

# Remembering the British Invasion

---

 [www.villagerpublishing.com/65798/front-page/remembering-british-invasion/](http://www.villagerpublishing.com/65798/front-page/remembering-british-invasion/)

## ***Concert in Centennial to welcome ex-Moody Blue and others***

***By Peter Jones***

Denny Laine is more than happy to reminisce about the British Invasion, the mid-1960s influx of English bands to the shores and pop charts of North America. But the singer-guitarist from Birmingham, England, is quick to say the musical incursion would have never happened without the American invasion of Britain during the 1950s.

“We listened to all your music as kids growing up after the war. We were so influenced by American music,” he said, emphasizing the effect of artists like Chuck Berry and Buddy Holly on the Beatles and the battalions of British acts that followed the band’s 1964 appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. “The whole John and Paul thing came from the Everly Brothers. Paul would be the first to say that.”

Laine is well qualified to make such observations, having been a lieutenant in the mid-’60s musical takeover. He was an original member of the Moody Blues before serving under Cream founder Ginger Baker and becoming an integral part of Wings with Paul McCartney.

*Valley of Dreams*, Laine’s upcoming solo album, will be a firsthand remembrance of that transcontinental exchange of musical influence.

“It’s an Englishman’s point of view as a songwriter being influenced by American music, because that’s where it all came from anyway,” he said.

Laine will join Peter Asher of Peter and Gordon and Terry Sylvester of the Hollies for *The British Invasion: 50 Years On*, a tribute to the conquest’s golden anniversary on Wednesday, July 30, at Centennial Center Park, an increasingly popular venue for national and local concerts. The show will benefit the Colorado Freedom Memorial, a planned tribute to the 6,000 Coloradans killed or missing in action.

Born Brian Hines in Birmingham, England, in 1944, Laine was essentially trapped for a lifetime by a stage name he assumed as the teenaged leader of Denny Laine and the Diplomats. When that band failed in its diplomacy with record labels, he joined the Moody Blues, a burgeoning band on the city’s rhythm and blues scene.

“Birmingham was a big factory town and there were a lot of different styles of music – reggae, Irish bands. Liverpool being a port and Birmingham being a factory town, you get exposed to a lot of different music,” Laine said.



Denny Laine, formerly of the Moody Blues and Wings, will appear as part of The British Invasion: 50 Years On in Centennial Center Park on July 30. Courtesy photo

## A few questions for Peter Asher

*Singer-producer to*

obviously one of the most magi-

room on the top of the house next

## appear in Center Park

By PETER JONES

Peter Asher may be the Renaissance man of the music industry.

In a career spanning 50 years, Asher has done it all – from recording as an artist to writing music and producing and managing other musicians.

He was one half of the British singing duo Peter and Gordon before he took a job at the Beatles' Apple Records and went on to discover James Taylor and produce and manage the likes of Linda Ronstadt and Bonnie Raitt, among many others.

Asher's actress-model sister Jane was for a time Paul McCartney's girlfriend.

In advance of Asher's participation in *The British Invasion: 50 Years On*, July 30, at Centennial's Center Park, *The Villager* spoke with the 70-year-old artist.

**Villager:** As a testament to this 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, you'll be appearing in Colorado on what is almost the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Peter and Gordon's debut at Red Rocks.

**Asher:** Somebody told me that. That's amazing. I don't remember the gig particularly well. I do remember seeing Red Rocks for the first time and thinking what a great place it was. Of course, I've been there many times since when James Taylor or Linda Ronstadt or people I was managing played there. It's

cal arenas in America.

**Villager:** The Beatles remembered using an oxygen machine when they played there the same year – first, turning down the offer, then changing their minds.

**Asher:** This was a different era. If anybody offered you anything to inhale, you'd go, "Sure!" (laughs)

**Villager:** In the mid-'60s when Paul McCartney was dating your sister Jane, it was reported that all three of you were living under the same roof with your parents, which seemed a little odd from the American fan's perspective.

**Asher:** There was a guest

to mine. I wouldn't consider it strange, but you may choose to (laughs). I first heard "World Without Love" when Paul was living next door to me. That was our first hit. When we got a record deal, I remembered hearing this unfinished song the Beatles were not recording. At that point, I went back to Paul to ask if we could have it.

**Villager:** Later, you worked for the Beatles' Apple Records, a job you quit to manage James Taylor, who was a virtual unknown at the time.

**Asher:** That's true, but – there's a big but – I knew I was going to get fired from Apple anyway. [Beatles manager] Allen Klein was clearly going to fire everybody when he moved in. I knew Allen Klein was coming and I didn't like him. I did batten my career on James's and went to America with him.



ABOVE: Peter, right, and Gordon circa 1964  
Photo courtesy of EMI

LEFT: Peter Asher, formerly of Peter and Gordon, will appear in *The British Invasion: 50 Years On*, July 30, at Centennial's Center Park.  
Photo courtesy of Gretsch Guitars

On the strength of the Moodys' first hit, "Go Now," sung by Laine, the band toured with the Beatles in 1964, but were lost in the shuffle of more raw British groups like the Rolling Stones and the Animals. Moody and blue over poor sales, Laine quit after the first album, just before the band made its name in symphonic rock.

"If I hadn't left the Moody Blues, they probably wouldn't have been as famous. They had to go in a different direction because I wasn't in the band anymore. After all, I'm more of a blues-type person. That's why it was called the Moody Blues," Laine said.

After stints in several other bands, including Baker's and his own Electric String Band, Laine took the call from ex-Beatle McCartney, who was putting together Wings in 1971, a year after the Beatles' official breakup. Laine would be tapped as the band's guitarist and secondary vocalist.

"We were very good friends. We worked well together," he said. "We knew each other for so many years before. It was much more fun than it was work."

In the wake of Beatlemania, McCartney's idea was to start over unpretentiously, evading the Beatles myth as much as possible. Wings' first tour was a decidedly impromptu affair with the new band arriving in a bus unannounced at European college campuses and playing hastily organized gigs in small auditoriums.

"That gave us confidence as a live band," Laine said. "We couldn't have been in big venues. We would have been slaughtered by the press."

Laine became more than a McCartney sideman. When the first Wings line-up dissolved, the two essentially recorded the acclaimed *Band on the Run* album as a duo, and as time went on Laine emerged as the band's secondary songwriter and lead vocalist, writing material that sometimes rivaled McCartney's.

"Actually, that was Paul pushing me to do it more," Laine said. "I wasn't trying to push my songs out there at all."

Wings came in for a landing in 1981, after McCartney's infamous drug bust in Japan pushed the brake on live performances. The disbanding may have also been tied to McCartney's shock over ex-bandmate John Lennon's murder.

"I was sitting with Paul the day John died," Laine recalled. "He came in the studio because he didn't want to stay home. He wanted to do something to keep his mind from wandering. We sat and talked about everything."

Laine eventually returned to his low-profile solo career and live appearances, such as the upcoming British Invasion celebration in Centennial.

"It goes down really well," he said of the nostalgic evening with Asher and Sylvester. "There's a lot of stories there. It's a good night."

## The British Invasion: 50 Years On

A benefit for the Colorado  
Freedom Memorial, featuring  
Denny Laine, Peter Asher and  
Terry Sylvester, will be held July  
30 at Centennial Center Park,  
13050 E. Peakview Ave.  
Tickets available at  
[www.modtickets.com](http://www.modtickets.com).

Share 0

Tweet 0

Share 0

Share 0

Share 0