

Destination Ithaca : a look at the astrological journey of

Bob Packham

The day I discovered that planet Saturn in the astrological chart of Paul McCartney was positioned at a challenging angle to Venus in John Lennon's chart and, to compound my surprise, that John Lennon's Saturn and Paul McCartney's Venus were similarly engaged, I was truly taken aback. Given the Saturnian – Venusian reputation for negative criticism, constriction and even animosity, how had these two peerless song-writers managed to work together so long and so productively? How had they been able to create Venusian – inspired music in an atmosphere over which severe, disciplining school – master – ish Saturn had been casting his grey shadow? The answer, of course, is that with co-operation and enlightened good will, one can work around a great many difficulties and, indeed, find a positive way to make use of them. Saturn, employed in such a positive way, had, perhaps, given structure and form to fleeting Venusian tunes and poetic fragments.

Most musicians in rock bands , at one time or another, unless they are very lucky, have to cope with difficult situations that have clashing planets as their source and might, also, find that they are required to subjugate their displeasure to a higher purpose. I suspect that the world of the rock star could provide the astrologer with a rich territory to investigate. In my own view, most intriguing is the rock star who remains with his group or band - no matter what set – backs he encounters, no matter what obstacle is thrown in his path – like a captain guiding a storm – tossed ship. Of course, Tony Crane's unwavering commitment to The Merseybeats – the rock and romance group that, in part, bears the name of the great river flowing past his home city – immediately comes to mind. But let us not forget how relieved he must have been over many years – decades- when faced with the problems inevitably arising from having to keep the show on the road, to have been able to rely on Bob Packham, loyal musician and the subject of this analysis.

The call to adventure

In Bob's astrological chart, four of the eight planets – Mercury, Venus, Jupiter and Pluto - are in the fiery sign of Leo. Many performers have a fall

of planets or the Sun or Moon in this glittering sign. Both Mike Bloomfield and Mick Jagger, for example, have Sun, Mercury, Jupiter and Pluto there. Leaving aside Leo's close connection with the performing arts, for a moment, though, I shall mention the fact that a man like Bob, born with such a strong focus on this vibrant sign, especially since expansive Jupiter is involved, will see life as a quest, an exhilarating journey and a great adventure. It is not surprising that he has been attracted to the life of a rock star, given its partial dependency on Odyssey – like voyages into the unknown.

In the spotlight

The emphasis on the sign of Leo in Bob's chart is so heavy that, in manifestation, it is likely to absorb the greater part of his time and energy. Generally speaking, the Leonine man believes that it is his duty, his *raison d'être*, to bring joy and sunshine into the lives of others, but the way this is done varies from person to person. A strong emphasis on Leo, not unlike the arrangement of planets in Bob's chart, can be seen in the astrological chart of the gifted Suffolk – based healer, Matthew Manning. In Matthew's case, the warm, life – enhancing qualities of Leo could be used, one imagines, to help to dispel those feelings of anxiety and hopelessness that accompany pain and illness – prior to healing. Bob pours the sunshine rays of Leo into the performing arts, creating happiness that way.

The stage, for Bob, will be a natural place on which to work and life on stage, with The Merseybeats, will appear to him to be an ever – unfolding drama – a drama that delights us all.

Neptune is home.

Although restless and happy to be on the move, Bob, with the Sun in Cancer making contact with Neptune, appreciates and even idealises the stability that a home environment symbolises – and he will be disturbed by the plight of the homeless.

His compassion goes hand in hand with artistic sensitivity. Like many in the world of music – George Harrison being an example – Bob will be conscious of the spiritual or mystical world that exists beyond what is physical. He will feel at ease with people who are attuned to this world, be they musicians

or artists. He may well draw inspiration from art and could be wowed by a place like, say, the Victorian Room of the Walker Art Gallery, where the rich paintings entice the observer into a mythological world more beguiling than the everyday one : a true source of wonder.

Voyage to Ithaca

The poem “Ithaca”, written by the Greek poet, Constantine P. Cavafy, is said to have been inspired by the Homeric “Odyssey”. Upon seeing Bob’s astrological chart, I immediately thought of it, not only because it describes a voyage, which I shall mention presently, but also because the poet spent part of his childhood in Liverpool, the artistic home of The Merseybeats. (It is not inconceivable, surely, that the poet was inspired not only by “The Odyssey” but also by memories of that great and gracious, exotic and mesmerising port), The poem describes a voyage to Ithaca, this voyage being “full of adventures”. On the way, the voyager sees beautiful sights, buys amber, ebony, coral and exquisite perfumes, meets cultured people and acquires knowledge. When he finally reaches Ithaca, he realises that the journey was as important as the destination because of the experiences he has had. The Jupiterian journeys Bob undertakes all over the world, as a rock star, he will regard with the same fascination as the poet Cavafy had for the journey to Ithaca and he will be similarly enriched.

Lucky Star

I began this analysis by writing about planetary connections across charts. I shall finish in the same way by mentioning the fact that Jupiter, the planet of benevolence, in Bob’s astrological chart, is usefully linked to the Sun in Lou Rosenthal’s chart and the Sun and Midheaven in Tony Crane’s chart. In other words, Bob’s mere presence will tend to ease the path through life for the group. Lucky Merseybeats, then! And, by extension, lucky us!

