

On 10th June, 2026, I awoke to the sad news that Brian McFie, who played on all three albums by The Big Dish had passed away.

Brian was no stranger to me, for I had enjoyed his company on a number of occasions over the years. He was a funny, down-to-earth man whose humility belied his considerable talents as a musician and painter.

Brian was born in Coatbridge, Scotland, on 16<sup>th</sup> June, 1960. After leaving school, he worked as a trainee graphic designer before attending the Glasgow School of Art, from which he graduated with an Honours degree in Fine Art.

As much as he loved art, Brian's biggest passion as young man was for music. A talented guitarist, he played in The Jive Turkeys, a rhythm and blues band that specialised in playing cover versions of songs, and Valerie and The Week of Wonders, which started out as a goth band but changed musical direction and become a pop group.

After Valerie and The Week of Wonders split up, Brian was invited to join The Big Dish, arriving in time to play on the band's debut album, Swimmer. Virgin Records had high hopes for The Big Dish but, in spite of delivering two excellent albums backed up by strong live performances, the band failed to make the anticipated breakthrough in terms of record sales.

Having been dropped by Virgin, The Big Dish were snapped up by East West, a division of Warner Brothers. This partnership led to the band's third album, Satellites, which was released in 1991. It was preceded by a single co-written by Brian, Miss America, which reached number 37 in the UK charts. Once again, however, the quality of The Big Dish's output was not mirrored by its record sales, and the band quietly broke up following a tour in 1991.

The years that followed were tough ones for Brian: the end of his marriage, the theft of his guitars, and the beginning of a battle with the bottle. Nonetheless, he carried on, playing with the likes of Hue & Cry (check out the video clip of their 1993 Top of the Pops appearance, featuring Brian with a Mohawk hairdo), The Christians, The Silencers, The Bluebells, and Maggie Reilly. In 2002, Brian joined Marianne Faithfull's backing band for a world tour that lasted several months, an experience which he thoroughly enjoyed.

Having been through the proverbial mill, Brian's life took several turns for the better in the mid-noughties: he returned to higher education and obtained a post-graduate Diploma in Community Education, he started to draw and paint again, and he stopped drinking.

His musical career continued but now he had second and third careers to add to his bow, for not only did he return to the art world as a painter of landscape and abstract art, he also taught art to others. As his portfolio grew, his art was not only featured in exhibitions but also in books.

On the musical front, he returned to the stage with The Big Dish in 2012 and 2014, and there was some talk of a permanent reformation. That did not happen, but another of his former bands - Valerie and The Week of Wonders – not only re-formed but recorded a new album, to be released later this year.

Brian also continued to play with other bands, some of which - The Scimitars, and Lola in Slacks – were co-founded by him. More recently, his skills as a guitarist led to him being recruited by both The Greig Taylor Band and The Countess of Fife, both of whom have released new albums this year.

It is hard to believe – and harder to accept – that Brian has gone, such was his zest for life and the warmth of his character. He has left behind many friends and admirers

and a lustrous legacy of music and art. He is – and long will be – much missed.