

# Brian Howe

## Early career

Howe was born in Portsmouth, England in 1953. Howe sang with a local band called Shy who had one minor hit single in the UK but he quickly quit, seeking a harder rock band. He had a brief stint with the NWOBHM group White Spirit, having replaced their recently departed singer Bruce Ruff. However, the group quickly collapsed, and Howe never even recorded an album with the group. A sole cut, "Watch Out", surfaced on Neat Records' 60 Minutes Plus cassette compilation in 1982, also issued on vinyl as All Hell Let Loose by Neat in conjunction with Italy's Base Records label in 1983. The song was also released on CD by US-based label Prism Entertainment on their Metal Minded compilation in 1987.

## With Bad Company

In 1986 Mick Ralphs and Simon Kirke decided to reteam for a new project. Their label, Atlantic Records, however, insisted they resume the Bad Company name, but Paul Rodgers was already engaged with a new supergroup called The Firm. With Rodgers gone, the remaining two members partnered with ex-Ted Nugent vocalist Brian Howe as the new lead singer. In addition, they hired Steve Price as the new bass player and Greg Dechert (ex-Uriah Heep) on keyboards. Howe's vocal style brought more of a pop-rock sound to the band, which Atlantic Records, looking to bring the band back up to arena status, was looking for after declining turnouts to previous live performances and the dismal sales of Rough Diamonds. The band hired Foreigner producer Keith Olsen to produce the new line-up's initial album, 1986's *Fame and Fortune*. Reflecting the musical style of the mid-80s, the album was laden with keyboards, unlike previous Bad Company albums, and was modestly commercially successful. The single "This Love" managed to reach No. 85 on the Singles charts, but was not the success the band hoped for, but things were about to change.

For the next Howe-era album, 1988's *Dangerous Age*, the band replaced Olsen with producer Terry Thomas, who got rid of most of the keyboards and returned the band to a guitar-driven sound. Thomas also added small amounts of keyboards as well as rhythm guitars and backing vocals and wrote most of the

songs with the band. *Dangerous Age* fared better than its predecessor, spawning several MTV videos and the AOR hits "No Smoke Without A Fire" (#4), "One Night" (#9) and "Shake It Up" (#9, also No. 89 on the Singles charts). The album went Gold and hit the Top 60. For the *Dangerous Age* tour, the band were augmented by Larry Oakes (keyboards, guitar), who had also played with Foreigner. Price and Oakes left at the conclusion of the tour.

The band's next album, *Holy Water* written mostly by Brian Howe and Terry Thomas released in June 1990 on Atco, also produced by Thomas, was enormously successful both critically and commercially, attaining Top 40 and Platinum status by selling more than one million copies. *Holy Water* was the band's first album on the Atlantic subsidiary Atco Records. The album spun off the singles: "If You Needed Somebody" (#16), the title track "Holy Water" (#89) and "Walk Through Fire" (#28). "Holy Water" also hit No. 1 for 2 weeks on the AOR charts with "If You Needed Somebody" reaching No. 2. The album received significant radio airplay (five songs made the AOR charts in all) and spawned several video hits.

Heralded as one of the top 5 grossing tours of 1991, and supported by *Damn Yankees*, that year was one in which saw many other rock acts facing a downturn in concert attendance brought on by rising ticket prices and economic recession.

The final studio album of the Howe era, 1992's *Here Comes Trouble*, featured the Top 40 hit "How About That" (#38) and "This Could Be The One" (#87). The album went Gold. Before touring in support of *Here Comes Trouble*, the band added ex-Foreigner, Roxy Music and Small Faces bassist Rick Wills and Colwell, a protégé of Ralphs, was now a full-time member. The band recorded a live album, *What You Hear Is What You Get: The Best of Bad Company* on the *Here Comes Trouble* tour. The critically acclaimed album released in November 1993, featured live versions of hits from both the Rodgers and Howe eras of the band.

Howe left the band in 1994.

## Solo

Howe released his first solo album, *Tangled in Blue*, in 1997 on Touchwood Records. It was re-released with one additional song under the name *Touch* in 2003 on MTM Music and Publishing.

Howe played a 5 show Iraq and Kuwait tour to entertain the troops overseas in March 2010, one of which was the "Change of Command ceremony" in Baghdad on 12 March 2010. The mini-tour was funded (and supported by) the US Forces Iraq/Entertainment Branch.

In late February 2010, Howe's second solo album, *The Circus Bar*, was released in United Kingdom to mostly positive reviews and after its subsequent North American release, has become, according to one American review, "one of the best solo albums of the past 25 years." The album is now available on iTunes in most countries.