

CADUSEUS - the unfinished story of an unfinished band.

IT'S LIFE, JIM, BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT...

2 years BC (before Caduseus)

Jim Griffin was quietly contemplating his future, sitting, sipping coke in the beer garden of The Buck public house in Newtown, Mid Wales. With nothing but a black bin liner filled with all his worldly goods, for company, Jim was preoccupied with finding a new direction to his life.

When his friend Gary Watson, a well-known local guitarist with The Naked Glue Sniffers, walked by and noticed that the contents of Jim's bag were spilling out all over the floor, he stooped down to help Jim replace the items.

"Oh don't worry about it" blustered Jim, as he hurriedly collected up some dog-eared A4 papers. "It's only a bit of poetry I wrote."

"This is not just poetry, Jim." uttered Gary, still clutching one of the pages as his eyes hurriedly scanned over the spidery scrawlings. "These are f***ing good lyrics, my friend."

It was the summer of 1986 and Jim, ex car-parts salesman, ex semi-pro footballer, ex soldier and aspiring poet, had fallen on hard times, was homeless and blissfully unaware that he had a hot talent for lyric writing.

Although deeply ensconced with his own band, Gary invited Jim to his recording shack at the back of his house, where Jim's first ever song, Wondering Aloud, took shape. Despite never having sung in a band before, it was immediately apparent that lyric writing was not the only hidden facet to Jim Griffin - he also had a distinctive, memorable voice and a good ear for melody.

Then, as the penny dropped, a career in music and songwriting opened up before him like a divine vision. The unstoppable tide had just begun.

Fired-up with renewed energy and enthusiasm, Jim sought to make contacts and eagerly perused the ads on the wall at his local music shop. He noticed that someone was advertising for a singer. The subsequent telephone call revealed that Sasha Goodwin, describing himself as a keyboard player, and his mate Stuart, who played guitar, were having great difficulty finding somebody who could connect with their style of music and an audition was arranged for Jim. The first meeting was extremely fruitful and the three of them decided to form a band there and then. Keen to make progress and driven by the muse, they forged ahead without a drummer or bass player, using a drum machine and a computer to provide the beats and the bass parts. The name they chose for their project was Department. The unstoppable tide was rising fast.

A long period of experimentation ensued during which the trio developed and honed their act, playing local gigs and writing new material. In a fit of passion for his art, Stuart left his wife and the band moved into a house in the hills above Llanfair Caereinion in deepest Mid Wales to follow their calling. Shortly afterwards, overwhelmed by guilt, Stuart returned to his wife, never to play again.

Despite their loss, Jim and Sasha continued to develop their music but had to move out of the house at Llanfair. Creative juices were flowing but, without a studio facility, there was the danger that they would dry up as it had become difficult to write and rehearse songs. In an attempt to restore the band's momentum, Jim and his new partner, Eirlys, now living outside Newtown, proceeded to convert their spare bedroom into a studio. But without a guitar player their sound was a bit hollow and their future decidedly shaky. It was 1987 and around this time that they also decided that, after only two gigs, Department was not a clever name. Was the tide finally beginning to ebb?

Birth of a Caduseus

In desperate need of a guitar player, Jim and Sasha hunted around and eventually found their player - none other than Gary Watson - who was now available, having left his band. Caduseus was born and, following a period of intensive rehearsals during 1988, the band played its first gig at the Music Hall, Shrewsbury, quickly followed by another in Evan Jobb Village Hall. Things were really flying again. Then, one day, Sasha was involved in a car accident. Luckily, he was not seriously injured but the band was knocked out for seven months while his broken limbs were on the mend. Despite this impediment, Sasha resumed keyboards as soon as he could (which was much sooner than recommended by his doctor) and proceeded to play using only one arm while concealing his broken leg from view, under the keyboard rack.

With many more gigs under their belts, and ever-expanding horizons, the band now decided that they wanted to add the unique textures and rhythm possibilities of a real drummer - someone who was capable of playing to a click track and happy to integrate with some synthesised sounds. Glynn Foulkes (ex Crab St. Crawlers, Mandala and Raymond Froggat), who was no newcomer to the intricacies of rock drumming, filled the frame and was able to blend with the electronic rhythms which remained a vital element of their sound.

In a further development, Gary, who could also play bass, moved to bass guitar and the Caduseus line-up swelled with the recruitment of another local guitarist, John Crowe, who took over lead and rhythm. With their new recruits, the band played some notable gigs during 1988 including the first Matthew Street Festival (Beatles tribute event) in Liverpool, during which they were on stage at the famous Cavern Club. Their performance gained them a residency at the

venue and you can see some video footage of the concert (coming soon).

Later that year, they played The old Frog, Newcastle under Lyme, as guests for signed band, Apple Station. Also on the bill was Valis (featuring bass player Jacqui Savage, who would later play her own important part in the story of Caduseus). In the audience that night was Nick Turner, ex of Hawkwind, who had been inspired by their first set. He asked to play saxophone with the band, which gave music journalist, Oz, who was also hovering around in the audience, some hot news to report. The gig received rave reviews. The unstoppable tide was reaching tsunami proportions.

Another three years of gigs at music venues and festivals all over over the UK attracted the attention of the music media and the band was in need of management and a record deal. Despite all the support from its entourage of friends, acting as stage helpers, roadies and soundcrew during their stage shows, the coveted recording contract eluded them. Frustrations were creeping in and undermining the band. A crash was coming. Tensions mounted and then came the final explosion because of differences between Sasha, Gary and Glynn. Even peacemaker Jim could not muffle the din as the band was dashed against the rocks. The tide had finally hit the sea wall and turned in on itself.

The parting of the seas

The last gig in this episode of the band took place at the Oasis Club in Stone, Staffordshire. In the audience was one Dave Lawrence who approached the band and asked if there was room for another keyboard player. He was told, quite abruptly, that Caduseus was finished.

Then there was silence. The band was in pieces and floated aimlessly for more than a year until a phone call from Glynn to Jim rippled the waters once again. He spoke of a strong desire to reform and urged Jim to consider a revival. Jim declined immediately, saying that the band had taken so much from him that he wasn't sure he had anything of value left to give. It was impossible to contemplate starting again and he had to put the band to rest. Working on the premise that persistence pays, Glynn continued to keep up a dialogue with Jim and, after a further four months of constant badgering, Jim finally agreed.

So, they set about getting a band together again. Firstly, they advertised for a keyboard player, deciding that their musical differences with Sasha were unlikely to be easily reconciled. In walked Dave Lawrence (ex Flash Harry and Maurice Men), who had been turned away at the Oasis Club gig. He got the job. Gary Watson returned briefly to play bass but former Valis player, Jacqui Savage, whom the band had met at the Cavern, stepped in and a new incarnation of Caduseus was almost complete. The band now needed the missing ingredient - a sh*t-hot guitar player. Did Jacqui know of anyone?

Ian Tengwall had been in a band called Ask Alice, with Jacqui. He was on the lookout for another band after Ask Alice had suffered a split. Jacqui contacted him and he came to an audition. Ian connected up his guitar and, within seconds of his fingers touching the fretboard, his playing abilities were apparent. The air was electric with an unspoken and unanimous decision to recruit him. So was born Caduseus II. It was September 1995. Was that the sound of the rising tide again?

Caduseus II

Within a period of just five months, over two hours of totally original music had been created and three tracks were chosen to be recorded as a demo at Back Yard Studios in Mid Wales, in January 1996. Now, with four songwriters in the band, there was a continuous stream of creative ideas which manifested themselves as strong, distinctive songs. Dave's wife, Sue, (who also played cello with an ensemble called Sinfonia Maldwyn) provided some interesting textures on strings. Drummer, Glynn Foulkes produced the demo and the band prepared for a busy year, having been booked for live performances at UK festivals and events throughout 1996. In a radio interview, Jim said: "Our sound is not contrived or manufactured in any way - basically, the first time we played together it was all there. We do not set out to imitate, but most people can hear flavours ranging from Pink Floyd through to Tea Party and late Led Zeppelin mixed with our own unique personality when they hear us. We experiment and stay with what works."

But 1996 started with another exciting and inspiring prospect. When keyboard player, Dave Lawrence, had joined Caduseus the September before, he had told the band of a pioneering new way of broadcasting to the world over the internet. Then working at the Department of Information Technology at Wolverhampton University in conjunction with Aberystwyth University, Dave was at the cutting edge of internet technology and was very impressed by the possibilities this presented. He had an idea. What if the band was to appear on one of the first internet webcasts? It could provide all sorts of opportunities and open some doors. Everyone in the band was very keen. But where would they start? Who would they need? Where could they play? What about finance?

Conversations began immediately with any person, organisation or company considered to be receptive to such an ambitious plan. The band needed help to make it happen. Eventually they tracked down C U C Me TV, who were developing the type of software that would make such transmissions on the internet a reality and they were willing to donate it on a trial basis. Help was on its way.

Next, the band set about trying to find sponsorship. Their requests were received well and much interest from around the UK was generated. For at least

one month, Peter Gabriel's Real World Studios in Wiltshire showed a very keen interest in being involved but later disappeared suddenly from view, failing to reply to any further emails or telephone calls.

1996 saw fewer gigs or public appearances for Caduseus than they would have liked. Noses were being kept firmly to the grindstone and a sense of urgency began to creep into the proceedings as the summer came and went.

As yet, no venue had been booked, so the search was on for a suitable place to stage the show. After a single call to Celtica, a tourist attraction in Machynlleth, with a strongly themed folklore and mythical bias, the band decided a visit was on the cards. At their meeting with the manager and staff, they were enthralled by the wonderful Vortex video theatre which, they envisaged, could serve as their stage. It had a circular aspect so that the audience would be wrapped around the band as it performed. No contest - it was perfect. Thus, Celtica was secured as the epicentre for the operation.

£100 from the Welsh Tourist Board was gratefully received but this turned out to be the only cash donation towards the costs of staging the show. Time was the one element that people were willing to donate as well as resources like catering, software, lighting and sound.

Moving heaven and earth

The year rolled on mercilessly. There was now less than a month to go before the show and still tons left to organise. The tide was in full flow again. The cry came for 'all hands on deck'.

Glynn and Jim set about preparing posters, contacting the media and generally stirring up as much interest as they could muster before the big event. BBC Wales picked up the story and included it in their TV and radio packages.

At the same time, Cam3, a local TV and video company, agreed to donate two of their camera men to film the event. Dave Owen, owner of Back Yard Studios, Churchstoke, offered to do the live music mixing. Machynlleth Rock Club donated a PA system for the night and an eminent lighting company - who had been lighting a Chris Rea gig in Montevideo just two weeks before - agreed to provide all the equipment and direction for the light show.

With only two weeks to go before the concert, they were missing one vital part of the infrastructure - a suitable link between Celtica and the world wide web. At that time, the highest speed of connection to the internet was via a technology named Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN). Talks with BT had been enthusiastic and the telephone giant had agreed to donate the necessary communications channel, but they still needed to conjure up the staff and equipment for the installation.

During the last week of October and the first week of November, the band managed to get the event covered by local TV and radio stations - firstly, an interview with Glynn on BBC Wales, then an interview with Jim on BBC Radio 5 Live, followed by a feature on the Welsh Channel 4, S4C, in the Welsh language, on 1st November.

Meanwhile, the band had written a special intro piece of music called The Trial Begins and Jim set about polishing the script for the narration which he had previously penned. Behind the scenes, Celtica staff were buzzing around preparing for the event and, as the day approached, the Manager of Celtica, agreed to provide the narration voice-over. At the eleventh hour, they managed to get food donated from Safeways, plus sufficient pasties and pies from Evans's Café in Newtown, to feed the 5,000.

The day of the show was upon them. The crucial BT ISDN line had been successfully installed with only days to spare and the stage set, the lighting, the sound and all the catering requirements were now in place. For the band, the whole exercise had taken, in total, 14 months of planning and organising, to the detriment of songwriting and playing gigs. With just a minute to go before the performance was due to begin, Jim, having lost track of time, was called from his duties in the Celtica kitchen, only to appear on stage still wearing his apron! As with any live broadcast, timing was critical and, despite very nearly being mistaken for one of the resident chefs, Jim pulled off his apron, joined the band on stage and they pulled off the show in magnificent style.

The webcast went out on 10th November 1996 on the night of the Welsh Halloween, Samhuinn (significant in the Celtic calendar) and was a great success, reaching far and wide to 22 countries, for a duration of one hour. Around 70 invited people were in the audience at Celtica but there are no figures for how many people across the world witnessed the event. We can only guess that it was probably thousands. An unexpected personal communication from NASA came through, during an obviously quiet night in NASALand, saying how much they were enjoying the show and that they were interested in exploring this kind of technology to improve communications between the Space Shuttle and Earth!

Among the guest musicians who appeared on stage that night, were members of the Youth Orchestra of Wales - including cello and bass strings, Sue Lawrence (Dave's wife), who played flute, Justin Brookes on sax and conductor of strings and Justin's wife, Carol, an experienced amateur operatics singer, who added backing vocals to the proceedings. Together, theirs was a stunning performance, integrating seamlessly with Caduseus to give the world one of its first ever internet concerts and certainly the very first to have been staged in the Welsh heartlands. But if not for the kindness and generosity of all the individuals and organisations who gave their support, history may not have been created

right there at Celtica.

The event was captured on video and was published by the band's own record label Ninth Wave Records, a name derived from the ancient custom in which to be sent beyond the 'ninth wave' meant you were an outcast - a significant Celtic story which tied in perfectly with the mythical nature of the venue.

"Oasis broadcast in sound the night before, but our live gig, at Celtica, had vision too", said Jim.

You can see highlights from the show on the BBC Wales website [here](#).

Shifting sands - cue Caduseus III

The Celtica event had been a ground-breaking one and had placed the members of Caduseus under enormous emotional pressure. After the highs, all the publicity and a rapidly-growing reputation for their music, the only way for these internet pioneers was up. So it was that this, the second incarnation of Caduseus, felt its first pangs of discomfort and Jim recognised the, by now, familiar feeling of sand running away between his fingers. Then, as if to manifest itself, the pressure got too much for Jacqui Savage and she left. It was 1997 and the band was floundering once again without a bass player.

Stirred, but not too badly shaken, Caduseus began looking for someone to replace Jackie and that person turned out to be Jacko Jones. The idea of recruiting a backing singer to add colour to the vocals and to relieve Jim of some of the weight he was feeling, was also explored. They scoured the ads and they found Marilyn Gibbs, a singer hailing, originally, from Harlow in Essex. There was no known connection with the Harlow gig which took place later, but this turned out to be one of the first of a series of strange coincidences which would become a trait of the band. Nic, who was a friend of Jacko's, and who would later become Jim's new partner, came along to some gigs and was fascinated with Jim, remarking on how she could change Jim's image and give him the kind of hard edge that she figured he needed. So, without smoke (well, only the legal kind), but with the copious use of mirrors, The Griffinator was born.

Gigs began to come in again, thick and fast as the bookings diary began to fill with dates for months ahead. The tide was at full flow once again and the band was right there on the crest of its wave.

By a stroke of luck the Rev Al Green (I Can't Stop, Rainin' in My Heart, How Do You Mend a Broken Heart & more) was in the audience when the band was headlining at a charity concert in the large council park at Harlow, Essex. He took time to come back stage to say that he thought the band were the most innovative band he'd heard for many a year and demanded a CD of Caduseus'

songs. Accolades don't come much higher.

During a live radio link with Radio Harlow, a reporter did an on-the-spot interview with the band. Having heard about the band's esoteric creative abilities, a radio producer also approached the band to write a piece of music for a short film that he was producing on the theme (rather spookily) of the Arthur legend. Memories of the Vortex at Celtica came flooding back. Jumping at this opportunity, and the prospect of extending their careers into music for films and media, the band wrote a piece which was submitted and approved for production. The film was due to have its airing on a Channel 4 short film showcase. It was looking like they were about to break into the heady world of films and video and dreams of joining ranks with the likes of Bryan Adams, who had celebrated a worldwide hit with 'Everything I do, I do it for you,' seemed not too far removed from reality. Bryan Adams' song, which appeared in the film Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves, had stayed in the charts for 16 weeks. Then another bit of bad luck manifested itself and the project was curtailed when the band got to hear of the sudden death of the producer. To this day the music remains unpublished, gathering dust under the layers of misfortune.

Filled with disappointment and, by now, shaken by so many 'near misses' in their attempts at the bulls eye, each new tragedy cut deeper. Coupled with the fact that guitarist Ian had become quite unwell, even relatively minor adversities became mole hills and the signs of a rift began to appear again.

Unexpectedly, this time almost the entire band wanted to break away from Ian and Dave as Glynn, Jacko and Marilyn tried to coerce Jim to join them in a new venture. Jim refused their offer and the band performed its final gig at Battle of the Bands in 1999 at the Bell public house, in Newtown, Mid Wales. They gave a slaughtering display and were touted as winners, but were pipped at the post and triumph ebbed away, taking with it any remaining enthusiasm by the members of Caduseus. Everyone went back to their homes and the year 2000 came and went as stalemate was declared. Once again, Caduseus was dead in the water.

A First Time for everything

Apart from the occasional meetings at Dave's house, between Jim and Dave, there followed a long period of musical inactivity which lasted years rather than months. Shattered by the break-up of Caduseus, and the way success had eluded them, Jim went into a deep hibernation and it wasn't until 2005 that something awoke him again.

With a back-catalogue of well-constructed songs but with no prospect of taking them on the road again, Jim and Dave decided to have a stab at getting a publishing deal. Ian was, by now, getting better and the three of them set up GLT songwriting. Links with the outside world were restored and they fired off

some publicity material to record labels and publishers. Among all the usual rejection letters came a positive reply from a George Thomas of First Time Records. Armed with videos, CDs and as many lyrics as he could fit in his smart black briefcase, Jim set off with Dave and knocked on the door of First Time only to be redirected to another studio about 3 miles away. When they finally sat down with George, and he'd listened to their material and to what they had to say, his first words to them were "What do you want?" "A publishing deal" came the reply. Scratching his chin, deep in thought, George responded: "Don't bother with publishing. This stuff should be played. Reform the band and come back when you're ready." With that he presented a recording contract to them. That was it - they were signed to the label!

So began the task of recruiting new members and putting a band together again. But almost before the telephones were back in their cradles, some devastating news hit them. They learned that George Thomas, the proprietor of First Time Records had over-traded and his development finances were stretched to breaking point. The company folded shortly afterwards.

A lifeline in the form of a Mr Cooper, a property developer who fancied himself as an Elvis impersonator, was thrown to them with the offer of financial help for George's shipwrecked record label. But it became evident that Mr Cooper wanted nothing less than to take over the control of the business. He declared that he had a desire to create an Elvis tribute band and that he considered Jim, Ian and Dave to be very suitable. Needless to say, the band declined and walked away, shaken, rattled and rolled, but in reasonable health.

Caduseus IV

The rest of 2005 passed quietly. The meetings at Dave's place, near Welshpool, continued. Very gradually, their energy levels returned and a kind of restlessness, known only to fellow musicians, set in. The following year, they wrote six new songs in one very productive afternoon. The tide had found its power again and was pulling at the keel of Caduseus. As the motion became stronger, the desire to get out on the road again resurfaced. A new band was formed. Jamie Jenkins was recruited to be drummer and Theo Lawrence, Dave's son, stepped in to play bass. Caduseus IV had fledged.

The band recorded its eagerly awaited self-titled collection of early recordings at Back Yard studios and plans were made to publish the work on the web. On 15th July 2007 they launched their [MySpace page](#) featuring five tracks from the album.

Then, despite the extended period of writing, recording and energy-restoration and with just a handful of fresh gigs under its belt, Caduseus felt the full force of another depth-charge to its hull. Dave left suddenly, for personal reasons and moved away from the area. Then Jamie (still young and living with his parents)

announced to the band that his parents were leaving to relocate to Peterborough. This would make future rehearsals and gigs extremely difficult. Within the space of barely one month the band had lost both its keyboard player and its drummer. With that same old sinking feeling, and despite a further eight months during which the band made every possible effort to keep going, Caduseus hit the rocks again.

During the rest of 2007, the band tried various drummers and musicians but good people were very thin on the ground especially given the sparsely populated wastelands of north Powys, in Mid Wales and nearby rural Shropshire, from which they were hoping to recruit. Only Jim, Ian and Theo remained in the band and the sound was too thin without drums and keys.

During a mad moment and after much discussion, the band decided that to survive, it should consider going acoustic. So began the rearrangement of some of the songs to see if they could work with a very different treatment. Then came a chance meeting between Jim and Brian Scott, another local musician, at Mid Wales Music shop, in Newtown. Brian said that he knew of a good drummer who lived not too far away. Having all but given up the idea of reforming a rock band, Jim, with his self-belief untarnished but his gusto wearing very thin, gathered together the energy to call Nigel Mervyn, experienced drummer, singer and songwriter, during the second week of January 2008. Having recently left an indie/electronica project called I Like it Electric, and with a long and varied career spanning decades, Nigel listened intently as Jim described the band and their aspirations during a lengthy telephone call. An audition with Caduseus took place at Back Yard Studios on 14th January and Nigel was immediately recruited. It seemed there were good people tucked away in the wilderness, after all.

Caduseus V - sailing high

With their new drummer and backing vocalist on board, and after a rigorous few weeks rehearsing, Caduseus took to the road again and began a mini-tour of some local pubs and clubs. At the same time, they began recording and writing new material at Nigel's studio and released three new demos in July. They had a new, incisive sound which began to attract much attention and which gave the band a new-found confidence. They had changed course slightly, with a more commercial edge but still retained the depth and truth of the older Caduseus.

Jay, a young guitarist from Newtown joined the band as understudy, initially, to Ian. His sharp, riff-driven style was to underpin Ian's exploratory lead guitar work and give the songs some much-needed rhythm and chords for the live shows. Another guest player from south Wales, Liz Prendergast, who played electric violin, added some sparkle and punch to the live performances. Caduseus was looking and sounding very good.

Daytime jobs and being involved in other musical projects while trying to break it as a band can be the cause of much frustration and argument among the band members. Caduseus was no exception. The call for more frequent practises and for total commitment to the creative energy of the group blew a pressure-valve. On the same day in early August, the band lost both its lead guitarist and bass player overboard. Ian and Theo had bailed out.

Caduseus VI - alone on the high seas

So began another chapter in the story. With the rudder intact, but no wind in its sails, Caduseus continued firmly, but slowly, on its course. Jim and Nigel continued to write and record, throughout the remainder of the summer and then autumn, with the help of Jay and the occasional use of a local guitarist called Tom.

Then, at the end of October, a young bass player from Wrexham, named Ste, showed an interest in Caduseus. Having successfully worked his way through an audition, a military-style briefing, ticked all the boxes on the full job description, and then, within a matter of weeks, played a live acoustic gig on Pheonix internet radio, Ste was recruited.

As the band entered 2009, the story of Caduseus VI was beginning to gain pace, with an increased presence on internet radio and its first cross-over into mainstream radio. On Sunday evening, January 11th, Adam Walton (BBC Radio Wales) played 'I Guess it's Goodbye' amid some enthusiastic narrative about the band.

Despite many incarnations over the years, there has always been a rare chemistry and synergy between the band members of Caduseus, under their leading light, Jim, which has led to their unique, timeless style of rock.

As with all the early editions of the band, the recent line-up consists of musicians from diverse musical backgrounds, all of whom draw upon a far-reaching pool of musical influences and experiences both in the studio and on stage. All members of the band get involved in the writing and musical arrangement of their work, under the guiding influence of both Nigel and Jim.

Since 2010 Caduseus has shelved its touring and has not performed live, although Jim and Nigel continue to promote the band and appeared on Oystermouth Radio, Swansea and had a live interview on Big Scott's Radio, Cardiff, in 2014.