

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Nearly 50 years on, **Bob Lind** of 'Elusive Butterfly' fame is elusive no more

By Lee Zimmerman



Publicity photo

EVEN THE MOST DEVOTED music aficionado could be forgiven for believing Bob Lind was a one-hit wonder. The once-reclusive folk singer enjoyed a brief stint at the top of the charts in 1966, courtesy of the hit "Elusive Butterfly." Lind sang of love and longing, and like Dylan and Donovan, set hearts a-fluttering in the process. And the song drew a following of its own; it was covered by more than 200 artists, including Cher, Aretha Franklin, Johnny Mathis, Dolly Parton and Petula Clark.

Sadly, Lind found it difficult to maintain the momentum "Elusive Butterfly" brought. Subsequent efforts failed to find an audience. Lind struggled with drugs, alcohol and a less-than-stellar professional reputation before he recorded a final album for Capitol Records, 1971's "Since There Were Circles." Although the effort pleased the critics, sales failed to follow.

Lind parted ways with the music business and initiated a career that found him writing novels, plays and screenplays. He relocated to

Boca Raton, Florida, at the tail end of the 1980s, wrote a series of novels and penned a screenplay for a film called "Refuge," which won the Florida Screenwriters' Competition in 1991. (He also had the dubious distinction of serving eight years as a staff writer for the Weekly World News.)

Now 72, Lind is in the midst of a comeback of sorts. It began in 2004, when his friend, folksinger Arlo Guthrie, encouraged him to consider returning to the concert stage. A live album, recorded at Miami's Luna Star Cafe, appeared in 2006. In 2012, Lind released a new collection of songs, aptly titled "Finding You Again," with the aid of an

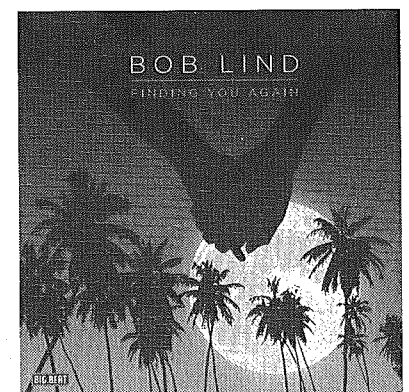
Bob Lind is the first to admit that he can be a bit unyielding when it comes to his projects. But it's for a good reason, he says. "I'd rather have no record deal and no career than relinquish control over what I say and how I say it."

unlikely collaborator — producer and power pop auteur Jamie Hoover of the retro rock outfit The Spongetones. Most of the tracks sound like they could have been spawned from Lind's earliest endeavors, replete with lush arrangements, flowery imagery, a bit of cabaret and a song or two that recalls the tangled tapestry that made "Elusive Butterfly" so memorable.

Lind's renaissance has included album reissues, occasional gigs and homages from fans — the British band Pulp's song "Bob Lind (The Only Way Is Down)" — and the documentary "Bob Lind: Perspective." In 2013, Lind was inducted into the Colorado Music Hall of Fame, along with Judy Collins. Most recently, Lind's somewhat dark play, "Lactose," was featured in a stage reading at The GableStage Theater in Coral Gables, Florida.

GOLDMINE: What made you decide to leave the music business when you did?

BOB LIND: It wasn't just me who made that decision. There's this prevalent picture of me turning my back on a flourishing career. But the truth is that my planets hit retrograde long before I cut it all loose and moved to Santa Fe. Who can say what I was thinking? We're all aware of the iciness of the music business and the fear and shallowness of the people who run it. What's less often talked about is the immaturity of the artist who can't take the industry realities in stride. I was one of those infantile, crybaby artists. I could blame it on my drug and alcohol use, but even today, clean and sober 37 years, I seem to be the same stubborn, quarrelsome, inflexible guy I was



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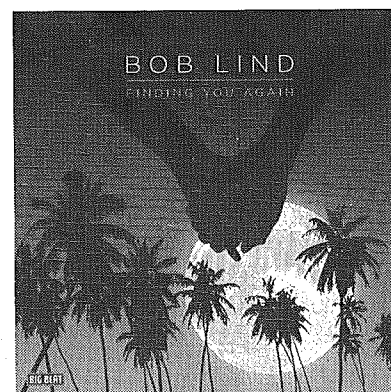
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then. Still, not all my relationships go sour. I've been with my manager for nine years, and I've had the same girlfriend for 23. As far as I'm concerned, the people at Ace Records, my current label, are wonderful, sensitive human beings. I can't say enough good things about them. Those relationships are in good shape. The bottom line is, I have to be listened to; I have to be heard. And the execs who were in charge of my career back in the '60s wouldn't listen to me. So I said, "F**k it."

GM: By your own admission, you were difficult to work with. Why?

BL: I'm not good at artistic partnerships when I'm asked to compromise my creative decisions. As long as publishers and record companies are willing to help promote and sell my music, that's fine with me. I need people who know the business better than I do. But when publishers want input into my songwriting, or record companies want control over what I record, it becomes "their" music. I'd rather have no record deal and no career at all than relinquish control over what I say and how I say it. Again, I have to feel like I'm being listened to. If I'm not, I know where the door is, and so do they. I still have a reputation for being argumentative and "difficult." But I only get angry when I feel my voice isn't being heard.

GM: Jack Nitzsche produced your first two albums, including the single "Elusive Butterfly." What was he like to work with?

BL: In a word: Perfect. When I came to Los Angeles and signed with World Pacific, I had never been in a studio before, if you discount those horrible sessions that became the album "The Elusive Bob Lind," and, well, you should discount them. I knew nothing about recording, and there was nothing Jack didn't know about it, having been [Phil] Spector's right-hand man for many years. He loved my songs, and I trusted him to bring them to life. So I just wrote, sang and played and let him produce. Later on, there were conflicts and disputes between us. But they were personal and alcohol fueled. But on those two albums,

there was no argument at all.

That said, I don't think Jack was a better producer than Jamie Hoover. Yes, Jack is legendary and celebrated as a genius — all much deserved. Jamie, on the other hand, is sadly underrated as a producer, an arranger and particularly as a bass player. He produced my best album, "Finding You Again." He understood my music, and he had the wherewithal to make the songs work. I can still listen to it and feel moved and amazed at what he did with those songs. Every one of them works, and there's nothing — at least very, very little — that I would change. What's more, he cut six more tunes with me that will be on my new CD, and all of them stand up to anything else I've recorded.

GM: What did it mean to have a new album after all those years?

BL: It felt good, especially to have a new album I can be proud of.

GM: Do you plan to do your next album with Jamie as well?

BL: Unfortunately, Jamie has decided he's unable to continue as my producer. Part of it could well be the sheer logistics of him living in one state and my living in another. Shuttling files back and forth is a hard and unnatural way to work, and he doesn't seem inclined to want to work it any other way. So, with reluctance, I'm open to the next producer.

GM: So what is your play, "Lactose," about?

BL: It's about sex and love and whether the two have anything whatsoever to do with each other. Mommies, don't bring the kiddies. There's plenty of "adult" language and "sexual situations." There. That's my politically correct caveat. The play takes a hard look at the question. The conflict is between a libertine poet who seems to have no sexual ethics whatsoever and a woman who believes our erotic urges should lead us into a deep loving bond with the one we're attracted to. It's about a poet who makes a superstar living on his book sales and tours. Other than the occasional Rod McKuen, Maya Angelou or

Charles Bukowski, we know that sh*t never happens to poets. A woman comes to do a documentary on him, a reporter known for asking hard, penetrating questions. Through the course of the play, they're both forced to confront their most deeply held beliefs.

GM: Is this your first theatrical work?

BL: No. I had three plays produced at The Group Repertory Theatre in L.A. And my short play "A Good Night" was a finalist in the National 10-Minute Play Contest two years ago. I think most of my fans know I write not only songs, but prose and poetry, as well. And since love, romance and man-woman passion is the subject of most of my songs, I don't think people will be too surprised that this play is similarly themed. But again, one can go into a play with a depth and thoughtfulness that would be boring or uncomfortable in a song.

GM: You wrote a book, as well.

BL: It's a novel called "East of the Holyland." It's a period piece about the folk-music, coffeehouse days of the early '60s. It's available from Lulu Press.

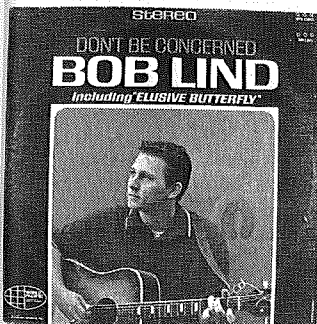
GM: How would you characterize your career thus far?

BL: Like those old westerns where the guy gets his foot caught in the stirrup while the horse is at full gallop. Sometimes, my career has been the horse dragging me along in the dirt. Other times, I've been the horse desperately hauling my career behind me. I prefer to stay in the saddle and avoid the abrasions and bruises as much and as long as I possibly can.

GM: In general, what are your plans going forward?

BL: To find a producer who cares about the songs and finish a new album by the end of 2015. I plan to tour as much as I can and to devote more time to my plays and novels. I also just finished the best book I ever wrote, a children's novel called "Crossing the Night Sea." **GM**

BOB LIND PLAYLIST: MUSIC AND VALUES



- "Black Night" b/w "White Snow," Verve Folkways 5029, 45 RPM. 1966. \$8.
- "Elusive Butterfly" b/w "Cheryl's Goin' Home," World Pacific 77808, 45 RPM. 1965. \$10.

- "Elusive Butterfly" b/w "Truly Julie's Blues," United Artists 0032, 45 RPM. 1973. \$4
- "Good Time Special" b/w "Just My Love," World

- Pacific 77865, 45 RPM. 1967. \$8.
- "Goodbye Neon Lies" b/w "We May Have Touched," World Pacific 77879, 45 RPM. 1967. \$8.
- "Photographs of Feeling," World Pacific WP-1851, LP. 1966. \$25.
- "Remember The Rain" b/w "Truly Julie's Blues (I'll Be There)," World Pacific 77822, 45 RPM. 1966. \$8.
- "San Francisco Woman" b/w "Baby Take Me Home," World Pacific 77839, 45 RPM. 1966. \$8.
- "The Elusive Bob Lind," Verve Folkways, FT-3005, LP. 1966. \$40.
- "Theme from the Music Box" b/w "She Can Get Along," Capitol 3169, 45 RPM. 1971. \$5.
- "Wandering" b/w "Hey Nellie Hellie," Verve Folkways 5018, 45 RPM. 1966. \$8.

- "We've Never Spoken" b/w "I Just Let It Take Me," World Pacific 77830, 45 RPM. 1966. \$8.
- "Don't Be Concerned," World Pacific, ST-21871, LP. 1966. \$30.
- "Don't Be Concerned," World Pacific, WP-1871, LP. 1966. \$25.
- "Photographs of Feeling," World Pacific ST-21851, LP. 1966. \$30.
- "Since There Were Circles," Capitol ST-780, LP. 1971. \$18.
- "The Elusive Bob Lind," Verve Folkways, FTS-3005, LP. 1966. \$40.

SOURCE: "Goldmine's Standard Catalog of American Records, 8th Edition" by Dave Thompson (available at <http://bit.ly/AmericanRecords8>)