

 Personal Record Interview

# Key plays that made a geologist musician



Now semi-retired, **Tony Doré** sustained a distinguished exploration geologist career, mainly high-profile executive roles at Equinor (Statoil) plus numerous publications, while also starring as songwriter, vocalist, and instrumentalist with cult folk band Tony, Caro & John (TCJ). His professional honours include an OBE, honorary doctorate (Durham University) and lifetime achievement award (GeolSoc). The band continues to perform and record.

### Family settled in Derby?

My Mum was Derby born and bred. Dad was a demobbed serviceman of Anglo-French origin, bringing our name's acute accent as his one link to France. He'd lost his family in WW2 and gone off to fight in the Royal Naval Commandos. Mum was his pen friend during the war, and the relationship became permanent. We lived on a working-class council estate, populated mainly by ex-servicemen and their families.

### Geology or music, which came first?

Definitely geology! Mum and Dad often took me hiking in Derbyshire. I was about eight, and started picking up fossils and minerals and asking my parents what they were. Being good parents, they rushed out to find me books. They probably assumed it was a passing fad, but many decades later I'm as keen as ever. There was always music in our house. Dad played piano accordion by ear and sang beautifully. I started in my early teens, inspired by the Beatles, Dylan and folk music. My first instrument was a plastic Elvis Presley guitar from Woolworths, which lasted about 6 months until someone accidentally sat on it...

### TCJ trio and first record?

In the 1970s, while doing my PhD, I was living in a small London flat with my musical friends John and Caro. We recorded a limited-edition LP in our living room (99 copies only) which we sold at

gigs and folk clubs, then forgot about it as our careers moved on. Imagine our surprise when, in the early noughties, a German label contacted us wanting to re-release the record! Apparently, it had a cult following and had become a collector's item. They'd even invented a genre for us – psych-folk. Since then, the album's been re-released four times, along with some newer music.

### Career journey from North Sea with BNOC?

BNOC was the UK's attempt to form a state oil company. It didn't last long, but they gave me my first job, and first North Sea experience. The Eighties and early Nineties were mainly spent in Stavanger, Norway with Conoco. Our son and daughter were born there, and I almost became Norwegian. I joined Statoil (later Equinor) in 1994, working in London and Houston until my retirement in 2019. I spent some 25 years in management, the biggest job probably being VP Exploration Americas. However, I doggedly kept my technical side alive, largely through publications and contacts with academia.

### Projects most proud of?

Co-leading my company's re-entry into the Gulf of Mexico, in the face of significant difficulties, must be up there. But the projects I think of most fondly are the mega-regional studies on the NE Atlantic margins, the Arctic and worldwide cratonic basins. I've always been better at big-picture thinking than detailed analysis, so these projects suited me perfectly. Because I was

allowed to publish, they helped build whatever reputation I have in regional geology.

### What are you working on now?

Despite being semi-retired, my geological caseload is quite full. I consult and act as Euro-representative for the Energy & Geoscience Institute, Utah. I'm also, among other things, currently working with a Bergen University team on the Permian-Triassic extinction event and its effect on Arctic sedimentation, and with a group of like-minded enthusiasts on the opening history of the Gulf of Mexico.

### Do geology and music relate?

I'll spare you the obvious plays on the word 'rock'. But really, I don't separate them in my mind. Both require creativity and imagination. Many geologists also seem to moonlight as artists of some kind. The best boss I ever had was also a world-class drummer. In the same team we had two incredible guitarists. So of course, we formed a band.

### Does the band play on?

TCJ have a small but dedicated cadre of worldwide followers, so every time I think things are calming down, another resurgence occurs. The most recent was a five-part podcast documenting the strange journey of our band, which actually dented the podcast charts. To mark its release this year, we did a concert in January to a young and enthusiastic audience. Was this our swansong? Who knows? Never say never.