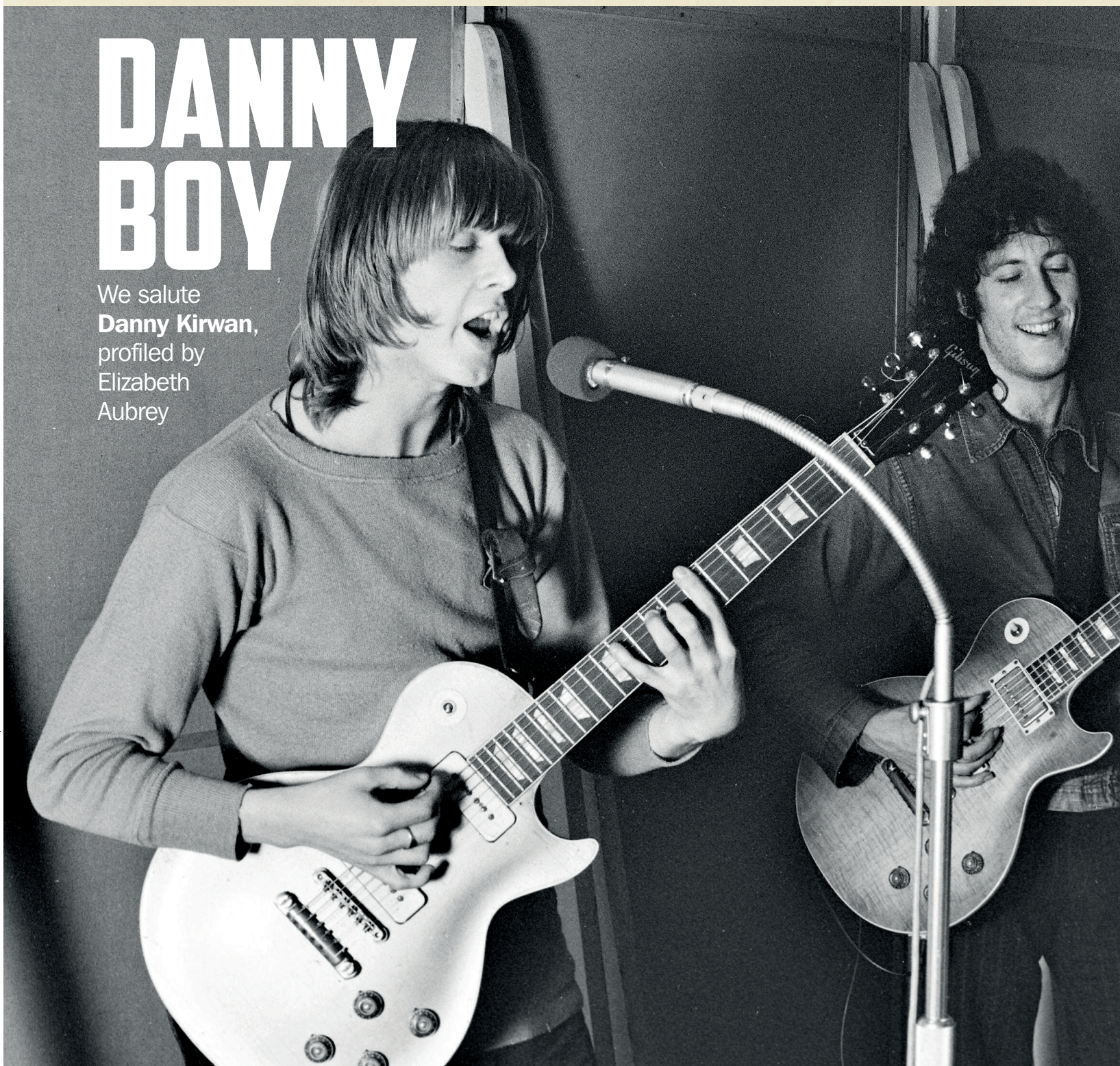


DANNY BOY

We salute
Danny Kirwan,
profiled by
Elizabeth
Aubrey



Brixton-born Danny Kirwan was just 18 years old when he started to jam with his hero, Fleetwood Mac's Peter Green. A huge fan of the band, he would often be at their shows, hanging around and offering to carry their equipment. Kirwan had started to play guitar when he was 15, and quickly became an accomplished player, influenced heavily by legendary jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt. His mother was a singer and at home, he'd often listen to Gatsby-era jazz. His first band, Boilerhouse, caught the attention of Fleetwood Mac's producer, Mike Vernon, and soon after, Peter Green.

Vernon saw Kirwan play and recommended his band to Fleetwood Mac,

who ended up supporting them on tour. "Danny played beautifully," Mick Fleetwood recalled of first seeing Kirwan on stage; Vernon was similarly effusive. "Danny was outstanding," he reflected in the 90s. "He played with an almost scary intensity. He had a guitar style that wasn't like anything else I'd heard in England."

Green took Kirwan under his wing and he soon became his protégé. Just a few months later, he asked him to join the band, having been impressed with the way Kirwan's soul connected to the music in a way he hadn't seen before. Green noted he was "so into it, that he cried as he played".

Kirwan arrived at a time when Green was moving Fleetwood Mac away from their

blues-based roots into something more experimental – and this was a vision with which Kirwan empathised. In one of his first interviews with *Melody Maker*, he said he was "not keen on blues purists who close their eyes to all other forms of music," adding "I like any music that is good, whether it is blues, popular or classical."

After just two months in Fleetwood Mac, Green asked Kirwan to write a contrasting guitar part in Albatross, and this contribution helped the song to become the band's first number one. The composition came to define the dreamy latter days of the 1960s: Kirwan was also responsible for the song's quirky B-side, Jigsaw Puzzle Blues. It was a track he adapted from an old piece of clarinet

Photo: Alamy