

## Mp3 Artisan - Breathing Space



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Intelligent original songs by Brian Bedford (serious/funny/eco and life-themes) with a Brit-kick, sung in breathtaking vocal harmony - a cappella - by England's finest vocal harmony trio. 20 MP3 Songs in this album (58:25) ! Related styles: FOLK: British Folk, EASY LISTENING: Harmony Vocal Group People who are interested in The Manhattan Transfer should consider this download. Details: Artisan arrived on the British a cappella folk scene in 1885, grew to be nationally known and respected, went on to tour in Europe from 1990 and Canada and the USA from 1994. They made over a dozen albums together and finally played their last concert (until the reunion maybe?) in November 2005. Their albums continue to be available, either physically or digitally (some as CD roms if required), and the Artisan office is still open for enquiries and contacts. The three of them are still great friends even after twenty years on the road together. "Well, Artisan aren't a hard act to follow, all I have to do now is to get up here on stage and burst into flames." - Valdy, Canada 1995 Artisan are Hilary Spencer, Jacey Bedford and Brian Bedford. They are three friends who decided to sing together for fun way back in 1984 in deepest darkest Yorkshire. "It was pure luck," says Jacey, "Our voices blended so well, right from the start, that we had lots of encouragement from friends and that prompted us to work really hard. Within a couple of years we were being invited to festivals and events all over Britain. By 1988 we were getting so much work that we either had to give up singing or give up the day-jobs. Finally in 1989 we became full-time vocal harmonists. " Since they hit the road they've taken their own brand of harmony and humour round Britain, Europe, Canada, the USA, Australia and Hong Kong. They've played venues both large and small, from folk clubs in upstairs pub rooms to open-air festivals with audiences of thousands. Artisan's special talent is making friends with an audience. Venues and Events Played Some of the interesting and unusual venues Artisan have played include the gun-deck of the HMS Victory (Nelson's flagship) in Portsmouth

Naval Dockyard; the 14th century Chapter House of Lincoln Cathedral; the Royal Shakespeare Company's Swan Theatre at Stratford on Avon; Rochester Cathedral; The World-Famous City Varieties Music Hall in Leeds and the Georgian Theatre Royal in Richmond. North American venues include Longwood Gardens, Pennsylvania; The Chocolate Church, Bath, Maine; The Birchmere, Washington CD; The Ice House, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and Coupeville Performing Arts Centre, Whidbey Island, Washington State. Their recent appearance at America's foremost performing arts centre in Washington DC - The Kennedy Center was webcast live and is now archived at the Kennedy Center website, Millennium Stage page (search for Artisan on 11th December 2004.) They have also played hundreds of folk clubs, arts centres, coffeehouses, concert series, theatres and halls all over Britain, Canada, the USA, Germany and Belgium. Festivals at home and Abroad Some of the festivals they've played include the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the award-winning Vocal Chords A Cappella Festival at The Barbican Centre, London, Sidmouth International Folk Festival, Vancouver Folk Festival (BC, Canada), Winnipeg Folk Festival (MB, Canada), Mariposa Folk Festival (ON, Canada), Lunenburg Folk Harbour Festival (NS, Canada), Bethlehem Musikfest (PA, USA), Philadelphia Folk Festival (USA), Central Pennsylvania Festival of the Arts (PA, USA); Lancaster Festival (Ohio, USA); Minnesota State Fair, (MN, USA); Gooik Festival (Belgium), Nordic Folk Festival and Festival Am Ith (Germany), Old Songs (USA). The New Jersey Folk Project (USA); Spring Gulch Festival, Pennsylvania (USA); Chippenham Folk Festival, (UK); Brampton Live Festival, Cumbria (UK) Earth Air Fire Water--Goderich Celtic Festival, Ontario, (Canada); and Owen Sound Summerfolk Festival, Ontario, (Canada). Then in Australia there was Port Fairy Festival and Nannup Folk in the Forest, and back at home Tamworth, Holmfirth and Otley, Moore Coast, Cleethorpes, Sidmouth, Broadstairs, Bromyard, Saltburn, Cleckheaton, Maryport, Birdsedge, White Horse, Upton on Severn, Cromer's Folk on the Pier, Four Fools (Chorley), Broadstairs, Bridgnorth, Trimdon Trowbridge. Plus lots more too numerous to mention, but which were enjoyed just as much. 2005 was Artisan's final year - but it is also their celebration of twenty years in the business. In spring they did a 43 date Twentieth Anniversary Tour, followed by festivals such as Glenfarg Folk Feast, Chippenham, Cleckheaton, Warwick, Brampton and Bromyard. They made one final transatlantic trip in August to play Lunenburg Folk Harbour Festival, Bethlehem Musikfest, Owen Sound Summerfolk and the Philadelphia Folk Festival. Their final weekend of concerts was in November with Saturday 19th November at the Georgian Theatre Royal in Richmond and Sunday 20th November at Penistone

Paramount Cinema (2 houses matinee and evening). See Endnotes for more details. A superb DVD of the final concert is available direct from Artisan. See the albums page or call Artisan on UK 01484 606230. Albums Artisan have recorded eleven albums together (plus a DVD) and have appeared on numerous compilations. They were nominated four times for the CARAs - that's the Contemporary A cappella Recording Awards. 1997 they had a Nomination for Best World/Roots Song with Lest We Forget from their "Our Back Yard" CD. In 1998 they won Best World/Roots Song with Mabel - Written by Brian Bedford - on the "Driving Home" CD. In 1999 they had their third nomination for Best Holiday/Christmas Album with "Paper Angels" and in 2000 they won Best World/Roots Album for "Dancing With Words" Radio and TV - At Home and Abroad Artisan's songs were frequently heard on radio. In England you were as likely to hear them on BBC Radio 4 as Radio 2. They appeared on Ned Sherrin's Loose Ends, Kaleidoscope, Comparing Notes, The Arts Programme, Folk on 2 and Not Today, a Christmas Day special. They also did their own "Artisan in Concert" show for BBC Radio2 and "Stuff the Turkey", a networked Christmas show. Jacey has also presented her own short series for the BBC called "Thinking Our Loud". They appeared with Ian McMillan on a BBC Radio 4 special 'Home for Christmas' for which Brian co-wrote the title song with Ian. Radio broadcasts abroad included BRT in Belgium, WDR in Germany, CBC in Canada and airplay across the Canada and the USA on a variety of public and commercial stations. On their tour of Australia they played no less than five ABC radio stations all across the continent and they have become regulars on Radio WDIY in Pennsylvania. They appeared on TV too, in England, Germany and Canada.

-o0o- Quotable Quotes Dear Brian, Jacey and Hilary, Just finished a good listen to Our Back Yard, and wanted to tell you while the memory's fresh that it's a super album. Good writing, production, performances--did I forget anything? Anyway, well done that mob! " Tom Paxton "Artisan aren't a hard act to follow. All I have to do now is get up here on stage and burst into flames." --Valdy, Canada. "Fiery, fast and effective." --The Guardian, UK. "Urgent and uninhibited three part harmony - joyful and vigorous." The Daily Telegraph, UK. "Like the music, the banter is very skilful - some of it is clearly premeditated, the rest of it is spontaneous tomfoolery. They are unashamedly entertainers." --Alan Murray, Folk Roots, UK. "Must see." --The Scotsman, (Edinburgh) UK. "The harmony work is sharp and unfussy, the words are worth listening to, the tunes are good and the group convey a real energy and enthusiasm in their singing." Nick Beale, Folk Roots, UK. The songs are, as much of Artisan's material, humorous but with a deeper meaning lurking below the surface. You'll have your fun

but you'll come away with a deeper meaning of the issues being sung about. And, as always, the harmonies of Jacey Bedford, Brian Bedford and Hilary Spencer are as wonderfully tuneful and rhythmic as any to be found on the folk scene today. --Dirty Linen, USA "Our Back Yard is a treasure box of social commentary done a cappella. If you're intrigued with lyrics and the purity of the human voice, it's for you." --Crossroads Magazine, USA "I would cheerfully sell my soul to the Devil for Hilary Spencer's voice." --Claire Giles, Shirefolk, UK. "Tremendous in their sheer ability to sing and entertain." --Venue Magazine, UK "A velvety tenderness that no other harmony group comes near." --Taplas Magazine, (Wales) UK. "Please will you come back again next year." --Brian Davis, Artistic Director, Lunenburg Folk Harbour Festival, Canada "Each original song, written by Brian Bedford of the trio, is a musical gem, with carefully crafted lyrics, some with great humor, some with social conscience. The three-part a cappella harmony is beautifully performed and keeps a varied audience on the edge of their seats. Our audience asked to have them back this year after a very successful first appearance last year, and have requested that they return again next year. This is a heart-warming performance that will appeal to many different audiences." Priscilla Johnson -- Longwood Gardens, Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, USA "For tight, exciting harmony singing, as well as sheer delight and entertainment, Artisan are the bee's knees. You'd be mad to miss them." --St Neot's Festival, UK. "Artisan strikes a perfect balance of poignancy and good fun, with original lyrics ranging from uplifting and heartfelt to clever and tongue-in-cheek. Their harmonies are stunning, their live performance an absolute delight." --Susan Casey, Manager, Calgary Folk Club, Canada -o0o- Artisan Reviews ARTISAN in concert! WFDU-FM's TRADITIONS - New Jersey, December 2003 Subject: WFDU-FM's TRADITIONS playlist for December 14, 2003 - HOST: Ron Olesko Our second nor'easter of the season was the perfect setting for today's show. As the snow fell on the NYC metro area, we offered seasonal fare. Today's program featured a concert, recorded last evening, with Artisan. I recorded their performance as part of the Sanctuary Concert series (sanctuary.org) at the Union Village Methodist Church in Berkeley Heights, NJ. Artisan is wrapping up the first U.S. tour of their annual holiday program known as "Stuff the Turkey". It was a real honor to have the opportunity to broadcast this extraordinary concert. The Church was a perfect setting as it was decorated in holiday trim with candles in every window, wreaths on the wall, and a gorgeous tree at the altar. Add an outstanding performance - what a treat! Those expecting an evening of standard holiday carols should look elsewhere. Artisan captures the spirit, humor and beauty of the holiday with a blend of songs that centered on the original tunes of

Artisan's Brian Bedford but also included gems from Stan Rogers, Mike Harding and others. They also showed the folk process at work with some delightful settings of the song "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks". Check out their website for more information - ([artisan-harmony.com](http://artisan-harmony.com)) I hope Artisan will bring their holiday show to the U.S. every year! I would like to thank Brian, Jacey Hilary for allowing me to record and broadcast the concert, and a special thanks to Scott Sheldon and the fine folks at Sanctuary Concerts. Artisan's Stuff the Turkey Victoria Hall, Settle: 19th December 2002 From Gill O'Donnell, Lancaster Guardian / Craven Herald - 27th December 2002 Fresh from a tour of Canada where they faces snow drifts of 'alarming proportions' as well as an unexpected heatwave, Artisan arrived in Settle ready to take on anything. Those hardy souls who ventured out in the chilly night to watch couldn't fail to be warmed by the enthusiasm and talent on display. This was a real Christmas treat! Artisan hails from Yorkshire and throughout the evening there were numerous references to the way in which Brian is a typical Yorkshireman when it comes to the scrooge-like tendencies that accompany Christmas shopping. A point he himself reinforced in his wonderful Pythonesque monologue lamenting that 'Kids today don't know they're born.' In contrast the ladies, Jacey and Hilary, positively revelled in the Christmas Spirit with numbers such as 'Scarlet Raygun' and 'Stuff the Turkey.' Dickens featured heavily too in the hilarious send-up of 'Christmas Carol' and the very apt 'What the Dickens is all the Fuss About?' One of the real strengths of the evening, however was the way in which the trio managed to switch moods so easily and were able to mix the sacred with the secular and the wittily outrageous with the more poignant and carefully observed. Parodies of carols such as 'God Send me a Merry Gentleman' gave way to a haunting rendition of the 7th Century 'Veni Emanuel' via a roistering version of 'The Holly and the Ivy.' The touching sentiments in 'Home for Christmas' most surely shared by anyone who has ever lived away from home and the beauty of 'Paper Angels' lay in its simple conjunction of familiar images. The skill in this performance lay not only in the trio's singing but also their exuberance and ability to tap into all that evokes Christmas memories in their audience. Their description of traditional wassailing as 'carol singing with menaces' being only one such example - and judging by the audience response I wasn't the only one to have gone down that route! There are many things which I will treasure about the evening: the witty retelling of the nativity - as it would have happened in Yorkshire; the singing of 'While Shepherds Watched' to the tune of the Can-Can (it also fits 'Doe a Deer' from the Sound of Music, apparently); the idea of a modern child sending an e-mail to Santa instead of a letter magically carried up the chimney and the

poignantly timely reminder in 'Silver and Gold' that 'they're still fighting today in the land where this story began.' I know that next year I'll make sure that tickets for the Artisan Christmas Show will feature on my wish list to Santa. -o0o- Lunenburg Folk Harbour Festival, Nova Scotia, August 2000 Songsters bring crowd to feet in Lunenburg By Stephen Pedersen / Arts Reporter CONCERT REVIEW Lunenburg Artisan, a favourite festival act now making its third appearance at the festival, sang their richly harmonized a capella songs to tremendous crowd reaction. The lyrics are literate and meaningful and the tunes gracious and often extremely expressive. They sing about dancing with words, being old enough to know better and too old to care, and letting your youngsters go without clipping their wings so they can fly on their own. These are simple enough but also eternal ideas since they deal with wit, aging, and nurturing your kids with a fierce but not overly protective love. -o0o- Birmingham, April 2000: Red Lion Folk Club Visiting the Red Lion last week was pot luck really - for my sins I had never seen Artisan. The first thing to strike me was the trio's accents - broadish Yorkshire, which is always refreshing in these days of uniformity. The most striking thing, however, was the quality and range of the voices, which complemented each other perfectly. It was hard to pigeon-hole the music, being a curious mixture of music-hall style and folk. Not only is the band tremendously gifted, driven by the powerful and versatile voice of Hilary Spencer and the sweet soft voice of Jacey Bedford, but complementing these two with voice and words, is song writer Brian Bedford, who captures some witty and poignant observations on life with a great catalogue of songs. Wings had some real emotive verses, which I cannot do justice in this column. -- "What's the use of wings if you can't fly." The concert had a full array of human emotion - fear, joy, strange habits and humour. "Who put the headache in the whisky, who put the volume in the kids?" "Quality stuff! Mike Critchley, Birmingham MetroNews, UK. -o0o- Philadelphia, May 1999 From one side comes the soaring notes of a broken angel, alternately betrayed and triumphant as her voice climbs a ladder from the dark earth to the bright starry skies. From the other comes a stridently stable baritone, seemingly playing point and counterpoint to itself, providing a bottom that sounds like it could come from the throat of a fallen Gregorian monk, now worldly and wise. And between them stands a small woman with an infectious pixie smile whose piping tones serve to anchor the group's sound. Unusual to have the high voice as the anchor, but there it is. And it works. God, how it works. But I'm getting ahead of myself. I had the great pleasure of seeing Hilary Spencer, Brian Bedford, and Jacey Bedford, the three singers--no; scratch that; the three ARTISTS--who make up Artisan, perform tonight at the Germantown

Academy. That pleasure was heightened by the fact that I sat front and centre, not fifteen feet away from the performers, my view unhampered by obstructions, other people, or even musical instruments (Artisan is an a cappella group, of course). When the show began, the smile on my face simply stretched and grew, pulling itself wider and wider with each song. They sing like angels, they really do. The songs, almost all of which were written by Brian, are witty, well-arranged, catchy, and just plain damn good. During intermission, I got to fight through a crowd bustling to meet Artisan and buy their CDs, one of which I bought and am listening to right now. This was yet another thing about Artisan's appearance that enchants--those who, like me, have met as well as seen Artisan can attest to the fact that Jacey's face seems to be powered by a halogen lamp. Hilary's smile, by contrast, throws off warmth the way her bandmate's casts light. Both women are perfect joys to speak with, and both take the compliments that inevitably come their way with an almost surprised glee that belies their longevity in the music business. It's a glee that is most infectious. For his part, Brian's smile is small and almost bashful. It is, however, no less sincere; no less warm. Have I said lately that they sing like angels? I have? Well, it hurts no one for me to say it again, and it's something that is very, happily, gloriously true. Just as impressive as the transcendent harmonies was the between-numbers banter the group engaged in. In this, as in their singing, the timing exhibited by the members of Artisan is just one step past perfect. Witty and wise, the banter had none of the cutesy camp quality sometimes associated with British performers (If you've seen or heard Michael Crawford live in concert, you'll know what I mean). There is none of the transparent wringing of poignant moments in Artisan's showmanship, nor can the "look- I'm making-a-joke" feeling be found. No; though funny, this is FUN. Though it may be their work, it's patently obvious that this group is enjoying themselves up there on the stage, and the sincerity of the friendship they share comes through as clear as ... well, as clear as their voices. Also, when they exhort the crowd to sing along with them, it's no calculated ploy to inspire loyalty or make them seem as if they want to be closer to their audience. It's not false largesse at all; these people genuinely want to hear their audience singing with them, loud and happy. Alex Jay Berman -- did I mention that they sing like angels? -oOo- Allendale, England, 13th March 1999 Artisan embrace the 'Dale in collective enchantment. These days, when you go out to a live show, you expect to see a range of instruments arrayed on stage, a sophisticated sound system, maybe a bank of lights, in a convivial atmosphere. At Allendale's Village Hall last Saturday, the audience walked into a convivial room all right, but the stage was, well, empty. There was more than a little trepidation, one felt,

and some concern whether the promoters, Northumbrian Music Nights, had actually lived up to their side of the bargain. Until Artisan, who are Hilary Spencer, Jacey and Brian Bedford, clambered up, and placed a single white sheet of paper comprising the set list, on the floor in front of them. Then the whole hall was filled with music. It was nothing short of magical. As the twenty or so local singers had appreciated at a vocal workshop that afternoon, projection can be uncanny, and so it proved. 'Come all you maids' a traditional song, flowed up and over and throughout the room, seeking out hidden corners and illuminating them in exquisite harmony. Many of the songs were Brian's own compositions, and the group's one concession to the traditional folk idiom, Mabel, was received with great good humour. Then there was the song Vin Garbutt has made famous, "What's the Use of Wings," so that was really pretty folk too. But this was startling, unique music with an upfront showmanship that nearly defies description. "Talk to Me" started off with a hook seemingly borrowed from The Eurythmics, but the patter on the bridge, and the wry twists in the humour, meant that it was Artisan's own. Or the tea-bag gospel choir "I ain't Goin' Down" which went some way to eliciting harmonies from everyone in the room. The cynical feeling "Snakes and Ladders" must have been written on a bad hair day, but it'd be a willfully naive so-and-so who thought life was always roses and no thorns. Or again, the melancholic but ever-so-enchancing rendition of "Holly and Mistletoe Days", which had the feeling of a timeless winter carol. Steam-huddled ponies indeed. Pictures seemed to spring effortlessly in one's mind as the words tumbled forth. And how they poured out! As Brian remarked, 'When you have three minds to remember, it's rare to forget the words.' Nostalgia set the first tone after the break, with "Walking down the Alleys" ('Do you remember -- do you recall?') and it was apposite to think of sepia faces and the innocence of childhood remembered in old photographs, as the Village Hall will host an exhibition of Allendale photographs later this year. But "Breathing Space" brought some tears to quite a few eyes, with the hard reality of contemporary loves and lives. 'What am I bid for a bell with no sound in a carpet of blue by a stream?' was a sparkling contrast to the Lottery Song -- 'I wanna be one of the few -- I wanna be known by the things that I own'. Then "Fear" (of fear itself, inevitably), and A Habit I'll have to Kick before the compelling NIMBY. A Stan Rogers song, from Canada, The Raising of the Mary Ellen Carter with its rousing chorus 'Rise again!' meant that the ensemble, who gave the evening their emotional all, could not easily leave the stage, but with the humanist benediction of David Roth, 'Here's to loving friends and family' as an encore, the evening finally had to end. 'Unique', 'indescribable', 'brilliant', 'exquisite': these



are some of the terms that have been used to describe Artisan. All are true, as those who were there, on chancing to read this review, will know. Larry Winger, Northumbrian Music Nights -o0o- Edmonton, Canada, 18th October 1997 Tonight was a night I will long remember. This was Artisan's first trip to Edmonton. They'd been to Calgary (and Calgary got TWO shows this trip... \*sniff\*) but it was the first time we were so blessed. Judging by the audience reaction, it won't be the last. They started with In the Beginning, a typical Artisan song - it quickly entralls you \*and\* makes you stare in amazement at how the members don't seem to breath. Primary songwriter Brian Bedford has evolved past the need for air and thinks the other two have, or that if he writes music with no breathing space in it, they \*will\* so evolve. (Of course, as they explain, when they finally asked him to write one with "breathing space," he wrote one CALLED Breathing Space, but hey...) When you sit through an Artisan show, you quickly feel as if you know them well. The anecdotes told by spokesman Jacey Bedford, the personality, the mildly snarky (and always hysterical) asides from vocal powerhouse Hilary Spencer - you feel you (and the other 150 people) are in someone's living room at a private sing-a-long. I'm sure they've done the same shtick 1,000 times before, but it \*sounded\* so fresh and personal... Most of the crowd tonight had never heard the group's music before. If you're familiar with them, you know many of the songs are very repetitive - tonight, watching a crowd who'd never heard any of it singing along enthusiastically, I realized how well that worked. It conveyed that feeling of intimacy and familiarity that made the show so personal. Artisan is \*very\* British, and not just in geography. Canadians grow up with more British TV and literature than Americans, so it was old home week for me. The anecdotes I related to easily, and the between-song jokes and stories were... Well, it was the first time I've seen a show not comprised of comedic songs, in which I tears of laughter streaming down my face much of the night. And for those without some understanding of British politics and daily life, Jacey and Hilary were quick to explain in terms that made the explanation itself just as funny. The group's music - as anyone who has their CDs or the CARAs CD knows - is stylistically very different than we're generally exposed to in Canada and the US. Their performance style is very different, too: singing with their hands more than choreographed, and for many of the songs they stand stock-still. They perform and emote solely with their voices and faces - and natch, I was completely mesmerized. (Do you have any idea how hard it is to type a review when your hands are bruised from clapping so hard?) The Britishisms were only one highlight of the evening. Other than finally meeting someone I've been emailing for 18 months, the other highlight had to be their performance of the

CARA nominee Lest We Forget. They introduced it by mentioning CASA and getting quite a bit of mileage out of Jacey's being an "ambassador" - and hence British royalty. I've been listening to Artisan music for a while, but none was ever so real now that I've \*seen\* it. And doubly for Lest We Forget. No a cappella show has ever given me the goosebumps I got from Lest We Forget. For the next 10 days they're in BC and Washington State, then down to California for a few gigs, and have a trip or two to North America already planned for next year. If you're \*anywhere\* near any of their stops, you will not forgive yourself if you miss it. Jessika Diamond--CASA Artisan's farewell concert - 20th November 2005... Artisan Final Concert Review Well, it's finally happened, the last concert is over, Artisan is no more - at least not as a gigging trio - but there are still CDs to buy and the DVD of the final concert is a fantastic memento of Artisan's live concert set. It's got great sound and we're delighted to say that we didn't break the camera lenses, so it looks good too. People ask us why we decided to quit and move on - and there's nothing complicated to the decision... Twenty years is a long time and we reckoned our twentieth year was a good time to finish on a high. We're all looking forward to our new performing projects. We're did our final day on Sunday 20th November (see below). We had a ball at the last gigs, especially - as you can imagine - on the Sunday. People kept asking whether we felt sad and whether we were going to manage to get through the concert without breaking out in floods of blubbing, but truth to tell, though the audience admitted to a bit of blubbing themselves, we were all fine. I guess the mechanics of organising the concerts and the DVD filming was taking up the portion of our mind reserved for dwelling on the occasion. We had such a good time seeing all our friends there that it was like a great big party and send-off combined. We'd particularly like to thank all those people who travelled so far to see us. The furthest travellers came from Seattle, USA (though that was a bit of a cheat as our friends William and Felicia were coming over anyway, so they just came over a week early). Our UK fans travelled down from Scotland (the furthest being Aberdeen) and from Northumberland and Durham. Some came up from Devon, Somerset, Kent, Hampshire, Cambridgeshire, the West Midlands and many from counties much closer to home. And do we feel sad now that it's all over? I think 'sad' is not the right word. Privileged describes it better. Privileged to have been part of something like Artisan with so many good friends and fans on both sides of the Atlantic and Australia too. We're proud of our achievements and hope you all continue to enjoy our music, because while CDs and DVDs exist Artisan is still out there somewhere. Artisan's Farewell Concert Happened at... THE PARAMOUNT, Penistone, South Yorkshire on SUNDAY

20TH NOVEMBER 2005 REVIEW BY DAVID KIDMAN "Sunday 20th November 2005 The glorious weather on this cold November day was tinged with a degree of sadness for lovers of fine three-part harmony singing, for one of the genre's most accomplished exponents was to "call it a day" with a pair of farewell concerts, bringing to a close the trio's last-ever tour and at the same time bringing down the curtain on over 20 immensely successful years as a performing unit. For most if not all of that time, Artisan (Jacey and Brian Bedford, and Hilary Spencer) have been a benchmark for aspiring harmony singers, supremely polished and professional (almost to a fault, some have said!), and Troopers to the last. So you wouldn't ever expect anything but a proper Show (in the true meaning of the word) from them! And so it proved - totally typical of everything Artisan have stood for over their lengthy and successful innings. A formal yet informal concert-style presentation, laced with enough of that characteristic friendliness, genial familiarity and genuine bonhomie to compensate for the very occasional whiff of stageyness. The three performers who stood up there on the Penistone stage struck up an immediate rapport with the capacity audience (something they're so very skilled in!). Much of the linkperson role fell to Jacey, who sadly was suffering from a throat infection (it happens to us all just when we least need it!) - but luckily for us this affliction was only noticeable in her speech (and then only just - for there, let's be honest, it didn't matter nearly so much) and not in her singing. We were treated to a pair of generous sets together comprising nearly twenty songs, which made up a kind of whistle-stop tour through the finest of Brian's own compositions. Running the gamut from breathless (yes, that's meant literally, as Jacey and Hilary are quick to point out!) patter songs of often hilarious bent through to deeply moving meditations on life and love, with everything sung clearly and supremely harmoniously. The afternoon was a veritable parade of deservedly well-loved, solid-gold-classic Artisan songs, from Breathing Space to Mabel to What's The Use Of Wings? to White Horses . all guaranteed to bring a smile to the face or a tear or two to the corner of the eye (sometimes more, and sometimes both in the same song - not an easy trick to pull off!). Even if we'd heard some or much of the clever linking narrative or partially-scripted ad-libs before, that didn't matter, for the sense of occasion was what counted here. The "planned encore" just had to be a rousing, roof-raising rendition of Stan Rogers' celebrated Mary Ellen Carter, which for many years has been Artisan's regular "evening-finisher". Then, after the hearty applause had died down, Artisan launched gently into The Farewell Song, a veritable tearjerker to send us all quietly weeping to the car-park. The concert had been a real occasion; in a way the end of an era,

for it certainly felt as though we were bidding farewell to some very dear friends. That is, until we remembered that of course, the three singers who comprise Artisan have all been involved in other projects and activities throughout the tenure of the group's life, and will continue to do everything they already do best (including sing!), the only difference being that they'll no longer do so together as Artisan. So, I'm happy to say, this particular cloud does have a brightly glistening silver lining: Jacey and Brian will join with three other excellent performers (duo William Pint Felicia Dale and multi- instrumentalist Ben Walker) in the newly-formed Brian Bedford Band, whereas Hilary will continue tickling our sensibilities with the fabulous guitarist and singer/writer Grant Baynham in the duo QuickSilver and as but one of the multi-talented madcap troupe of Les Barker's mighty Mrs Ackroyd Band. So hallelujah! for we are saved!."

David Kidman So what's next? Hilary will continue to perform as half of the duo QuickSilver with Grant Baynham - with voices and guitar performing an eclectic mix of songs alongside Grant's own amazing compositions. You can keep up to speed with her goings on by visiting [hilaryspencer.com](http://hilaryspencer.com) Brian has been getting more and more deeply into technology and recording and his Park Head Studio is fast becoming the love of his life. He'll be concentrating on other people's recording projects (which he already does but currently with limits on his available time). Details of Brian's studio are available at [parkheadstudio](http://parkheadstudio) Jacey is going to continue keeping tabs on the folk world via her UK-based agency, Jacey Bedford Tour Management, which arranges tours for great folk acts from abroad. Away from the folk world she also writes science fiction and fantasy! You can keep up with her writing activities by visiting [jaceybedford](http://jaceybedford) and her agency at [jacey-bedford.com](http://jacey-bedford.com). Will there be a reunion? They aren't ruling it out... eventually.

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