



RETURN OF THE ZOMBIES!

By Peter Jones

It was the hit that almost wasn't.

By the time the Zombies scored one of their biggest chart toppers with 1968's "Time of the Season," the band was no longer among the living dead. Frustrated by a general lack of commercial livelihood, the Zombies had already made a beeline to the graveyard and were not inclined to reanimate in the interest of a hit single.

The album from which the song came – although now considered among the finest of the era – was barely released in the United States. The hit that closed the record could have ended things right there when the band's chief songwriter Rod Argent and lead singer Colin Blunstone impatiently disagreed on how the song should be sung.

"We had a very tight budget so there was a lot of pressure on recording quickly," Blunstone said. "I was struggling with the melody, and it got to the point where it got a bit heated. The

irony is while we were having this argument, we're singing 'It's the time of the season for loving.'"

As fate would have it, the album, titled *Odessey and Oracle*, would eventually become a hindsight classic of sorts from the era's psych-pop genre, though few could have predicted the posthumous accolades. Discouraged by poor sales and disastrous tours, the individual Zombies were ready to find a second life on their own.

"It was quite a common idea that making records in a rock band was a two or three year career," Blunstone said. "I certainly wasn't thinking we'd be playing *Odessey and Oracle* for the first time in America 50 years later."

That re-dawning of a Zombies masterpiece comes to the Paramount Theater on Oct. 19 when the surviving original members perform the album in its entirety.

Never mind that artist Terry Quirk misspelled "Odyssey" and no one in the halcyon 1960s noticed the error until the album was released.

Founded in Hertfordshire, En-



The Zombies, featuring Rod Argent and Colin Blunstone in foreground, will perform Oct. 18 at the Paramount Theater. Photo by Andrew Eccles

gland in 1963, the Zombies were essentially the melding of Argent's song craft and Blunstone's ethereal vocal style. Like Jimmy Webb and Glen Campbell, the pair was a near-perfect partnership, with the singer acting out the songwriter's emotional intentions as Argent sat Buddha-like at the keyboard.

"I don't know if it takes some of the romance out of our songs, but there's very little left to chance – probably nothing left to chance," Blunstone said of a rela-

tionship that saw Argent literally direct the singer's phrasing.

"We've lived our whole lives with the kind of partnership where he writes songs and I do my best to interpret those songs."

In "She's Not There," the band's first hit in 1964, Blunstone acts out the double heartache of love lost and the betrayal by friends who could have set things straight on a former lover's insincerity, but didn't. Argent's lyrics were unusual for a pop song at the time, with "She's Not There"

as a recurring observation on emotional absence.

Such lyrical play and emphasis on melody were in stark contrast to the more rougher-edged R&B of the British Invasion. While not charismatic enough to fully ride the Beatles' coattails, the Zombies also lacked the edge of the Rolling Stones and the Who, leaving the band in a kind of commercial netherworld.

"Whether you liked us or

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