

What's On

The Solid Silver Show continues to play the hits from a golden musical era

Go back in time to the Singing Sixties

Music

By Martin Hutchinson

PEOPLE over a certain age may recall the package tours of the 1960s when a number of top acts appeared on the same bill.

The Solid Silver 60s Show is proof that the concept still works. Now in its 24th year, this tour – which brings together a wealth of talent from that decade on one bill – visits Wolverhampton Civic Hall tomorrow and Birmingham Symphony Hall on April 18.

The line-up this year is pretty special with The Searchers, The Mamas&The Papas, The Dakotas, Wayne Fontana and John Walker performing their best loved hits.

John is on his third Solid Silver tour.

As one of The Walker Brothers, John (real name John Mann – The Brothers weren't related, along with Gary Lewis and Scott Engel, took Britain by storm in 1965 when they came over from the US and scored a string of hits including chart toppers Make It Easy On Yourself and The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine Anymore.

After that, they broke up and all three had solo hits, John charting with Annabella in the summer of 1967.

Proving that you can't have too much of a good thing, the trio reconnected in the following decade and had the classic hit No Regrets.

It seems that they were more successful in the UK than in their own country, a fact that John finds mystifying.

"We were just starting to be successful in America," he says.

"We'd just started a weekly TV show when we moved to Britain. The records were instant hits, I

couldn't figure it out, and I still can't."

Before The Walker Brothers happened, John had another claim to fame. "I lived near David Marks who was one of the original Beach Boys and was giving him guitar lessons," he says. "One day his neighbour came in during a lesson and said that he was starting in a band and would be playing guitar."

"Then he asked me if I would give him lessons as well. It was Carl Wilson of The Beach Boys."

John will be toasting us to a mixture of music during the show.

"I do four Walker Brothers hits and then a couple of songs from my solo CDs and some rock and roll," he says.

He won't be on stage alone as he has a special backing band.

"Yes, The Dakotas," he says. "They'll have their own set performing songs like Little Children and Do You Want To Know A Secret, and then they'll back both myself and Wayne Fontana."

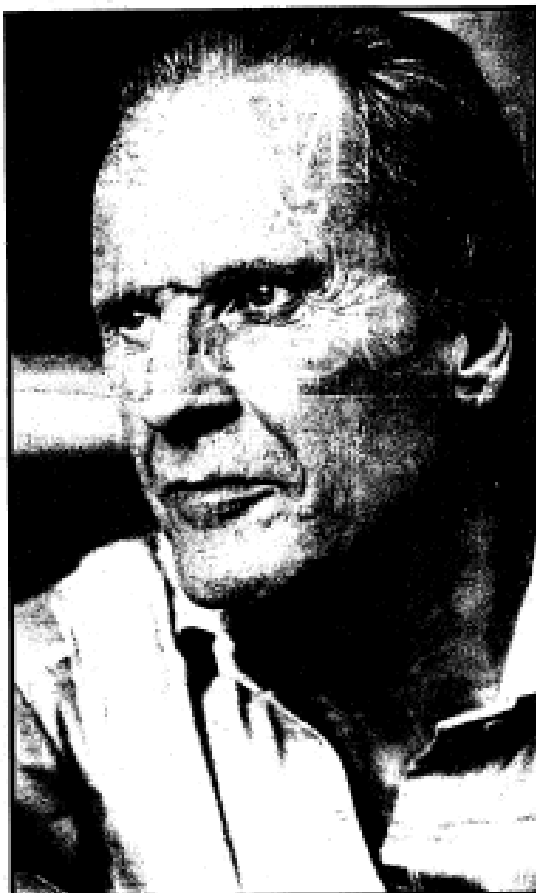
John always loves playing in England. "It's used to it," he says. "It's crazy, you've got so many friends here and my son and his family also. It's like Home Week, and I seem to be more comfortable in England."

He still keeps in touch with his old band-mates Gary and Scott.

"We keep in touch as much as we can and I may see them on the tour as they are both in Britain. In fact, Gary and I are writing a book together about The Walker Brothers."

TicketInfo

THE SOLID SILVER 60s SHOW
Tomorrow: Civic Hall,
Wolverhampton (01902 549030).
April 18: Symphony Hall,
Birmingham (0121 780 0334).



John Walker will be providing a mixture of Walker Brothers classics and his solo songs

Stars will be putting on a great soul night

Music

By Alan Cross

TONIGHT at Birmingham's Town Hall the biggest names in 60s UK soul music get together for what should be an outstanding night to match the excellent Carol Stanton gig last week.

The gig features Gene Washington and The Ram Jam Band, Jimmy James and PP Arnold.

Back in the 1960s Gene Washington and his Ram Jam Band transformed the music scene in England with their spectacular live shows and the release of *Handclapping*.

Footstomping, Funky, Butt Live – one of the biggest selling live albums in recording history.

Their rise to stardom coincided with the explosion of the soul music of Otis Redding, Aretha Franklin and Sam and Dave arriving from the USA, as well as the emergence of "Mod Culture" and the huge popularity of black American music on the new Radio 1 and the pirate stations.

Gene Washington had arrived in the UK as an American soldier and teamed up with George Fano for the legendary late night jazz and soul sessions at The Flamingo in Soho.

As soul music started to replace jazz as the sound of the young dancers, Washington put together a band with a huge brass section, headed out on the road, packing major venues across the country.

On their national tour in '67 they were supported by Pink Floyd, Jimmy Hendrix and Cream.

Also around this time, vocalist Jimmy James arrived from Jamaica and put together a band called the Vagabonds who followed the lead of Gene and made a great live album at The Marquee and embarked on a national tour, which has been going on for 40 years.

PP Arnold started her career in the USA as a backing vocalist for Ike and Tina Turner before moving to the UK where she released classic track *The First Cut Is The Deepest*, which is still regarded as one of the great sounds of the 60s.

The Town Hall is the perfect venue to host what should be a memorable night of 60s soul played by the original artists.

Legendary Searchers top the bill

COMPLETING the line-up for The Solid Silver 60s Show are two of the decade's top groups.

The Mamas&The Papas had over half a dozen hits between 1964 and 1967 including the classic *Washin' and Ripin'*, *I Think Of You* (which sold a million copies) and *I Love You, You Love Me*.

Topping the bill and on the tour for an incredible 11th time are the

legends that are The Searchers, still with original guitarist John McNally and bassist/singer since 1964 Frank Allen.

The Searchers had 14 hits in three years including a trio of chart-toppers, *Sweets For My Sweet*, *Don't Throw Your Love Away* and *Needles And Pins*.

As well as taking part in The Solid Silver 60s Show, they still

undertake a punishing touring schedule that leaves the rest gasping.

John and Frank are now joined by Spencer James who, as a member of First Class, had a hit with *Beach Baby* in the 70s, and Eddie Hothe, who was in the charts at number two in 1960 with *Liquid Gold* and *Dance Yourself Dizzy*.



The Searchers had 14 hits in the Sixties

