
RUPERT AND MARC

Marc Bolan, Rupert and "hippie" culture

Kingsley Mole sat high on a windy knoll, his eyes consuming the silent midnight woods. He nuzzled his long molish snout deep inside the heart of a marigold and let his molish imagination skip to and fro over sunken galleons and pirate pictures of rusted doubloons and deep-water cabins stacked to the brim with musty muskets and goldfish gauntlets, once worn by Henry Morgan. ... so the Mole, kneeling on the soft soil, said a morning prayer to Ra, not even caring if he dirtied his yellow Rupert trousers because his molish mind knew that praying was special

What on earth? What is this odd outpouring of dippy hippiness? The above is taken from the children's story, read by John Peel, on the Tyrannosaurus Rex album "My People were Fair and had Sky in their Hair - but Now they're Content to wear Stars on their Brows"(!). The story was written by Marc Bolan - the late, great front-man for Tyrannosaurus and then T.Rex. The Rupert reference clearly was not an accident, as we can see from the main photograph on this page, where Marc wears a Rupert Tee-shirt proudly (as did the author of this article at the same time).

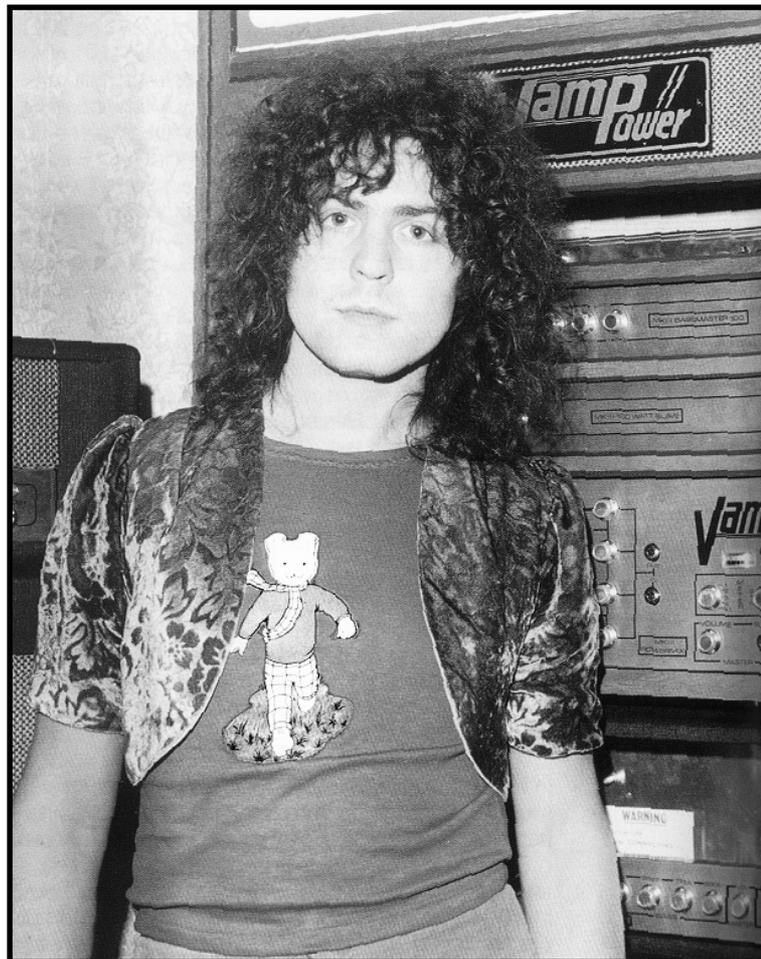
We also know that Marc was a fan of children's stories in general, as he dedicated "My People..." to "Aslan and all the Old Narnians" and filled his songs and poems with fairytale characters. Unicorns, dwarfish trumpeters, mythical lilyponds and sages poured from Marc's productive pen and fertile imagination. But did he read Rupert? Well, Marc was born in 1947, so he grew up in London (as Mark Feld) through the 1950s,



Artwork for George Underwood ... perhaps a little too "hippie" for Rupert, but certainly in the same vein and of the same quality "My People were Fair and had Sky in their Hair - but Now They're Content to Wear Stars on their Brows"

when some of Alfred Bestall's most surreal, imaginative, fairytale stories appeared. He hit his mid-teens in the early 1960s, when Lord of the Rings was beginning to make its mark on youth culture and C.S. Lewis's Narnia stories were happily becoming classics, so he was almost

certainly attracted, as an imaginative and poetically-minded pre-hippie, to the same aspects of Rupert that attracted the slightly older Paul McCartney, Terry Jones and Terence Stamp. We have no proof that Marc was a closet *Follower*, but we know that Marc's delightfully incoherent world of fairytale characters, bringing wizards, magical woods, and fauns together, owed a little to Tolkien and a little to Lewis. Perhaps we can also be allowed to speculate a little that our own Rupert Bear and his equally



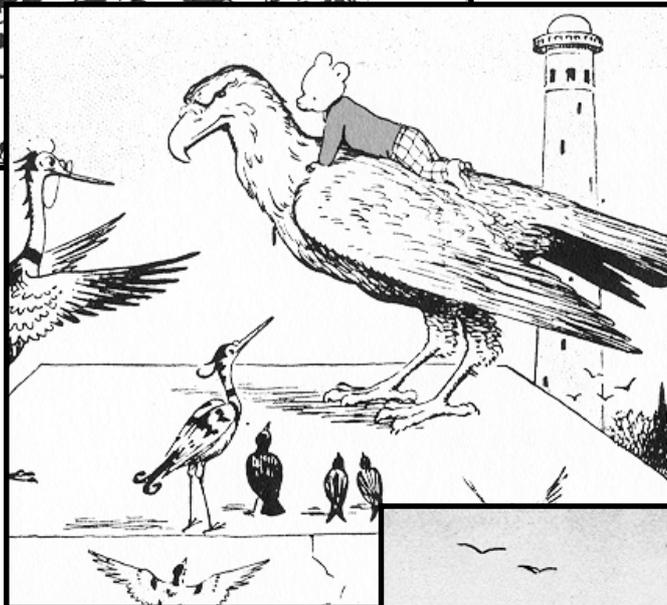
i n c o n g r u o u s adventures with elves, sorcerers, dwarves and impossible locations are implicated?

We may be able to even stretch the speculation to one of Marc's earliest big hits, "Ride a White Swan". It's



Ride a White Swan Goose like a druid in the old days ... (from Rupert in Dreamland)

not hard, however, to find Rupert on a giant eagle, a large heron-like bird and, in Mary Tourtel's "Rupert in Dreamland", riding a large and very white goose. I have even found an image of our chum on a white swan. It would have been typical of Marc to have taken inspiration from something



Ride a White Swan large Eagle like a druid in the old days ... (from Rupert and the Courier Bird)



From Rupert Bear to Mickey Mouse - not an improvement!

like that and it's a nice thought.

Certainly, Marc Bolan wasn't alone at the time in his liking of Rupert. We have already noted Rupert's presence on a King Crimson album sleeve (Letters Page, Nutwood Newsletter 20 - which also commented on the Bolan connection) and Oz magazine's inclusion of a rude and rampant Rupert in their 1970 "Schoolkids' edition" is the stuff of both legend and law-suit. Sadly, as Marc became more famous and more influenced by Americana, his lyrics turned to Cadillacs and ladies carrying frogs in New York City. He even abandoned his Rupert Tee-shirt for a Mickey Mouse one. Harrumph!

However, there's very little doubt in my mind that the young Marc Bolan of Tyrannosaurus Rex was a follower, if not a *Follower* (impossible, as we were not



Ride a White **Swan** like a druid in the old days ... da, da, dee, dee, dah! (from Rupert and the Swan Lake)

even a twinkle in Tony Shuker's eye in the 1970s!). Tyrannosaurus Rex's songs appealed, and continue to appeal, to me in the same way as does Rupert. They amuse me, they fire my imagination and they offer me a place to go that is often more pleasant than the all-too-real world. Are these the ramblings of an old hippie? Probably - but those of a happy old hippie, not a sad old one!

Alan Murray