978 LP

232. Shutout (S. Engel)

Original release: *Nite Flights* 1978 LP

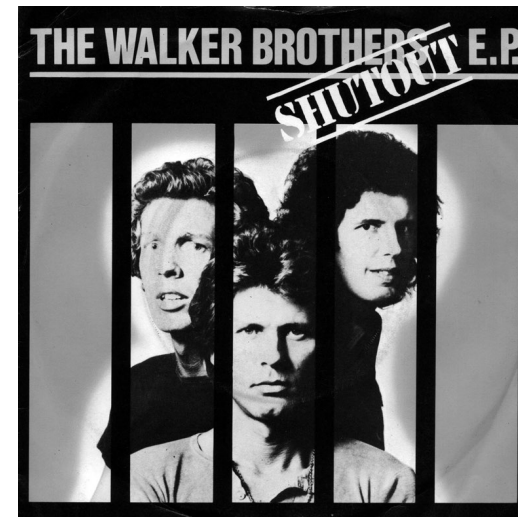


The Nite Flights LP – by far the darkest Walker Brothers product.

The Walker Brothers' third and final Seventies LP, released in 1978, was anything but a continuation of the *No Regrets-Lines* formula. *Nite Flights* tore the rulebook to shreds. Comprised entirely of the Walkers' own compositions, it is a much darker record than anything else they ever recorded.

The years 1976 to 1978 saw great change in popular music. Punk and disco had both happened in a big way, with the result being that the musical landscape of 1978 was very different to that of 1975. A third album of cover versions of songs written by men with beards (which pretty accurately describes *No Regrets* and *Lines*<sup>6</sup>) would have sounded hopelessly behind the times. Thankfully though, the Walker Brothers' idea of moving on did not involve a total embracing of

either new wave, which would have been risible, or disco. (Can you imagine Scott singing falsetto a la the Bee Gees?) Instead they rose to the challenge of the times in a different way. If *Nite Flights* has any affinity with contemporary music, it is with David Bowie's mid-Seventies 'European' albums, *Station to Station* (1976), *Low* (1977) and *Heroes* (1977). What brought about this change in musical style? Well, apart from changing times, there was also the collapse of the Walker Brothers' Seventies record label, GTO, which meant that they already knew this was going to be their final LP before they recorded it. The decision was made to make the record they wanted to make without compromise. Scott, once again the album's co-producer, was the guiding force both in this decision and the mood of *Nite Flights*. In a 1984 radio interview, he put it as follows: 'I said to the other guys, this is going to be the last album so everybody just get as self-indulgent as you want.'<sup>7</sup> Like the Beatles' 'White Album', *Nite Flights* is at the same time a group album and a collection of solo tracks, identifiable by the singer and the writing credit. On *Nite Flights* the first four tracks are Scott's, the next two are Gary's and the final four are John's. The respective writing credits are given under their real names: Engel, Leeds and Maus.



Would Nite Flights have made a great EP? Actually it did – all four of Scott's tracks were also released by GTO as the Shutout EP.

The most important tracks on *Nite Flights* are without a shadow of a doubt those by Scott. They marked his return to songwriting, his first writing credit since 1971's B-Side 166 'My Way Home'. And all four tracks are magnificent, in effect setting the agenda for the rest of Scott's solo career. The Scott Walker of *Nite Flights* was a very different songwriter to that of *'Til the Band Comes In*. Most importantly, the notion of compromise was gone. In 1970, Scott seemed to welcome Ady Semel's moderating influence in the hope that it would make his songs more accessible. Since 1978, his songwriting almost redefined the word

## 258. Indecent Sacrifice (Scott Walker [lyrics]/Goran Bregovic [music])

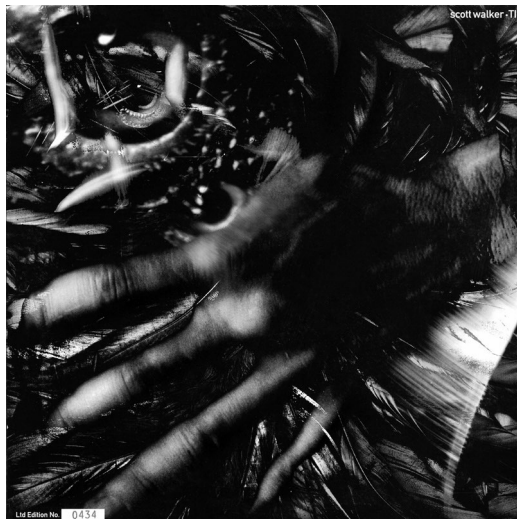
Original release: France only CD single 1993

Most recently available: on *Five Easy Pieces* box set

A lesser track than 258 'Man from Reno', 'Indecent Sacrifice' grooves along quite nicely in a kind of sub-Steely Dan way. Scott's lyric is about someone moving on and leaving the past, metaphorically or literally, for dead: 'saying goodbye without warning'. The song's title, and the fact that its narrator 'took the murder weapon' and 'took you by the throat to drag you under', suggest a sequel to the serial killer references in 'Man from Reno'.

## Tilt 1995 LP

## 259. Farmer in the City (N. S. Engel)

Original release: *Tilt* 1995 LP/CD

1995's *Tilt* – a disturbingly compelling album and easily twice the record that *Climate of Hunter* is.

Scott Walker's second post-*Nite Flights* solo LP, *Tilt* was finally released in 1995, some eleven years after *Climate of Hunter*. The album's release had been expected as long ago as 1992, and the CD booklet makes a point of mentioning that the majority of its songs were composed during '91 and '92. If anybody at the time of *Tilt*'s release had supposed that 257 'Man from Reno' / 258 'Indecent Sacrifice' gave an indication of its musical direction, they were in for a rude awakening. *Tilt* is a dark mix of the orchestral and the industrial, discordant sounds and spartan arrangements. Scott's fairly restrained vocal performance on 'Man from Reno' does not prepare you for his literal highs and lows. It becomes very apparent that his voice is different than it was. Of course, no one should expect a man in

his fifties (as Scott was at the time of *Tilt*) to possess the same voice that he did as a young man. Scott's vocals on *Tilt* are decidedly more mature, more operatic, than anything that had come before. Unlike *Climate of Hunter*, nor is *Tilt* a short record – its pieces are, for the most part, longer than the three or four-minute norm, with most clocking in at over six minutes. Its lyrics are as deep and dark as its music and anything but easily accessible. *Tilt* is a serious record (although, paradoxically, it does contain traces of humour that don't really work), and requires patience and repeated listenings to get much from it (although there are elements which almost beg the listener not to bother with it). A bit like the man himself, *Tilt* is a contrary beast. So is it worth the effort one needs to expend in order to appreciate it? Yes. It is easily twice the record that *Climate of Hunter* is.

*Tilt* opens with 'Farmer in the City'. It is undoubtedly one of the best tracks and also one of the most accessible. Although comprised of different lyrical and/or musical sections, like most of the tracks on the album, it is more of a continuous and cohesive whole. The music is dominated by the orchestra for the most part. The opening and closing might be gloomy, but there are no sudden changes of pace or abrasive sounds. Curiously, Scott appears to plagiarise himself by lifting the 'man from Reno/Zurich/Italy' section from 'Man from Reno', rewriting it as 'man from Rio/Vigo/Ostia' and dropping it in<sup>7</sup> with the strings of the Sinfonia of London behind it. It works rather better than it did in its original setting. An artist plagiarising himself typically suggests he's running out of ideas, but, given the obscurity of 'Man from Reno' and the resulting brilliance of 'Farmer in the City', Scott's reuse of material can easily be overlooked.

The lyrics to *Tilt* in general, and 'Farmer in the City' in particular, are opaque, and attempting a line-by-line exegesis doesn't really make sense. In interviews, Scott said that to do so would be impractical, and would 'cheapen' the words. Many of the lyrics have evocative rather than literal meanings, but there are definite clues to be found in the CD booklet and in interviews. 'Farmer in the City' is a case in point. The song is subtitled '(remembering Pasolini)', and Scott did say that the song is in some sense about his murder. Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-1975) was an outspoken Italian intellectual and filmmaker. Ever controversial, a Marxist, and openly gay, he was found murdered in Rome on 2 November 1975. It has long been supposed that the official version of events (and the conviction of his alleged killer)<sup>8</sup> does not tell the true story. In May 2005, the police in Rome belatedly reopened their investigation of the case. Whilst there are oblique references to Pasolini in the lyric ('Paulo' is perhaps a misspelling; 'Ostia' is the suburb of Rome in which Pasolini's body was found; 'Ninetto' is presumably a reference to Ninetto Davoli, one of Pasolini's leading actors), the song is obviously not a linear telling of his murder and neither is it political sloganeering. Instead, we find that in addition to whatever it says about the murder of Pasolini, the song transcends its origins in this particular historical incident. The titular farmer in the city seems to work as an allegory for someone who finds himself in a world that is not his own (a world up for auction sale, perhaps, to evoke the song's opening

# Afterword

The title of this work was not chosen entirely at random. Scott Walker was, it seems, always saying goodbye. In the Sixties, with the Walker Brothers, nearly every song he sang was concerned with the loss of love. If Scott was in misery, you were in for a good time. His solo career after the Walker Brothers said goodbye to his pop-star image. As late as 1969, Scott was complaining of people's expectations that he should be the person he appeared to be in the Walker Brothers. By the end of that year, his wish to no longer be seen as a pop star came all too true, when the record-buying public ceased to have any interest in him at all. Scott's brilliance endured through *Scott 4* and *'Til the Band Comes In*, but his audience did not remain with him. His commercial failure was to a large extent a product of the times. The music scene of 1969 simply had no room for someone who could release a pair of albums as different as *Scott Walker Sings Songs from His TV Series* and *Scott 4* within a few months. The Seventies saw Scott Walker temporarily saying goodbye to his muse and, for most of that decade, recording only the songs of others. Though no one would apply the 'God-like genius' tag to this period, this is not to say that he didn't make some good records. One or two pratfalls aside, Scott's self-styled artistic wilderness period does not altogether deserve the bad reputation the man himself gave it. The most visible and commercially successful product of this period was another rhyme of goodbye, a cover of a song about a relationship breaking up, 'No Regrets', which saw the reformed Walker Brothers back in the Top Ten a decade after their heyday. When Scott did return to writing songs in 1978, it was to say goodbye to pop music altogether, to sentimentality and to the mainstream. His albums since 1978 have been postcards from the edge, all of which are remarkable records. 1995's *Tilt* was remarkable not just for its content but for being such a significant defining moment so late in an artist's career. And the contrary brilliance of *The Drift* and *Bish Bosch* could not have been predicted even on the basis of *Tilt*. That loose trilogy of albums can be spoken of in the same breath as *Scott 1-4* as the peaks of a unique, influential, brave and beautiful recording career.

# appendix

## Unreleased Tracks

### 1. Unreleased Studio Recordings and the 'Bootlegged Three'

A long time ago, the fanzine *Walkerpeople* published a tantalising list of 29 unreleased Walker Brothers/Scott Walker tracks dating from 1966 to 1972, 19 said to be Walker Brothers tracks and ten to be solo Scott Walker tracks. Of these, 12 of the Walker Brothers tracks on the list were released in 2006 on the *Everything Under the Sun* box set, and three of the Scott Walker solo tracks did somehow unofficially escape, and are now well known amongst fans.<sup>1</sup> The titles of 'the bootlegged three' are as follows, and they are all remarkably good.

Free Again (Basile/Canfora/Colby/Jourdan)

Original release: not applicable, believed recorded 1967

'Free Again' is believed to be an outtake, albeit a perfectly finished one, from the *Scott* LP. Other artists, including Barbra Streisand and Nancy Wilson, have recorded the song, but never has it been more menacingly handled than in Scott's version. The lyric is an exercise in irony, with lines like 'free again, lucky lucky me, free again, back in circulation now, time for celebration now, time to have a party,' that the jilted narrator clearly isn't supposed to mean a word of. Against a haunting arrangement, Scott intones every line with vehement sarcasm. Chilling stuff, which might have made a more convincing inclusion on Scott than, say, 95 'You're Gonna Hear from Me'.

I Get Along Without You Very Well (Hoagy Carmichael)

Original release: not applicable, believed recorded 1967

Also believed to be a *Scott* outtake. It would be fair to call this song a standard, recorded by a long list of artists including Billie Holiday, Frank Sinatra, Jimmy Dorsey and Peggy Lee. Scott's version is a welcome addition to the list. Like 'Free Again', it's an exercise in irony, with the singer declaring the song's title but then adding a list of circumstances in which he doesn't get along without you quite so well after all.

I Think I'm Getting over You (Roger Cook, Roger Greenaway)

Original release: not applicable, believed recorded 1967

The best of the three escaped outtakes, recorded for potential single release. What makes this song so appealing, in addition to its gorgeous tune, is the feeling of both sadness and hope it manages to impart – when Scott sings, 'and yesterday I saw the sun shining through,' it sounds like he really did. After all the songs of inconsolable heartbreak we've heard him sing, it's nice to hear him at least expressing some hope whilst at the same time acknowledging his pain. This is a wonderful track.