

# Cardy & Coke

Multi award winners and singer/songwriters

In addition to their combined talents as songwriters, the sound of Cardy & Coke has become unique and distinctive over the years with individual backings enhanced by the sound of Jan's mandolin plus strong vocals and harmonies from both Wes and Jan. They have eclectic tastes in music from bluegrass to cajun, western swing to Irish folk and actively seek out good songs, old and new, that perhaps get passed by or forgotten in the rush to cover the latest hit from Nashville. One thing is certain, just as no two audiences are the same, they never stick to the same set two nights on the trot and often plans made in advance shoot off at tangents as the evening develops.

It was back in 1975 that Wes Cardy formed his first band and over the next five years built up solid experience through entertaining in pubs and clubs. In 1980 he went into full time music when he made the first of 11 visits to Norway as a solo artist but it was later, as part of the Cardy & Coke duo which was formed in 1986 with Jan Mellon, that he became a familiar name on the British Country music scene. In January 1989 they expanded to become one of the south east's most popular award winning five-piece acts called the Wes Cardy Band. This lasted until Christmas 2000 when the band played their last gig together but since that time Cardy & Coke have gone from strength to strength and are familiar faces on the Country music theatre, club, festival and holiday scene, both at home and abroad. Jan met Wes through a local drama group and in the years of his involvement with the group, Wes conceived, wrote and directed several original plays and variety shows. However, due to the success of the band and duo, drama had to take a back seat but Wes and Jan's experience in the theatre reveals itself in their stagecraft. They take pride in their visual presentation and the emphasis has always been on entertainment.

Songwriting has always been one of his interests and it was a natural step therefore, for him to write a musical based on Country music called King Of The Cowboys. Jan helped with some of the lyrics for the songs and this sowed the seeds for later songwriting. He has had a lot of success as a songwriter and on three occasions has won the UK Country Music Radio Awards, twice for Best British Song - in 1995 with Special Absent Friends, co-written with Greg Tingey (this was also nominated in the prestigious Great British Country Music Awards in the same year) and in 1998 with All That I Do Is For You, co-written with Jan. The album, The Collection, containing these songs was voted The Listeners' Choice album in 1998. Another of his songs, Cuckoo Hill was nominated in 1996 but was piped to the post by Charlie Landsborough's What Colour Is



Jan Mellon - lead/harmony, vox, mandolin and rhythm guitar.

Wes Cardy - lead/harmony, vox and rhythm guitar,

The Wind and Jimmy Nail's Crocodile Shoes.

As with anything in life, luck plays as large a hand as talent and with the help of some friends Wes' songs reached the ears of Ken Dodd and Daniel O'Donnell who both recognised the potential of Special Absent Friends.

Ken Dodd has for a number of years been closing his theatre shows around the UK with this song and recently recorded it on an album which is on sale at his shows, whilst Daniel O'Donnell also recorded it and another of Wes' songs, Love Me (I Love You) co-written with Charlie Ruffle. Daniel has also agreed to record sometime in the future, as a duet with Mary Duff, When I Needed You, co-written with Joan Hart. This is a track from an album of mostly original songs entitled, My Love Song For You which was shortlisted for The Listeners' Choice in 2002. Possibly the most successful track from the album is Wes' version of an Al Dickinson song, Can We Go Round Again, which has received much airplay on BBC Radio Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex and also received a nomination for Best British Song in 2002.

Within the last 10 years Wes has also become known for his successful shows at the Empire Theatre, Halstead, Essex where, initially, these were annual all-British songwriter shows but have recently been broadened to tribute nights twice a year.