

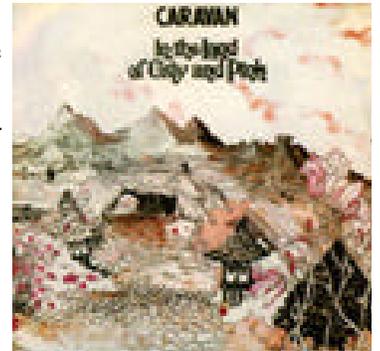
The Desert Island Playlist



Back in the good old days (no, not those halcyon days of typhoid, body lice, and lack of proper flatware that so many Revelwooders inexplicably embrace, but the good old days of about a quarter of a century ago), when the General, I.B. and I were spinning stacks' o' wax at our Alma Mater's radio station, one of our pastimes was compiling our personal "Desert Island Playlists" – you know – "if you were stranded on a desert island with only ten records, what would they be?" Probably an idle musing that many of us have indulged in at one time or another.

Never mind that if you actually *were* stranded, having your favorite tunes to mellow out with would probably be way down on your list of priorities – somewhere behind shelter, food, and lack of proper flatware. But, those herbally-enhanced reveries that yielded up those ponderings generally allowed us to make certain assumptions that, shall we say, skirted reality somewhat. And it was *fun* coming up with our lists. It still is. (Read on for the chance to share *your* list with the rest of the world via the Revelwood web site.)

I was reminded of this exercise in fantasy a few months back, when, in the midst of a CD shopping spree (on cdnow.com – a very dangerous site for an audiophile with a Visa card in good standing and a half hour to kill!), I came across a CD version of the #1 entry on every list I ever compiled, my absolute favorite recording of all time, *In the Land of Grey and Pink* by Caravan [Dream, 1971].



Caravan was at the vanguard of the late 60s-early 70s' Canterbury progressive scene populated by such bands as Soft Machine, Camel, Matching Mole, National Health and Hatfield of the North (all of which at one time featured members of Caravan, in fact). Formed in Canterbury in 1968 by Pye Hastings, Richard Coughlan, and the unrelated Richard Sinclair and David Sinclair, Caravan released two albums before *Grey and Pink* – their eponymous first LP, and *If I Could Do It All Over Again, I'd Do It All Over You* – before achieving a smattering of overdue commercial success with *In the Land of Grey and Pink*. The hooky, quirky, downright fun short songs on the record – the title track, *Golf Girl*, and *Love to Love You (and Pigs Might Fly)* – all got some FM airplay in their day (you'd probably remember one of 'em if you heard it again), as did side two of the record, the almost rock-operatic medley *Nine Feet Underground*, but the one tune that was rarely heard outside the airwaves of WGLS in Glassboro, *Winter Wine*, has remained my absolute favorite song for over 28 years; I consider it the finest song ever recorded.

Winter Wine takes the listener on a dream trip to an old English tavern, rather reminiscent of the Pipe & Pint, with dancing maids ("dull red light illuminates the breasts of poor young girls, dancing, prancing, provoking"), and drink that muddles your senses ("tea puts all the color in your dreams"), then onward to a "paradise for the taking," ending finally with a return to reality ("You're better off not dreaming of the things to come. Dreams are always ending far too soon"). This is a seven-minute journey that, although I've taken thousands of times, always leaves me refreshed and uplifted at the end, owing in large part to the song's sublime instrumental craftsmanship. It features Hastings on acoustic guitar, Coughlan on drums, Richard Sinclair on a bass line that dances through the song, working a brilliant complement to David Sinclair performing some of the best keyboard work ever done, on Hammond B3 organ and on Caravan/Sinclair's signature instrument, the Mellotron.

Now, this memory may also be herbally-enhanced, but I seem to remember that this short-lived musical phenomenon (the Mellotron) was a freakish mutated cross between an Emenee organ and an eight-track player, which produced sounds via individual endless loops of tape, one per key, with other instruments recorded on