



**HOW DID
I GET HERE
FROM THERE?**

DAVID MINDEL

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Firstly, thank you for opening this lengthy tome. I need to explain it isn't a book, isn't edited or published so there may be some typos or grammatical errors. My drift should be got, however.

I'd like to thank every producer, musician and singer I've ever worked with, especially Bernard Beddard and Don Gould, you taught me everything. Thank you Andy Spence for the great layout, Sue Thompson for checking, David Seys for sharing your luck and, most of all, Darcie Gage Mindel.

Also, thank you to Tessa Niles for persuading me to write this because:

1. You have stories 2. You can write 3. You have fuck all else to do

Rather than a foreword I asked some colleagues to tell of their memories of us working together.

Kent Shively - Creative Director of the Griffin Bacal agency

"He wouldn't have got much work out of me had he not had access to a truffle dealer."

Ray Russell - legendary session guitarist and composer

"I've been doing gigs for decades and have to say, of all the musicians I've had the pleasure of sharing a stage with, he's by far the worst."

Gary Benson - hit artiste and collaborator.

"We have written many, many songs together including some hits and I don't remember him ever writing any of the good bits."

Ron McCreight - publisher, writer and promotion guru

"What can I say? I fired him."

Tessa Niles - legendary backing and session singer

"I never slept with him, I swear!"

Miriam Stockley - also top singer and artiste

"Me neither... ewww!"

Alex Larke - UK representative on the *Eurovision Song Contest* 2015

"He ruined my life!"

Lesley Davies - Top TV client with too many shows to mention

"The best thing about him is he has a house in France."

INTRODUCTION

When I think of my sixteen year-old self, drowning in the realisation that I would have no hope of progressing to the 6th form (last two years) at school or any kind of higher education; not having been given an hour of musical tuition in my life and without the ability to play a single chord on the guitar or piano; with no prospects and no realistic ambition, just an unrealistic one of getting a job in the Music Industry and becoming a record producer, but with no relevant qualifications whatsoever, I think, 'How the hell did I get here from there?'

Still, there I was in Switzerland on the way home from an Italian holiday with my parents when, for the first time, they had managed to phone my sister from the Trois Couronnes Hotel in Vevey to see if all was well at home.

"All's fine. David's GCE results arrived, I guess you'd like to hear them." she said gleefully.

"OK, read them out."

"Failed four, scraped by in two!"

I think you could say that this is where my life changed or perhaps it's where my life started or my 'normal' life ended, even.

Chapter One... THE BEGINNING

I'd been born on the 25th October 1946 in the Nightingale Nursing Home in Twickenham on the outskirts of London... the home of Rugby football. It seems I was a really cute baby and remained reasonably cute until puberty at about 22. Probably.



Still cute.

I'd had suffered fits; well, I think my parents suffered more, but the hospital discovered it was only a calcium deficiency. I lived with my parents, sister, Lesley, who was nearly 4 when I was born and my grandmother who was a wonderful, talented lady.



My mother as a dancer.

My grandmother died when I was only about four and my sister now solely occupied her own room; Gran's piano was eventually sold and my father bought a radiogram and a Platters EP; possibly the best EP ever (my choice). I already loved music and would listen to Classical music with my mother who would name each instrument in the orchestra as it was featured and test me on their names. My mother had been a dancer who had also played the banjolele... I thought I'd come clean about that early on. My father's father who, with his wife, hadn't spoken to my parents for three years because my mother wasn't Jewish had now become unestranged (I just invented a new word), but died and I became grandparentless (another).

At four and three quarters I went to the local primary school and screamed the place down until they brought my sister to calm me down. I screamed again the next day on the realisation that I had to go to this horrible place regularly. Who knew? My sister and I changed schools mid-term and I made my first best friend, a boy called David Reilly whose father was a famous harmonica player, Tommy Reilly... and there aren't a whole lot of those. The headmaster, Mr. Guidford, was a sadist who liked beating certain boys with a slipper for incongruous, fabricated, misdemeanours at the end of the day. The more they begged for mercy, the more pleasure the monster enjoyed this disgusting ritual. He liked me so I never got beaten.



Early holiday photo.

My father's business, selling all manner of stuff on full credit (many people had NO money then) was doing well and, when I was ten, we moved from our modest semi in the most suburban of suburbs, Whitton, to a nice, detached house in Finchley, which would probably rate about number three in the most suburban of suburbs. For two terms I walked to the local underground station, took the tube to Waterloo, a train to Richmond and the bus to St Margarets and back in the evening, a journey of about an hour and a half. I doubt that many 10 year-olds would be doing that these days, but there's almost certainly no greater risk now than back then, but it would most likely be considered as 'child abuse' now. Anyway I'm sure my parents weren't concerned and the only time my mother was perceptibly worried was when I returned really late for Saturday lunch having become hopelessly lost on Hampstead Heath.

"But what will we do if anything's happened to him?" asked my frantic mother to my rather flippant dad.

"Order less milk!"

I then transferred to the local Moss Hall Primary School that made Folsom Prison seem like a kindergarten and there I took my eleven-plus exam. Against all predictions I passed and I was now entitled to attend a Grammar school, one of which was three minutes' walk from our house, the other being about 45 minutes away. Naturally, I was sent to the latter, but at least there would be girls there also; not that any took the slightest interest in me. I hated school save for the football and cricket and was probably almost anonymous. I doubt that there would be more than six masters and students who would remember me three years after my departure, let alone now. I excelled at nothing except 'English Language' under the guidance of the excellent Miss Smith, coming top of the whole year until Miss Gibbons took over and I plummeted down the league.

My interests were music, Chelsea football Club, music and France, a country I'd fallen in love with at the age of six while on a journey to see my mother's cousin in Spain. Back then, if we saw an English car during the three day journey there or back, my father would pull up in order to interrogate the other driver in order to discover what on Earth they were doing so far from home. It was that unusual then. We travelled through France several times with a couple of overnight stays as there were no motorway then and I spent most school days daydreaming of driving along French country roads or sitting outside a café or restaurant with the smell of the old Gauloises cigarettes wafting by. Even then, I knew this was where I was supposed to be.



Our first family car.

Likewise, as soon as I'd seen Elvis on TV, I knew this what I was going to do and pestered my parents for two years for a guitar before they finally brought me one back from Spain. Within years I could play a couple of simple tunes.



The guitar.



The Watkins Rapier.

On seeing Buddy Holly on *Sunday Night At The London Palladium* I became obsessed with that Fender Stratocaster and spent at least an hour every Saturday morning staring at a model in the window of the Tally-Ho Music Centre in North London. It cost 160 guineas, about 15 weeks' earnings for the average worker, so totally unachievable for me.

However, at 13 I won £25 on the Premium Bonds I'd been given for my birthday and bought a second hand Hofner President that made my fingers bleed and a cheap amplifier. I added a couple of new tunes to my repertoire. As luck would have it, I won another £25 and decided, against my father's advice to buy a better guitar.

"Ah, but will it make you play better?"

"If my fingers aren't bleeding, it might."

I bought a Watkins Rapier, a poor imitation of a Fender, but it was much easier to play without requiring every ounce of strength to pull the strings onto the fingerboard. I learned several more tunes.

A bit later, I tore a knee cartilage in a football game in the school playground. Because of my age, it wasn't removed, but I was required to go for three months of ray treatment and physio that involved lifting sandbags on pulleys in a seated position at a hospital a mile from my school. Shortly after completing the treatment I was knocked off my bike by a coal lorry. Two days later I mentioned it was hurting so I was taken to the local Casualty Department. It turned out to be more serious than anyone, including the doctor, thought, but, thanks to a nurse who realised the potential severity, I didn't lose my foot. After the hole in the back of my ankle healed I was sent for physio.

"Not you again?!?"

Yes, back in the same hospital on the same sandbags, but now needing to get to the school on crutches. Still, due to those sandbags, I have very strong legs.

Then I took the 'O-Level' exams.

Chapter Two... LIFE

Now here I was in the room in Switzerland and I seem to remember hearing,

“So what have you got to say for yourself?”

Well, not a lot, actually.

These days, parents claim that their children are dyslexic or have Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or some other such syndrome. Back then we were ‘lazy, little shits’. And I was.

As you can imagine, a lengthy discussion followed, but I was unable to come up with a positive spin except that I’d done OK at French and English. Then my father suggested that I might study language further and become a translator or a teacher or... was just hoping to delay the inevitable when suddenly, out of the blue, my mother remembered a couple they’d met on a cruise. Their son had gone to a language school in Switzerland and, for some strange reason, my mother still had their number in her handbag. She called the wife who happened to be at home and gave my mother the phone number of the school that was, coincidentally, just three miles away. My father called and that afternoon we met Mlle Graf, the headmistress, who seemed a delightful woman and the school was in an idyllic spot looking over Lake Geneva. With no dissent from me, I was enrolled in the school from the following January.

This was my first instance of being in the right place at the right time, be-it for the wrong reason. I also relished four months off. My parents would hear none of this, however, and, on the contrary, I was made to go to ‘a crammer’, a school purely for the study for exams that I was obliged to re-sit.

Davies, Laing and Dick was situated in a side street in Notting Hill Gate. It might be hard to believe now, but Notting Hill was an area we avoided when I was a kid... very rough. The building would be worth millions now, but was a bit dilapidated. I took maths, German and a subject I can’t remember.

I can only recall one lecturer who was ancient. He was dirty, his suit was dirty, his collar was dirty and his handkerchief was filthy; so much so that, one morning, a student left him a clean, white one. I’m not sure if he was insulted, but he never used it, but he smoked incessantly and stank. Although I arrived most mornings, I usually left before midday not to return in the afternoons. I’d take the bus or walk to Soho a lot to check out guitars and amps; it was on my way home, or I’d go to the cinema to catch up on the latest movies. You may have already gleaned what an enthusiastic student I was. I made three friends there: a Persian lad, a Greek chap called Costas Pateras who dressed exceedingly smartly and Alinawaz Rahimtula, of Indian origin, with whom I spent the most time. To my surprise, my parents allowed me to go with Ali to the all-night Saturday sessions at the Flamingo Club in Wardour Street. My sister indignantly claimed that she’d have never been allowed to stay out all night at sixteen and she was right, but I could be trusted not to be tempted by the pills and other drugs that were readily available at the Flamingo and I wasn’t, so we just had a couple of beers and enjoyed the wonderful music. I have to say, I’ve never been into drugs. I’ve seen them kill people, use up half the salaries of my friends, make them talk gibberish and become paranoid.

Georgie Fame and the Blue Flames were regulars at the Flamingo and after 11pm, musos from the pits of various West End theatres congregated to form a big band; all marvelous stuff and I remember a young Elkie Brooks singing with the band, which I really enjoyed far more than her later recordings. We’d then go to the Golden Egg for egg, chips and tea and take an early tube home.

During that December, my father suffered a heart attack and it was serious. He was rushed to the Wellington Hospital. My mother had given up driving so she and I were obliged to take several buses to get to and from the hospital every day. He was getting better, but I was still worried. One Friday night my sister went out to stalk a bloke who'd just broken up with her, sped through a red light and was side-swiped and also ended up in hospital. My poor mother spent a sleepless night, worrying about them both. Luckily, Lesley only stayed overnight, but my father was still there over Christmas. When my mother and I arrived on Christmas day, a well-known actor named Alfie Bass who lived near my dad's office had come in to see him and brought a bottle of Champagne. I still think that was such a kind gesture. I delayed my trip to the Swiss school until my dad was home and recovered. I was mightily relieved. Incidentally, I had passed all three exams on the second attempt without a second of extra study, yet I'd failed the time before. Go figure! It still wouldn't have been enough to progress at a regular school, yet I was accepted into McGill University in Montreal where my aunts lived. I didn't go.

So, one Saturday morning in January 1964, I arrived at Heathrow, a place I'd only visited previously to greet my visiting, Canadian relatives or to have dinner with my parents and their best friends in the 'Silver Service' restaurant there. Going to an airport just to have a meal... imagine!

I recall my mother being there to see me leave home for the first time. I can still remember the take off in that BEA Vanguard and the heart-stopping moment when the captain throttled back the engines. During the 90-minute flight we were served a meal with a hot main dish (just like Ryanair) and then relished the marvellous views as we descended into Geneva Airport, which was pretty tiny then. There was a bus from there to the Cornavin station in town from where I took the train to Vevey. I sat on the right hand side of the train and stared out at wonderful views of the mountains, lakeside villages, meadows and undressed grapevines. Stunning; not France, yet magnificent.

From the station in Vevey, I took the bus to a stop called Portail Blanc at La Tour-de Peilz where I believe Shania Twain still resides. With not a little trepidation I climbed the thirty or so steps up to where the school was located. I entered and walked into the common room where I encountered about fifteen students of all nationalities sitting around, mostly smoking, which surprised me. It was permitted as was drinking off the school premises. The headmistress was out so, due to my lack of having anything interesting to say, I mentioned how nice we'd found her when we visited. A chorus of laughter ensued and I was informed in no uncertain terms what a tyrant she was and so she would be.

Everyone seemed friendly and I was shown to the small room I was to be sharing with a guy called Angus Lamont. It turned out that Angus's father had been head of Express Dairies and he was the man responsible for the idea of making milk deliveries throughout the war in order to keep up morale. Apparently, waking up to find a pint of milk on your doorstep every morning gave some semblance of normality. I liked Angus who went on to the Lausanne Hotel School and later ran a lovely pub/hotel in Chiddingfold.

The best news was that the population of 'La Colline' comprised twenty-two girls and eight boys. At my infant school, girls were really annoying; they kept telling you they loved you and that you were going to get married. When I arrived in Switzerland I hadn't even had a date save for 'double dating' at a cinema one afternoon as a friend wanted to take a girl who would only go if her mate came as well. We may have held hands, not sure. But I was comfortable in the company of girls having always been to co-ed schools. It seems to me, I've been a late starter in everything: girls, music, common sense, responsibility, ambition, potential; you name it!



The view from La Colline's terrace.

That evening I was invited to join some of the other students in The Scotch Bar in Vevey, a very nice hangout and, as the newbie thought I'd offer to buy the around. "No we don't do that" was a reply, "we always pay for our own" and so it was. I found it surreal that I'd been at home in Finchley that morning and now I was drinking beer in a completely different environment with people I'd never met before. I guess it's just the first flight that brings that on. This moment only got better when one of the girls suggested that I, "Be at the bus stop over the road at 7am tomorrow morning for a jolly good day".

At 7:25am, we took the Orient Express (no less) to a small town called Aigle and then a mountain railway up to a village called Chambéry so that, around 10am, I was standing on two planks of wood on a ski slope, terrified of what could possibly happen next. One guy, David Copeland, showed me how to walk up hill with the planks and then 'snowplough' down again, which is what I did for most of the day when I wasn't on my arse, during which time the others shot past multiple times looking as elegant as downhill racers. Lunchtime was spent on a sunny terrace eating chips washed down with a Feldschössen beer, which, with that view of the mountains and the pristine snow seemed, to me, to be pure heaven and at 4pm we set off back to the school. I'd never known a weekend like that!!! I also realised that my weekly allowance wasn't going to see out the week(end)! "Hello... Daaad!!"

This school, although it only taught languages, changed who I was and who I am. That is where my life really stepped up a gear for the second time and I began to learn stuff that my past life, school and my family until then had never taught me.

I began to realise that we were the St Trinian's of private schools: by far the cheapest, academically the weakest and with far more freedom than any other establishment. The kids who went there seemed to have an unenviable reputation. Can't think why! I took French German and Italian. I never really did get on with Italian although I love the sound of the language. I can just about order a table for 3 for dinner.

I really enjoyed the diversity of the place: many nationalities, many backgrounds, lots of girls, but I really liked just about everyone and my feeble mind was just beginning to open. There were kids from extremely privileged backgrounds, who, like me, only they were wealthy, were simply deemed unfit for work. There were others from ordinary families and one who really impressed was Bernard Beddard from Dudley in the midlands. He spoke English with a 'Broomay' accent, wore an appalling jumper (too long), but when he spoke French, he spoke like a classical actor or artist. He'd taken

'O level' French and someone must have spotted his potential so here he was. His French accent was perfect and his grammar was pretty damned good also. How on Earth does happen? We were together two terms. Apart from him, I've never had a formal music lesson in my life, but have learned something every day. He had his guitar out there and was my first and most influential teacher. Each afternoon he taught me chords; Put your little finger 'ere and the thomb op the fretboard 'ere. I was frickin' seventeen years old and I couldn't play chords!!! For my 70th birthday, my buddy, Junior Campbell, gave me an original copy of Bert Weedon's best-selling book '*Play In A Day*'. He was 60 years too late. The school had a 'music room' in the garden. It was a kind of gazebo with a piano and a window, but was mostly used for 'making out'. There wasn't much sex at the time. There was no pill and we hadn't reached the swinging sixties and most girls 'didn't'. Unfortunately, I didn't either. This was no bad thing as I wouldn't have known what the hell to do.



The entire school.

Anyway, my eternal thanks go to Bernard and I'm still in touch with his adoring wife, Peggy following Bernard's sad death. I decided to take my own guitar the following term.



With Bernard and the trusty Rapier.

Winter terms were great on the whole. Most Sundays we'd take the train up to some ski resort: Villars, Chateau-d'Oex, Chambery or Leysin and sometimes during the week, a bus took us from the school to a closer resort. How lucky were we?

One day a Persian day student was at the school for a lesson. She was staying privately and I'd only seen her once before. She was film star gorgeous. Her name was Mary Deyhim and about the third day she sat with me, took my hand and said.

"Com for... walk".

We walked to the lake and then she kissed me. Bloody Hell, what just happened? That evening as someone had seen us, 7 guys crammed into our room, "What happened, you do know she is the most gorgeous girl in town, she's 28 and has a son; everyone has asked her out and she is Queen Soraya's cousin and she's going out with YOU???" I think I had a detailed, yet frankly disturbing sex lesson from my schoolmates that evening.

After a couple more 'dates', she discovered I was just 17, immature, completely naïve and an idiot and that was it. She set me on my life's path of being a serial dumpee. I'll save you the boring details of many dumping events that followed. Well, most.

There was a student turn-over at La Colline and, the next term, two rather posh-sounding Harrovians arrived: Richard Gatty-Saunt and Ivan Moore-Brabazon. They sure had long names and gave the appearance of being very smart. Neither was in the least bit clever and, like me, had nowhere else to go. Years later, after I'd lost contact with Ivan, I turned on the news to see footage of the Zeebrugge ferry disaster.

"We're now going to hear from the Minister for shipping." Bloody hell, it was Ivan!



This was an 'outing' so we looked smart. This side of the table is Sally Dimbleby, daughter and sister of the famous broadcasters and Andrew Ainley, later a flatmate.

The other side, next to me is the Hon Ivan Moore-Brabazon, later Lord Brabazon, Minister For Shipping.

We'd been good friends and Richard became a 'bestie' for life. The whole school contingent was a close bunch of people until two ex-Etonians arrived. Reg Sheffied and Andrew Lesley, were the most unpleasant, snobbish couple of arrogant tits I've ever had the misfortune to come across. They would have little to do with any of us save that Andrew had to share a room with me. "Oh, for fuck's sake stop snoring, you oily oik, will you" or "Are you masturbating again, you prick"? No, I wasn't. They made most inappropriate remarks to the girls, but fortunately, they stayed but a short time. Recently I discovered that Reg is now in fact Sir Reginald Adrian Berkeley Sheffield, 8th Baronet DL and father of Samantha Cameron who is the wife of former British Prime Minister, David Cameron. He had to improve and I hope he taught his kids better manners, but I heard he's still an arrogant prick. However it was great to have friends from many other countries.

I learned more music from Bernard and I now had my trusty Watkins Rapier with me and we started playing real songs together. Richard and I hung out a lot also. He played a bit of drums so sat in sometimes. One afternoon the three of us and another guy performed in front of our schoolmates, teachers and Mlle Graf. We must have been awful. My solo vocal song was *Hippy, Hippy Shake*. The kids were polite and Mlle Graf said 'I had something'. I never found out what.

The summer afternoons were spent sunbathing on a little beach opposite the school where we'd swim a quarter of a mile out into the lake and back. It was the hottest summer on record and Lake Geneva was warm.

All this probably sounds like one long stay in a holiday camp and that's how it reads, but a lot of lessons and study period were included. I could not fail these exams and expect to live. Some of us said our goodbyes and never saw each other again.

When I arrived back in London for the summer break, my sister and father walked straight past me at Heathrow. I was so tanned; suddenly my father realised who I was and exclaimed, "bloody hell, it's you!" Mother was, in fact, in bed with terrible back pain, a condition I was to inherit. They called it 'lumbago' in those days.

I visited a lot of my new friends during the summer holidays and went to Italy with my parents who dropped me off on their way home.

"Now, let me take a look at the new girls." The new bunch was as nice as the old bunch. A few English boys, Edward Kiley, Chris Jeans, Stephen Simons, a Jewish kid from Streatham and a lovely guy from South Africa. There was a gorgeous French girl, Michelle Filieu, whose parents worked at the Embassy in Mexico city, but she and said South African soon got together, much to my chagrin. There was also a girl from Surrey called Sally Hunt was said she was 'Best friends with George Harrison'. There was also a new convent-educated girl. Like her predecessors, she was not used to being with boys or men, went out with a local chap, got 'knocked up' and returned to face the shame with her distraught family. We could always spot the kids from single sex schools.

In the local town of Montreux there was, and is, a lovely café called Zürcher. On Sunday afternoons Richard and I would go, along with the sons and daughters of aristocracy. Two nice ladies called Sofia and Anne-Marie went on to become Queen of Spain and Queen of Greece. Sometimes we'd pay 1F 20 to go into the town Casino for a 'Tea Dance' so we could hear the live band. What a great job that seemed to be, playing music and getting paid for it!

One evening Mlle Graf announced to the school that two more students were arriving and that Richard and I would be lodged in a room in The cook's apartment as "Zey are not a goot influence on you all!" Richard and me... a bad influence... really! This meant she could get two more school fees and was bliss for Richard and me to live off the premises as Guido, the cook, couldn't give a damn when we came in or went out as long as we didn't wake him up. We would go evening fishing as the flat was by the port, more visits to bars and no curfew. The bike ride up to the school for 7:30 am was a bit of a drag, but other than that... bliss.

At the end of the winter term, Sally Hunt's brother, James, arrived. He'd been skiing nearby and, for a bet, jumped off the 2nd floor balcony and had broken his arm. A sign of things to come.

Eventually, I started my last term. One Saturday Evening, one of the prettier girls asked me if I'd care to relieve her of her virginity. "I'm sorry, I've got plans" I blurted out like a moron and she moved on to Steve Simons with the same question and they actually DID IT!

To my surprise, they looked no different whatsoever the following morning. They then started going out, were caught having sex on the table tennis table (I never used it again), were expelled, got married, had a daughter and got divorced. That's life. I think I had a lucky (if stupid) escape, really.

That summer I, for the first time, did some studying and revision for my exams. Richard I and became kind of besotted with the USA and daydreamed of visiting one day. We were into Blues and West Coast music especially the Beach Boys. The country looked so inviting on TV and in the movies. Richard's father was not well at this time; he was very wealthy and had married a much younger dancer and they had adopted Richard and his sister. This nice gentleman was very keen that Richard make the trip (they call it a gap year now) and he somehow persuaded my parents to top up my birthday money and other savings so that we could go together. I told my father I'd pay back the money. I'm sure I never did. We couldn't believe our luck (I still can't) and so we started making plans.

We found a ticket where we could sail from Southampton to New York and fly back from there with an open date. (I still have that ticket). I also discovered a Greyhound bus offer of \$99 for 99 days, unlimited travel. You can't beat that.

This time passed I did pass my two exams and in the two weeks or so between arriving back in London and setting sail, we had to go to the US Embassy to have an interview with a US consul who asked us if we were Communists or had ever been to Russia, China or Israel. Then we received our visas. The other place we went was to Herbert Johnson's hat shop where we bought two 'Beatle Caps' like John and Ringo wore in *Help*. Mine was rust coloured and Richard's was grey and had we been able to buy fifty, we could have sold them all in the US and paid for our trip.

I can still remember how excited I was when my parents drove me down to Southampton. We met Richard and his folks for lunch and then headed to the Queen Elizabeth. She was massive, 84,000 tons, in fact; heaven knows how they weigh them! We were shown to our cabin, which was in the bowels of the ship, absolutely without daylight and the size of a box room with two bunk beds, a toilet and a sink. Little did we care. While waiting for our bags, Richard's mother, who liked a tippie, ordered a bucket of ice. When it arrived she tipped it into the sink, opened a briefcase and pulled out a bottle of Champagne, a bottle of Vodka, some miniatures and two glasses that she placed 'on ice'. Now we had nowhere to wash, but were well supplied.

My father introduced me to our cabin steward, "He'll be taking care of you" he said and boy, he must have 'beaded' him well, because he became our savior and hero.

Once the goodbyes had been said, we headed for a bit of a tour of the massive ship. We had to wear a jacket and tie for dinner and were put on a table with a young group of various nationalities. We immediately took to them all especially a cute, blonde Swiss girl. All their parents seemed to be travelling First Class, but this crowd seemed quite happy to be with a younger group.



On board.

In those days, Harold Wilson had brought in a law that said you were allowed £50 travelling money, but you could not bring it into your destination country, only travellers' cheques. We worked out that, at 2/- (10p) for a double scotch, we'd need to drink 100 doubles a day each to get through that, not to mention the Vodka and Champagne. All food was included. And it was good.

We moored in Cherbourg and picked up more passengers. We had discovered a large room at the back of a ship that was a bar with a jukebox. That's where we first heard *Satisfaction* and *Gloria*, by Them, *Like A Rolling Stone* and other classics. It's also where we spent many evenings stretching late into the night and, despite an extra hour being added nightly at 2 am, we got to be bed late, very late. Once in our cabin, we couldn't tell if it was day or night and it always sounded as if it was raining. On several days, our lovely steward, would bang on the cabin door, come in and say, "Well boys, you missed breakfast, you've missed lunch so I've brought you some sandwiches... after you've had those I've run you each a bath along the corridor... a salt bath then come and find me." When we did, he took us up on deck where he'd reserved us two deck chairs... next to the prettiest girls he could find as per my dad's instructions.

The last night we bought more drink and held a party just to get rid of the £50 allowance and a few came back to our minuscule cell to help with the vodka. The following morning our new best friend woke us at some stupid hour and wouldn't leave until we'd followed him onto the deck. That's when we first saw the New York skyline in the dawn light. I'll never forget it. Then the Statue of Liberty became visible... just stunning, then approaching these massive skyscrapers... unreal. Then we packed, disembarked and went through the lengthy customs and immigration process. There seemed to be so much bustle and noise in this place. There still is; the most vibrant city I've visited.

Through the New York Tourist Board, I'd booked an hotel on the Upper West Side. This whole area has been gentrified now, but was pretty rough then. We worked out how to get to the hotel that had quoted \$10 a night for a double room. The building didn't remind me of anything I'd accepted as a hotel before. The 'concierge' was straight out of a movie: string vest and cheroot. "Wanna TV, it'll cost you a buck a day?" We took it, we'd never seen US TV before. It was back and white and we had to place the antenna in just the right place to make out a thing. Sirens sounded all day and all night. It was hot; the room had a single light suspended from the ceiling, a bulb, no shade.

Mr. suave was in front of the building. "Can you direct us to Central Park, please?" "Yer looking at it"

Because of the 25-hour-days on the ship, we had no jet lag. We walked and walked and then walked again. We walked to the UN building, the Bowery, Washington Square; we went up the Empire State building and ate dinner every evening in the 'Idaho Potato' where we could get a steak and baked potato for \$1.29. Sometimes we'd have a beer in the Go-Go bar opposite.

One evening we decide to visit he Peppermint Lounge, which had become famous through a hit called 'The Peppermint Twist'. I guess it was no longer in its prime, but still a trip! There we met two pretty and nice girls who took us back to their hotel room with the promise that "We're not those kinds of girls" and sadly they weren't, but there was some kissing and I still can't smell Halston perfume without remembering what's her name! However, they did have tickets to the Worlds' Fair that was taking place in New York that summer so we decided to go two days later. When we arrived back at the 'hotel' from the Peppermint Lounge, the guy on duty asked,

"I don't see no cab, how did you get here?"

"We walked across the park"

“Are you fucking insane, you’re lucky you ain’t dead!”

The following day we met the girls and took the train to Flushing Meadow where over 140 pavilions, 110 restaurants, for 80 nations, 24 US states had been set up. It’s not far from La Guardia airport, Shea Stadium where the Beatles would soon be performing and where the US open tennis tournament is held. The giant globe built for the exhibition still stands. We saw as much as we could and I tasted Maryland fried chicken for the first time. We had a touching farewell with the girls, swore to stay in touch and took our first Greyhound bus the next morning.

We went to Baltimore and then Washington where we stayed in a hotel that looked like a hotel. The idea was to sleep as much as possible on the buses to save accommodation costs so we set off through the Carolinas to Florida. My undying memory is being turfed off the buses at 2 or 3am while they cleaned them out and standing in line for chili con carne with saltines before being allowed to board again. Thinking back, pretty much all the staff in these stop-overs were black. I probably never even thought about stuff like that, but there never seemed to be any tension. They were all nice to us and, of course, we were nice to them.

We arrived in Miami in a thunderstorm and took another bus to our pre-reserved hotel on the beach. We were soaked, but it was nice and still cheap. We discovered it was cheap because only the less well-off will put up with the heat in Miami in July. It’s a winter resort. When we walked outside the following morning, it was like entering a fully heated sauna. We’d never felt anything like that.

Until now, we hadn’t talked to anyone who’d ever met an English person and this generally worked to our advantage. Furthermore, we tried to ‘milk’ the accents somewhat and overplay our ‘perfect English manners’. For some reason, everyone we met asked us if we knew the Beatles and after a while it became obvious that saying we did and that “George is rather a close friend” paid dividends.

One couple we’d met, out of the blue asked us, “Would you mind taking our daughters out to dinner somewhere nice? On us.” Tough call. We certainly worked the room.

One evening, we were walking back from town to the hotel and a smart convertible stopped by the kerb. The driver was probably around 21 and well dressed. He leaned out.

“You guys need a ride?”

‘Thanks a lot’... we got in.

He, of course spotted that we were British and we held a polite conversation until he stopped outside our hotel.

“You guys need any pills or anything?”

“No, no, we fine,”

“Any girls?”

“Er... no thank you.”

“Anything else?”

And with that, the guy reached and grabbed Richard’s crotch. I was over the back of the car and away as quickly as Richard was out of the front seat. I was eighteen years old and can honestly say that, until that evening, I knew nothing about homosexuality. It seems ludicrous now; there were as many

gays then as there are today, but no one I was aware of had been gay at school, in Switzerland, in London... anywhere, but, of course, some must have been. Richard recounted how older boys used to enter his room at Harrow and try to get in bed with him. I hadn't even been in bed with a girl! Well, properly, anyway! How naïve was I???

We spent a day trying to surf on South Beach, got badly sunburned and, after more fond farewells from the girls, headed off with severe sunburn on the overnight bus to New Orleans... more chili con carne and Saltines and an oft-disturbed sleep.

The journey took about 12 hours so we found a cheap hotel, left our bags and wandered around the French Quarter. What a great place. That night we descended into a cellar bar to hear some great music... Clarence "Frogman" Henry was playing that night. He'd had hits in the UK and is, at the time of writing, still alive.

More bus sleeping and a couple of nights in San Antonio in a motel where everyone wanted us to talk to them. "We jus' love to hear you boys talk with those accents and all." Happy to oblige. We did find that, in the south, we got some funny looks also and quite often a police car would stop and a cop ask us to spread out across their car where they'd search us and check our papers. We had longer hair than the locals and our Beatles caps must have stood out, but mostly the officers were polite and sometimes even welcoming.

Were I asked to give out just one piece of advice, it would be: "Never eat in El Paso", being about 500 miles from the sea. I did. I will always regret it. To save you the unpleasant details, I'll just say that, if I'd had a gun, I'd have ended it all right there on the bus, but eventually the kind bus driver pulled off the highway to drop us at a motel in a one horse town called Deming, New Mexico. A shower and bed saved my life. The town was a shithole and appears not not have changed a great deal. Its only claim to fame is that one of the writers of Del Shannon's *Runaway* lives there. There was a diner where we had breakfast the next day and noticed that all the other diners arrived in pick up trucks with rifles in the back.

Our fifteen-hour ride to Los Angeles took us through some stunning scenery: Indian reservations where I saw what appeared to be mud buildings with TV aerials, air conditioning units and Cadillacs outside. There were desert, cacti and flat-topped mountains glowing a bright red reflecting the setting sun... straight out of a Western.

We arrived at LA bus station around 5am and headed for the Men's Room for a good wash. There was a jukebox into which I placed a coin and selected a favourite record.

In marched a burly, cop.

"Wadya doing?"

"Just playing *Gloria* by Them, we like it."

"You know there's a curfew, you going someplace?"

'We didn't. We are... Malibu."

'Why?"

This took a bit of thinking about.

"Well, we love The Beach Boys and we're seen a lot about it so we thought we'd visit the place"

If he'd asked us to point out on a map where Malibu was actually situated, we wouldn't have had a clue.

"You have tickets?"

"No, sir"

He then marched us to the ticket office where we were obliged to buy two tickets to Malibu and then he pointed to a bench..

"Don't you boys move until I come back!"

I did move to take a pee, but after two and a half hours, he came back, marched us to our bus and made sure we got on it. About an hour later, we got our first look at the Pacific Ocean in all its splendour. Another hour of following the delightful coastline and we'd reached Malibu City Limits.

"Where exactly are you guys getting off?" enquired the driver in a friendly fashion and all we could say was, "Not sure, but we'll need a motel"

Oh, the foolishness of youth. We were deposited right outside a place that boasted the sign, 'The Malibu Motel'. The owner said he did indeed have a room. Then he looked a tad puzzled.

"Say, are you boys from England? Ya don't say... I was stationed in Kent during the war and those guys were so kind to me; I'll never forget it. Tell you what... I have a special room; well it's kind of a living room with kitchen area and bathroom and a bedroom off it and you can have it for \$10 a day if you like"

Oh, how we did like. I slept on the sofa bed and Richard had the bedroom and it was just ideal and idyllic with a view of the ocean. With swimmers on, we asked the lovely owner where people surfed and so we strolled a mile along the beach until we came to Malibu pier. The building on of the pier (intended for the Coast Guard) became the Malibu Sports Club Restaurant in 1966, then Alice's Restaurant from 1972, but in 1965 there was no restaurant, just a food truck.

Talking about a place like this evokes great memories, but writing about it actually brings back the emotions that I felt being there for the first time. I think, because of surf music and the movies, it felt iconic even then. We descend onto the beach. A couple was hiring out surf boards and so we settled down close by on the sand, just taking in the view, the smells, the waves, the moment.

Not a lot of time passed before a guy and a pretty girl came to speak to us. We were wearing our Beatles Caps so this probably alerted them to the fact that we might not hail from California. Before long, a large, friendly group had assembled and we told them about ourselves and they told of their lives and situations also. There was a hell of a mix. Several had been in a kind of juvenile detention centre for some misdemeanor or other. One was due back in court. A couple of guys were living rough on the beach, which was illegal; two had been called up for service in Vietnam without having a clue why they would want to go and fight the Vietnamese while several were dreading 'That letter'. One talked about fleeing to Canada. These guys weren't old enough to buy a beer, but were old enough to die or get fucked up for life in a futile war. Others were just on their summer break, but in swimmers and bikinis, they all seemed alike. Unlike in the UK, all the accents were pretty much identical.

The surf the first day was unimpressive. We were offered two boards to try out... almost unheard of... and, with a little instruction, we both kept falling off. The Ocean was no warmer than the English Channel.

And so our days passed: on the beach; talking, a little surfing, lots of falling off, body surfing and that was great fun and we survived in this place on a diet of donuts and tuna mayo sandwiches from the truck. Something that impressed me was the rip tide: standing in no more than a foot of water, but being unable to walk against the receding tide to the beach.

One day, two brothers who arrived every day in a beaten up car asked if we'd like to go to a dance that evening, a Saturday.

"Love to, thank you."

"We'll pick you up at 6:30 cause it's in The Valley"

We didn't even ask what this valley was.

We dressed as smartly as we could and the brothers arrived at 6:30.

"We just have to swing past our house on the way."

"No problem,"

We left Malibu, drove through a canyon and at the top of a hill stopped at a magnificent house with four other cars in the driveway. We went in the house and met their charming parents. We'd had no idea they weren't beach bums. Everyone's the same in swimmers.

The dance was a bit of a throwback for us. We'd been going to pubs and bars for years, drinking wine with our folks and here we were in a kind of youth club with just soft drinks. But all of this was far from our minds when we walked in because I had never, ever... in my entire life seen so many gorgeous girls in one place. There was a live band that was rather good. I do hope I didn't drool too much, but the only way I was going to get to talk to any of these beauties was to ask one to dance and I'm not a dancer, I was dad dancing when I was 16 and quite hopeless so a 'slowie' is always my only hope. I plucked up courage and asked one, she accepted. Result!!!

When I asked her name she replied, "Oh hell, no... not another with that phony, British accent! Ever since the Beatles hit in town, every idiot is putting on that stupid accent!"

And, before I could claim my genuine ancestry, she broke free and walked away. The Beatles were playing The Hollywood Bowl the following two nights and 'Beatlemania' was in full swing. That night, my accent universally garnered the same reaction in the room and Richard fared no better. If only we'd brought our passports. Or Beatles Hats.

With no mobile phones and expensive international calls we only contacted home sporadically to let our parents know where we were and that we were OK. Richard's next call home brought the sad news that his father had died. He elected to return to the UK as soon as possible. Gladys, his mother, organised a flight out of LAX that evening and our wonderful host at the motel and his wife took us to the airport. Before Richard's flight was called, we had a drink and a sweet waitress asked Richard,

"Where y'all going tonight?"

"I'm going to London... England" Richard explained.

"Oh, is that in Germany?"

"I got there first," No, but it might have been."

The three of us went back to the motel and I headed off to the pier to see my friends who were very sad to see Richard leave. Someone had even got a few cans of beer from his older brother. How anyone can get drunk on that stuff is still beyond me, but one kid was. Walking back to the motel a patrol car stopped and two donut fans got out. I was, as usual, required to 'Assume the position.'

"What you doing?"

"Taking a walk."

"You know there's a curfew?"

"I don't."

"Well there is and you've broken it"

This was shortly after the Watts riots and the police were very edgy, as we'd discovered at the LA bus station.

"Have you been on the beach?"

"No, sir."

"Well, why is there sand on your ass?"

I didn't want to get my friends into trouble so replied,

"I just sat down by the side of the road" and I regaled them with the sad story of Richard's dad and how I was now on my own, sad and five and a half thousand miles from home and...

Only because I had my room key, they took me back to the motel and made sure I went inside. I might have had a better story of spending the night in a police cell.

I stayed a few more days, then two weeks with my uncle's cousin in Burbank, then a day in San Francisco and ten days in Montréal with my dad's sisters and families, my aunt Fay and I were especially close.

Then it was time to return home. I left Montréal with less than 5p on me, not enough for a drink on the plane. For the first and only time, a very pretty young lady sat next to me. We struck up a conversation. Apparently she'd been working as a mother's help in LA until the husband hit on her. She resigned and the husband gave her a wad of money to keep quiet about his evil attempt. So, being lucky again, she bought me drinks all the way back on the Boeing 707. Despite arriving home on Saturday morning, I went out to an all-night party... as you do.

Chapter Three... **STILL STUPID AFTER ALL THESE YEARS**

On Monday morning I started writing letters: to Abbey Road Studios, Decca, Pye; all the record companies and all the publishers telling them how great I'd be as an employee. Foolish, naïve and blind spring to mind. My sister had been working for an impresario called Philip Solomon for some time. He had discovered fifteen year-old Irish singer called Clodagh Rogers and managed The Bachelors and the Chieftans. The Bachelors had their first hit with *Charmaine* in 1962. They had agreed to play at Lesley's 21st birthday party and had stayed at our house when our parents were away. I suspect Lesley may have had a fling with one of them. She did, though, give me a load more contacts to write to.

Philip and his wife worked together and were real characters. Philip had bought into pirate radio station Radio Caroline. Sometimes, when artistes received royalty statements, half the amount would be deducted for 'Paid plays on Radio Caroline. Despite his patchy reputation, Philip was extremely nice to me, but far too clever to offer me a job.

With very few replies to my begging letters save for Abbey Road and the BBC pointed out that I needed a good degree, my, until then, patient father announced I was going to 'work'. I looked up the word in the dictionary and didn't fancy it.

He made me apply for an interview at Marks and Spencer. His cousin was manager at the Oxford Circus branch. He earned a great salary, had private health insurance, share options and would retire on a generous pension and staff discount for life. I applied and was sent a letter telling me to turn up at the head office in Baker Street on a certain day. I passed the first interview and then the second also and felt I owed it to myself to blow the third one intentionally to save me a lifetime of retail tedium; and missing Chelsea matches on Saturday afternoons was unthinkable!

Still, I needed to do something so got a job in Selfridges department store in Oxford street that would take me through until Christmas. When I arrived, I was instructed to familiarise myself with the layout of the store for when customers needed directions to a particular department or product. It took a couple of days to memorise the whole place after which I was handed a white jacket that I was required to wear and was instructed to stand at the bottom of the escalators on the third floor and repeatedly call out:

"Stand on the right; keep moving on the left!"

This I did every fifteen seconds for eight hours a day, six days a week for eight weeks except when someone asked me where he could find men's shoes. "On their feet" would have been my chosen response, but I resisted.

One day, an attractive couple I'd met at a party recognised me. They must have been so impressed!

Around Christmas, I met some of the people who'd followed me to La Colline. Several of my friends had stayed on so, at a party, they were there with their new colleagues and some older faces. It was there I met the person who would most change my life. His name was David Seys and, during the party, he got out his guitar and played and sang some songs; a couple he'd even written. People listened. I was impressed. He went back to Switzerland with the current crop, but I saw him again at Easter and we even played a couple of songs together.

After Christmas I took up the offer to go back to Selfridges to work in the boys' outfitting department for the duration of the sales. I sold stuff I knew absolutely nothing about. I've done that quite often in my life.

I had passed my driving test and inherited the car my sister had used. Someone had brought in a 1932 Austin 10/4 to the garage where I'd worked and wanted to sell it for £5. My father gave her £10 and he and my uncle had it re-painted black and yellow; it had fake leopard skin seat covers made and all the chrome re-done as new. It was quite a sight. My sister had it; I had it; my cousin, Steven, inherited it and a second cousin took it before Steven's brother was due to inherit it and then my sister's children. For some reason, the second cousin was able to sell it and it left the family. Its registration number was OY 6554 and everywhere I went, people waved at it. It had no synchromesh on the 1st and 2nd gears so it was necessary to double de clutch. I can still do that. It can prove useful.

With no other job prospects in hand, my father decided I'd be working for the company that had taken over his firm. I was to become a 'trainee executive'. I won't bore you as much as it bored me, but I had to learn about the business and was, without much effort, destined 'for great things'. I was promoted to be the 'furniture buyer'. Apart from the grotty offices in West Ham, I sometimes had to travel to equally grim places around the country. I had a frickin' full-time job, but a world apart from the music business. This was in no way part of my plan to be a record producer.

Sundays in winter could be quite tedious; back then nothing was open and I lived out in Finchley. Often I'd hang out with Richard, Malcolm McDonnell another ex La Colline chap who owned a very nice Gibson guitar and James Hunt, brother of Sally. James had a grey minivan and, if he was driving, I made damn sure I got to the front seat first. There was none behind, just a space for goods, but the other two had to sit in there. Pulling away from lights, James's foot would be on the floor and you could hear the poor buggers in the back slide into the rear door. Braking for lights would be at the last second and the unfortunate pair would then slide forward hard into the divider. I do remember the four of us going to Brand's Hatch for a motor race. This may have been James's first visit to a circuit. I loved motor racing even then and Malcolm and I once went to the old Chrystal Palace racing track to watch a Formula 2 race.

In early summer 1966 two things happened: a girl decided she wanted to sleep with me. Actually she wanted to sleep with everyone and did. Then Richard, Malcolm, John Drayton whose sister was at the Swiss school with me with me and I decided to get a flat together. What we found was actually one big room in Harrington Gardens, south Kensington. The whole block had been gutted and these spacious rooms now contained a small bathroom in one corner and a small kitchen in the opposite corner and stairs to a 'minstrel gallery'. Two of us slept up there and two downstairs. Dinners usually comprised Fray Bentos steak and kidneys pies that you baked in the can and actually tasted good or Vesta freeze-dried curries that didn't. Otherwise we'd drive to the Windmill Café off Ladbroke Grove for veal escalope, spaghetti, chips and peas with a cup of tea and slice of bread for 4/3 or we'd walk to Dino's in Gloucester Road for their terrific Cannelloni. Dino's lasted a long time, but is now a Nando's.

We all had jobs; Malcolm followed in his father's footsteps and was an assistant film editor at Pinewood Studios. Johnny, despite his delusions of grandeur, was a cashier at Harrods and Richard, with little ambition, but an allowance, was washing up at the trendy 'Guys 'n' Dolls' café in the Kings Road. He started going out with a waitress there so sometimes didn't come home. We all hung out there quite a lot; the King's Road was very cool and THE place to be in 1966. The big song was *Summer In The City*.

Our rent was 4 guineas a week each.

Some Saturdays we'd go to the Scotch of St James club in Mayfair and nurse a Scotch and Coke for the entire evening. There were no VIP areas then so we'd often be sitting on the next table to a Stone, a Beatle or a Kink. There was always a great, live band. Sometimes, after an all-night party, we'd wander down the King's Road to have breakfast at the Picasso Café. The Thomas Crapper sanitary-ware shop was just down the road on the corner of Beaufort Street.

My sister got married to a Maxwell, a kind, but barking mad property developer and my parents decided to sell their house and move to the West End.

Sally Hunt fell pregnant to an Italian guy called Toni and several months before she gave birth, her parents put her in a 'Home for Unmarried Mothers' in Streatham. I tried to visit her regularly. After the birth, I became 'Uncle David'.

In the summer, after my cousin took over the Austin, I took over my sister's Renault Floride. It was convertible and had the same body as the underpowered Caravelle, but with an even smaller 850cc engine. Apart from being sluggish, changing gear was like waving a spoon in runny porridge. One Saturday, trying to look cool while parking the thing in the Kings Road, my passengers had to push me back into the parking space as the reverse gear had gone missing. Still it was convertible and good looking.

That September, my parents asked to borrow my convertible so that they could drive through France on their way to the Cote d'Azur. One day they phoned and said they'd rented a house and would I like to join them for a few days? I had never been and was more than keen. I was due time off.

My parents picked me up in Nice and as we drove along the coast road – no autoroute then – they kept saying the house was nice so don't be put off by the fact that it looked, from the road, like a men's toilet. I was sure it wouldn't, but it did. However it was nice inside with picture windows facing the sea, a terrace and even steps down to a tiny private beach. I loved the coast and, while my parents took an afternoon siesta, I took my car to explore. Sometimes I'd drive into St Tropez for a beer and park outside the famous Senequier café, still trying to look cool, but realised I'd have to return one day in a Ferrari to stand a hope with any of the girls there. Now you can't park anywhere near the place.

The local food was great and one night we had such an enormous storm that my father and I drove into Ste Maxime to look at the height of the little Preconil river. It was a torrent and we watched as cars and vans were being tossed about like toys and were disappearing out into sea.

My father went into the rental agency to see if he could extend their stay and came out laughing.

"They want to sell me that house for £27,000; they have to be crazy!!!"

Work on it has been done, but it's probably worth £3-4 million now. Oh well!



The 'toilet'.

Our quartet then moved into a slightly better place off Kensington High Street.

Early in 1967, a couple of the guys left to be with girlfriends so I moved temporarily into the apartment my parents had rented in Thayer Street, Marylebone. They didn't charge me rent so I was able to save a bit of money. Most evenings, I just practiced on a cheap copy of a Gibson acoustic guitar and started writing songs and spent nearly every free moment trying to improve. David Seys, whose mother was a Rothschild had got a job with the family business. He was writing also so we practiced when we were both free.

Malcolm and his brother, Robin, had seen an old wooden wartime cruiser for sale at Old Winsor on the Thames. I was in and, until it sank, we had some great weekends on it. One weekend, Andrew Ainley and Joy, his fiancée were invited down and brought Joy's parents' au pair. She was blonde, pretty with a good figure and was French. Jeanette Rigal became my first real girlfriend.

I detested my job. But there I was. However, Jeanette and I went to some great concerts because my sister's in-laws had debenture seats at the Albert Hall in London and, as they hated modern music, gave us their tickets for these events. We saw Simon and Garfunkel twice, Tom Paxton, Blood, Sweat and Tears, Derek and the Dominoes, Chicago, Tony Joe White, Credence Clearwater and a whole lot more.

If I wasn't to be inside the music business, I was going to get closer. Malcolm and I had seen the first mobile discothèques set up and we decided to get in on the act quickly. We could keep our daytime jobs and earn some extra money in the evenings. Malcolm sold his car and got an old three gear Bedford van. We were about to order some equipment when my father (remember he was Jewish) announced that he could save us half our budget by getting an 'expert' friend to purpose-build the stuff for us. We explained exactly what we wanted. We then bought all the currently popular singles.

When we picked up the gear, the speakers had been mounted in old TV cabinets! This didn't bode well at all. Our first engagement was at a swanky house in Kensington. We started playing some gentle background music, fading from one turntable to the next. When the host asked us to play some up-tempo songs for dancing, we did as he bid, but as soon as people started their upper class gyrations, the needle kept jumping. The 'expert' had added no springing to cushion this effect. Malcolm and I spent most of the evening holding the entire unit off the ground while Jeannette, our lovely assistant, played the disks. As it happened, Princess Margaret was at the party and requested her favourite song, *Ode To Billy Joe*. Luckily, we had it and luckily it was slow enough for us to put down the turntables for three minutes.

Our next booking was a wedding. The amp and speakers were only powerful enough for the empty room, not when 200 people attacked the dance floor. The last gig was where at my firm for the company's Christmas party. My colleagues weren't impressed... except with my girlfriend. Then we retired hurt. The positive aspect of this disaster was it kicked off my love of Soul music, especially Stax.

I turned 21 and still wasn't in the Music Business.

Through David Seys' family and connections, I was able to go to some great events and got to know his parents, family and grandmother, who was a hoot. Most of the Rothschilds were really lovely people, especially 'Uncle Leo'. Sometimes at these events we'd be asked to play some songs that (naturally) always went down very well. David also got us some paid gigs. This was great!

After a holiday in France, I split up with Jeanette and reconnected with Richard whom I hadn't seen for a while. He'd got married, separated and was now back with Gaynor, his wife and training to be a car mechanic. The problem between them seemed to be that, after their marriage, Gaynor's father started dating Richard's mother and forthcoming marriage would create the oddest collection of family relationships. Still, Richard's inheritance permitted him to buy a lovely mews house in Chelsea. My problem with Jeannette was that I didn't like arguments and there were just too many for my liking.

My sister, having worked in the business was very helpful and introduced David and me to some useful people. She knew Marion Massey who managed Lulu. Marion's partner was Mark London who, with the wonderful Don Black, had written *To Sir With Love*, the theme song to the film of the same name. The song was Billboard's Top Single for 1967.

We went to see Mark and he liked what we were doing and suggested a simple, two guitar, two voice recording of some of our songs. This turned out to be our first ever recording session and was held at the legendary Regent Sound in Denmark Street. The Stones had recorded their first EP and first LP there and Hendrix had also used it, but it was, frankly, a bit of a shithole with egg boxes on the walls and mold in the corner, but that didn't matter to us.

An advantage to the place was that it had a lathe for cutting acetates. For anyone under sixty, these were like 45 vinyl singles, but breakable and blank until the lathe cut the grooves onto them. They were done one by one, but you could immediately take home something that you recorded to play on your turntable. Few people owned reel-to-reel tape machines and it was years before the cassette would be invented. Of course, our morning was hugely exciting and Mark told us he'd be in touch.

Awaiting this call was like waiting for your girlfriend's pregnancy test only it took longer. Oh, the apprehension when you have your first glimpse of a breakthrough. Just the fact that we'd had interest from professionals and we were now regularly getting being paid for playing convinced my incredibly stupid, younger self that... well, I don't actually know what. When people say, "What was I thinking?" they don't expect to receive an answer.

When the call did come, it was via the work switchboard and I was in the toy warehouse. Well, I told you it was a glamorous job. As I remember it went something like:

"Hello David, sorry about the delay; we really like your sound, but I don't think we can do anything for you at the moment." What I heard was,

"Hello David, we think you're wonderful and are undoubtedly going to be worldwide superstars, but we're so busy at the moment that we can't keep you waiting". So, demonstrating my total lack of wisdom, intelligence or common sense, I immediately went to one of the directors who was the Chairman's son; he drove an Aston Martin and was addicted to Polo mints and told him I was leaving.

"For what"??? I think you're crazy, you have such a bright future here"

That didn't have the slightest effect on my desire to escape from this nightmare scenario.

Incidentally, the company later took over Asda. Maybe I could have been a director and become extremely wealthy, but the decision was right and had to be made.

I explained to my father that I was leaving my job and I explained I'd figured out that it wouldn't take a huge number of record sales to be able to make a living as a songwriter. He simply buried his shaking head in his hands. What he must have thought of me, I can't imagine.

Chapter Four... THE STRANGEST THING

Because of David Seys' connections, we were playing quite a few Deb or May balls or shows in the Officers' mess at some barracks or other. An 'Officers' mess' doesn't sound too glamorous, but they were very grand events in opulent surroundings. The format was usually the same: we'd go on before dinner as a kind of cabaret and sing five songs and an encore and would receive £60. There would also be a live band that would perform three 45-minute sets and also get paid £60 so, as we would use their microphones, P.A. and didn't require a roadie, we got by far the better deal. Not only that, but we'd be well fed and after dinner would inevitably be invited to join one of the tables and drink Champagne until breakfast was served at about 4am. We'd normally drive home as dawn was breaking and sober. Maybe!

The group with whom we worked the most was 'Mud' who were extremely good and went on to have many hits in the seventies on a terrible record deal. They were lovely guys and all became friends. Their superb guitarist, Rob Davis later wrote Kiley Minogue's biggest hit *Can't Get You Out Of My Head* with Cathy Dennis.



Early gig.

David Seys had a beautiful Ramirez classical guitar. My steel string acoustic wasn't too good (see above) so he, very generously, sold the Ramirez and bought me a gorgeous, second hand Gibson Hummingbird and himself, a nice, but cheaper classical one. Good bloke!

Stupid as I certainly was, I knew we couldn't rely on gigs to survive so I would need gainful employment, but not full time and so I sought out and found the job. I started parking cars in a car park in Meard Street, Soho at £3 a day. The place was on two floors and was part of the Gargoyle Club in Dean Street owned by Jimmy Jacobs. We started early and, at rush hour, people left their cars down the street. One of us would drive a car into the garage and onto the lift, get out and press the button to send the lift and car down. The second guy would take it off the lift and park it and send the lift back up. Then we'd start parking on the ground floor. We had to run to stop the cars backing up into Dean Street. In the evening we reversed the process. Most of our customers were in the film, advertising or music business and during the day we were less busy and available to wash cars if anyone wanted the service. I learned well from my teen, three-job period. A minicab company was run out of the garage and there was always cover if I took a day off for a meeting or to rehearse.

Meanwhile my friend, Andrew Ainley, was moving into a large mansion flat in Beaufort Street, off the Kings Road, with a some workmates: Steve Wright, Bob Hilland and Peter Wren, (known as 'Fibres') and they had one more room to let so in I moved. The Kings Road was still a wonderful place to be in 1968. The flat was spacious and affordable and you could park freely outside on the street. At one

end of the road was the Chelsea embankment and river Thames and a pub that singer, Bryan Adams, would later buy. At the other end was the Kings Road and the Beaufort Arms, our usual local and, once a week, we'd throw all our dirty clothes in a bag and take it to the launderette next to the pub. We'd set the machine in motion and the lady working there would transfer the clean clothes into a dryer and, on leaving the pub, we'd collect the bag, take it home and try to identify our own items of clothing.

Round the corner was the Picasso café and our favourite restaurant called 235. It was inexpensive, had wooden booths and one huge table in the centre where anyone could sit and it had a very cool clientele and good food.

I had some friends at Ruislip Lido where I sometimes went to waterski, a sport I'd always loved. A young British team member was called Robin Beckett and he became British Champion and a lifelong friend. I remember Richard, Gaynor and I went with Robin to the 235 and him having snails for the first time. Amazingly, Richard and Gaynor's daughter, Sarah, born some years later, went on to become World Champion at the slalom.

David Seys had his 21st birthday that October and an Australian lady called Shirley Abacair performed some songs at the event. I'd seen her when I was young on a BBC TV children's programme singing and playing the zither. They'd met at another party, had hit it off and even played some songs together. She seemed really lovely.

One day, we played her some songs and she said she was determined to help us really get started. Not long after this she called David. "You have a meeting with a great friend called Tony Hall. Play him some songs; I think he'd be great for you."

Tony Hall had been a DJ and was now a manager. We took the day off, rehearsed during the morning and turned up at 20 Noel Street, Soho, in plenty of time. Tony was a charming man and listened to us patiently before giving us the "Very nice, but not for me" polite brush off. There were plenty of those including one at a luxurious mews house in Kensington, delivered by two old-Harrovians called John Gaydon and David Enthoven. When we left, David told me that one obviously hadn't remembered having him beaten at Harrow. Gaydon and Enthoven went on to manage Roxy Music, Robbie Williams and many others. But not us.

At that time, for me, perfect Saturday would entail meeting friends at the Hollywood Arms off the Fulham Road for a beer and a curry, walking to the Chelsea match (that they would win); walking back to the flat; having dinner at 235 or Newton's, another Kings Road favourite and then getting back to the flat for 'Match of the Day'.

However, on more than one occasion, there would be a knock on the door and a guy or two would be standing there with a large can of beer.

"Hi I'm here for the party."

"What party?"

"A bloke called Steve in the pub told me there was going to be a party here."

"Well, he didn't tell us" by which time a gaggle of other people would arrive.

There would be a party! The guys would outnumber girls by about 12-1.

As a kind of 'Thank you' I helped Shirley Abicair with her upcoming one-woman show at the Arts Theatre. Her boyfriend directed and I agreed to work the slide show. There was no automation then so I had to follow a script and press a certain button to make the appropriate slide appear. Shirley was a wonderful performer and human being. As of writing, she is still alive at 89

Out of the blue I received a phone call from Tony Hall... remember, the manager who'd turned us down...

"Hi David, it's Tony Hall. Are you still writing and performing?"

Slight pause...

"Hi Tony; yes we are, more than ever."

"Great, so would you like to come in and play me you new material?"

"Yeah, of course."

I must say I was perplexed... hearing from someone who turned you down... really?

We did go to see Tony. And believe it or not, he said he really liked the new material; apparently we'd matured and he would like to manage us, which would also involve a publishing contract and hopefully a record deal that would involve being recorded by one of his producers.

With two smiles a mile wide, we went back to David's house and opened a bottle of his family's priceless Château Lafite 1945 that had been stored in his garage, a 21st birthday present, and glugged out of Duralex tumblers. Peasants!

Now, anyone who has ever been in the business knows, as I know, that if someone turns you down, they don't get in touch again to see if you have 'improved'. But he did and many years later, I saw him at an event and asked him why he'd called; something I'd wanted to know for years.

"Well, he said, 'at the time, I was having some worrying personal problems and a friend suggested I go to see this amazing clairvoyant, which I did. She told me a few things I understood and then said, 'You've met two people who have the same name and one is from a famous family and you have to, absolutely must get involved with them' "So I remembered you two Davids and that David Seys was from the Rothschild family so it had to be you... had to be and there we are."

"But", I replied; "Signing us, as far as I know, did you no good whatsoever."

"That's right, but it changed everything for you!"

I don't think I've given too much away as I'm sure you're aware Tony didn't steer us to superstardom.

Even for the music business, that story is totally bizarre and there is no other explanation than it's true and it absolutely changed our lives. So, although I don't believe in that stuff, thank you Mrs. Clairvoyant, we owe you... so much.

Again the right place at the right time for the wrong reason.

Our next move was for me to switch from parking cars to driving a minicab. David elected to drive one too so we could work to survive, but spend more time on our music. All the other drivers in Meard Street drove their own cars and paid a percentage to the owner of the firm. I didn't have an appropriate vehicle, but there was a beaten up Austin Cambridge Estate I could drive and receive the same £3 a day, but keep the tips. The drivers were a bizarre array of people who had lost their real jobs, firemen who had plenty of spare time and guys willing to work all hours, sometimes sleeping in their car in order to feed their families. This was no Addison Lee, but right at the arse end of the business.

Because I drove an estate I drove mostly goods: carpets and clothes deliveries, but on my first day, I was dispatched (car 33) to Illustra films in Romilly Street. A young assistant and child actress piled into the back and I was told we were going to a commercials shoot in Buckinghamshire. I was out all day, got fed and finished up with £19. "This is good, I thought". It was, but it didn't last.

My other memorable jobs are few, but I remember one where I was instructed to be at an antique dealer's address at 7 30am the following day; we were going to Brighton where he was going to sell some of his stock. I'd driven him before, a handsome and very personable chap and we had a good, if long, day while he sold a lot of antiques. On our return, he was most generous. However, three days later I received the call,

"Come in car 33, return to base." When I got there, two constables were waiting for me. Apparently, the stock had been 'nicked' and someone had taken the number of my car. My booking time had, thankfully, been logged so they left satisfied that I was an innocent party.

My other favourite job was one Good Friday morning. I was to pick up Frenchie, a regular who was a 'lady of the night' with rooms in Dean Street. It won't surprise you to learn that she was French. She told me that the destination was Heathrow Airport and that, earlier in the week, a Pakistani gentleman had rung her doorbell; he said there was a coach-load of his fellow countrymen parked in Dean Street as they were on a trip to London and could she 'accommodate' them all. She did, with the driver taking his turn first and she'd made so much money that she'd decided to visit her family in Paris for Easter.

At Heathrow she turned to me,

"Merci, Davide. Would you like a money tip or... somesing else?" I took the money, perhaps my biggest pourboire in my period of being a cab driver.

Sometimes I was persuaded to do 'night control', which I hated. Back then, Soho was gloriously sleazy during the day, but at night!!! Night control meant working in the office alone from 9pm until 9am taking phone calls, listing the bookings and trying to get a cab to the pick-up on time. However, there was an area for 'walk-in clients' and these people were unlikely to make my Christmas card list. Much as I enjoyed driving prostitutes who were almost always a delight to talk with, the 'Clip Girls' were vile. These women would pick up customers with the promise of sex at their apartment. They'd come in, eventually get a cab and give an address. Then, having taken their fee, they'd ask the driver to pull up outside Boots the Chemist in Piccadilly Circus and ask the client to pop into the shop for some contraceptives. Then they'd instruct the driver to drive off. What could the client do? Well, usually, go back to the cab office to demand who the girl was or to get the driver back in, often believing I was in on the scam. What the girl would do if her 'John' already had contraceptives, I don't know, but, back then, they probably didn't.

The local crooks and hard men were fine and usually very friendly. One, 'Chris the Greek' on hearing that "Somebody's givin' ya a bit of bover?" offered to have him disappear for me and that, "There's no charge, Dave, you're a mate". On another occasion he asked, "Would ya look after this for a coupla hours, Dave?" I took something heavy wrapped in a towel. Later I took a peek. It was a revolver. I wasn't sorry when he came back to retrieve it. "Thanks, Dave; you're a mate."

Eventually, in July, our publishing contract came through. Tony's publishing was administered through Essex Music and our contract was with them for a year with options. We received an advance of £15 for the first year, increasing to £25 thereafter. We were rich!

When a recording deal was issued, it was with EMI records, the most prestigious company in the UK... Hell, The Beatles were with EMI!!! The Shadows, my heroes had been with EMI. David had Freshfields, his family's solicitors, check out the contract and they approved it with a penny, halfpenny royalty to be paid to be shared between the two of us. It didn't seem a lot, but, hey, we had a record contract and, on signing, David and I shared another bottle of Chateau Lafite 1945, such a rare vintage, again straight from his garage and again out of tumblers. Perhaps the wine would have tasted better if decanted and at room temperature, but we didn't care, we were celebrating. A bottle today is worth over £3,000.

Essex Music was based at 58 Oxford Street and Tony Hall Productions at 20 Noel Street, about 5 minutes' walk away. Tony wanted us to keep writing as much as possible and we were afforded use of the demo studio at Essex... just two stereo machines, but good enough.

Tony represented three talented, young producers: Tony Visconti, Gus Dudgeon and Rodger Bain. Gus agreed to produce us when we had the right songs so one evening came to my parents' flat in Marylebone to hear us play our songs. My parents were away so it was a good place to meet. I bought a large jug of rosé and we really enjoyed Gus's company, but the next morning he was found sitting on the steps of the London Palladium with his head between his hands, moaning, "Never again!"

Essex Music was such a great place to be back then. We were allowed not only to record, but also hang out there and learn from other artistes and producers. The young singer from Tyrannosaurus Rex, Marc Bolan was often there. A really sweet guy, he went on to have huge success, only to die in a car crash much too young. What struck me was how nice and normal everybody seemed to be... I don't know what we expected, but not that. Drugs may well have been involved, but I wasn't aware.

One morning David and I were in Gus's office and he asked:

"Would you like to hear a single I just produced?"

"Of course."

"Tony (Visconti) usually produces David, but didn't fancy it so asked me to do just this one."

He then played a tape of Bowie's *Space Oddity* to two young 'done nothings' with jaws hanging open.

"We found this incredible keyboard player who's only seventeen. He really makes this work; he's called Rick Wakeman"

"Cool."

We were still trying to write our first single while 'normal' life carried on as usual: go to work and drive the cab; evenings writing or rehearsing, some pub visits, Chelsea matches every other Saturday and

Steve's 'surprise' parties. I don't remember our neighbours complaining... pretty sturdy those old mansion blocks. Now and again, we would have a party where we all got to invite people. At one, I spotted a really pretty girl. Well, you do, don't you! I was even then, shallow as I always went for looks and would frequently approach a pretty girl with, "Would you like to have dinner with me?" The reply was invariable "No thank you."

David and I had different 'modus operandi' where dates were concerned. He would chose a fancy restaurant for the first evening and then take the girl on to 'Annabell's', a toff's club in Berkley Square of which he was a member. I, on the other hand, on the rare occasions I wasn't rejected, would choose to eat at a modest bistro. I figured, whereas David's dates might be impressed and think they were onto a good thing, if mine agreed to a second date, it was because they liked me. So, usually, they didn't. Back to the party: I engaged this lovely lady in conversation, found out her name was Lyn and, at the end of the evening, I walked her to her bus stop and invited her out. She accepted!!!

I was smitten from day one. She was smart, very artistic and worked for Vogue Studios as a photographers' representative. One of her photographers was Lord Snowdon aka 'Snowshoes'. We became close and, apparently I was her first real boyfriend. We were an item. I was happy. Very happy.

My sister had some lovely, matching shirts made by a friend for David and me to perform in. A friend of Lyn's photographed us in them and we were featured in Harpers Bazaar, our first piece of publicity.



Getting trendy now.

We were also asked to play at the Devon County Fair that was held near David's parents' home. I don't recall if it was paid gig or not, but I do remember that there was a big crowd and a non-televised version of the *Going For A Song* that was a very popular TV programme on which people had their antiques appraised by a panel of experts. The most popular of these panel members was a gentleman named Arthur Negus who, as well as appearing at the show was staying, as were we, at David's parents' house on their farm at nearby Kingsclear. Another appraiser was also staying there, a flamboyant, young man sporting bright red trousers.

At the fair, Mrs. Seys had offered a dining chair for appraisal.

"Oh A lovely Queen Ann Chair from the early 18th century in pristine condition..." began Arthur, whereupon, Mr. Red Trousers leapt up...

"I'm sorry to contradict you, Arthur, but this is a fake, a very good copy, but not a genuine piece."

Arthur took another look.

"I do believe you're right, I've just noticed the...."

I was surprised that David's mother didn't have a heart attack on the spot and was very edgy until we all returned in the evening and the experts agreed that only this chair was a fake.

"Must have replaced a broken one" explained Arthur and the status quo returned.

At dinner - Mr. and Mrs. Seys had a wonderful cook - Red Trousers asked us if we'd be willing to play a private party and offered a more than acceptable fee so, a few days later, we turned up at an address in Sydney Street, Chelsea that appeared to be an antiques shop. There was a flat above that, like the shop, belonged to our client. We set up and started to mingle with the guests and little by little it dawned on us that they were all men; lots of men... men of a certain age and they were getting quite er... inappropriate. David had words with Mr. Still Red Trousers and soon the 'flirting' ceased. We ate, played and left. Later, David explained to me that Red had told his guests that the two of us had "A very special relationship." It's true we got on, but not like that.

It seemed crazy that homosexuality had only been legal for two years and this was only my second real interaction with gay men though there were just as many around then even though some wouldn't admit it. Thank goodness, we've come a long way since.

Lyn and I went on holiday... to France, of course... always on a tight budget, but enjoyed everything, coming home through Switzerland and Paris where Lyn got rather nasty food poisoning. I felt really bad later for having stopped for lunch on the way to Calais, leaving Lyn asleep on the back seat. But I did love my food.

David I kept writing and writing and were getting a little impatient to record something and become the inevitable worldwide sensation that we'd forecast, but the right songs weren't there. My sister suggest that:

"I know the business. They won't do anything; they'll string you along and invariably dump you."

That cheered me up, but late in the year, Gus did pick two new songs and Tony approved them. I'd have liked us to have written one each, but they were both mine. Still, David Seys was the lead singer in the duo and my harmony was always below, which is how the Everlys had usually placed their vocals. Only they sounded a whole lot better.

The two songs, *In The City* and *Good Morning Morning* would be, according to Gus, orchestrated and we wouldn't be required to play, which didn't concern us one bit. One evening, in Gus's office we met a young arranger called Paul Buckmaster. We talked about the songs and Paul wanted to know if we had any ideas.

"On *In The City* I can hear strings a bit like *Days of Pearly Spencer*."

'Oh I don't know that one.'

I tried to sing him roughly what they did. Mostly, we wanted to just let Gus and Paul have a free rein. They knew so much more than we did.

Gus called us with a studio date, a Friday evening, two or three weeks later. He had wanted to use Trident Studios, but EMI had insisted he use their studios in Abbey Road in St John's Wood. He said the tracks would be done in Studio 3 because they didn't have enough 8-track machines at the time and then the backing tracks would be transferred to eight. That seems totally bizarre now.

We kind of understood what he meant.

On the appointed day and feeling pretty nervous, I borrowed my father's car and picked up David, Gus and Paul who sat in front with a cello between his legs, scribbling out parts for the session. I wondered if this was normal.

Having already been to Abbey Road with Mike Sloman, my sister's friend, to witness a P.J. Proby session, an unforgettable treat for me, I was so excited to be back as an actual artist this time. We went through the famous front door and into Studio three, located to the left in the front of the building. I have to say it was quite a moment. A bunch of musicians was setting up... we counted 23. I remember that Brian Daly (who later wrote the Postman Pat theme), Alan Parker (Blue Mink) and Clem Cattini (Tornadoes) who has played on forty three No1 hits were on guitars and drums. None of them has any recollection of doing our session... they played on so many over the years; why would they?

In the control room was the engineer, Jeff Jarratt, and a very young tape operator/tea maker called Andy Stephens. Andy later became an A&R man, head of Epic Records UK and then managed George Michael, then Susan Boyle and we still see each other regularly, over 50 years later.

In 1969 The Musicians' Union was very strong and was often a pain in the ass to boot. A union rep could stop any recording or TV session to check all the membership cards of the hired musicians. If one didn't have his or her card, the session could be called off. The worst MU rep was Don Smith, known as 'Doctor Death', who caused many a session to go into overtime or a song to be dropped through time running out. Another ridiculous and pointless rule was that the artists had to sing with the musicians... live! For the runs through, we were put in a booth about twice the size of an old telephone box and had to sing with the orchestra although we'd never heard what they were going to play.

David started his lead vocal on *Good Morning Morning* and was noticeably out of tune as was I when I joined in. We weren't much better on the recording and I was convinced we would be fired there and then, but when we apologised to Gus he said,

"Oh we weren't even listening to you, it's just to keep to Union happy." Weird!

It was good to discover that we weren't being recorded either. The track sounded great... lush and expensive!!!

We then went back for *In The City* and just walked through it, but when we got to the chorus, the fiddle parts were nearly identical *Days of Pearly Spencer*.

We said not a word.

Jeff had recorded those 23 guys brilliantly over just 4 tracks and IN STEREO. No wonder he went on to be a hit producer and made his fortune with the 'Hooked on Classics' series.

When Gus was satisfied with what had been captured, the musos left after picking up their cheques from the 'fixer', the person who'd booked them all.

We now waited in the reception for the transfer suite to become available. We went in with the four-track tape; it was transferred to four tracks of an 8 track tape and we were done. Having dropped off my passengers and returned the car; I arrived home in the early hours of Saturday morning, somewhat elated.

We were booked in to add our vocals the following week. I'd mentioned to Gus that the main guitar riff on one of the songs was barely audible. Gus told me to bring my guitar so I did and we found ourselves in Abbey Road Studio 2... hallowed ground... The Beatles' Studio with its famous stairs up to the control room.

The place overflowed with an indescribable atmosphere, the spirits of all the great artistes and songs that had come out of that studio. They have kept the wall coverings the same so that the magic made there is trapped as long as the building stands.

My first recording in the world famous Abbey Road Studio Two was to overdub my guitar part. There was I, sitting on a chair in the middle of that huge studio with two mics to record the guitar. I don't know how I played as I was shaking so much. However I got it done and it still sounds fine. Then we recorded the vocals over two or three hours. We took the lunch break in the canteen that wasn't any different from any factory canteen... there were quite a few people who wore long white coats and a motley assortment of musicians, engineers and an artist or two.

In the afternoon, we 'tracked' our voices on the choruses to make them sound fatter. In those days, if a section was out of tune or the performance was wrong, the tape op (also known as 'tea pot') was required to hold down the play button and hit the record button to 'drop in' just before the section to be recorded and then the 'play', after the section to 'drop out'. If he clipped the end of the previous or following word, then that section had to be done again also. There was no 'Ctrl Z' or 'undo' then, what was erased was erased for good.



Listening back to vocals in the famous Abbey Road Studio 2.

At the end of the session, Gus asked us if we wanted to hear a couple of songs he'd recorded with a new artist. He played us *Take Me To The Pilot* and *Border Song* from Elton John's eponymous LP. I have to admit my first reaction was, "What the f**k is he doing with us when he's recording stuff like this?" I still have no logical explanation.

Having told my careers' officer at school that I intended to be a record producer, I asked questions, watched, listened and tried to pick up as much knowledge as I could on production. One day in the Essex Music offices, Gus asked me if I'd like to walk down to Trident Studio as he was going to show me an effect he was putting on an Elton track. Yay... another studio and more to learn. Walking down Dean Street we bumped into a jolly chap and I was introduced to him. His name was Reg. It took a couple of moments to realise that this was Gus's artist, Elton John. I said I really loved what he'd done and he explained he was on his way to a Hollies' session to play piano and add a top Harmony as no group member sang as high as the departed Graham Nash had done. He exchanged a couple of jokes with Gus.

"How much are they paying you?"

"Thirty Thiseand Poindes."

"Get ite you binder!"

These terms were often thrown around on Gus's sessions. He taught me so much; but I would never become the producer that he was.

We returned to Abbey Rod for the mixes. Tony Hall heard them and pointed out the on the opening line of each chorus of *In The City*, 'But I am dying here... The 'Here' was very clipped making us sound a but like a couple of upper class twits. So we returned to the studio and repaired those sections. Every mix then started at square one, but we were finished the same day.



Linda.



Us together in Kew Gardens February 1972.

We had been asked by a friend of David Seys if we would be prepared to participate in a mini tour of the London prisons that the Daily Mirror was organising before Christmas. It seems that the prisoners hadn't seen or heard any entertainment for years. The known artists on the show were Kathy Kirby who had once been Britain's highest paid singer, top harmonica player, Larry Adler, a comedian/compare and a band that would also be backing Ms Kirby.

We were to play Monday to Thursday in Pentonville, Wandsworth, Holloway and Wormwood Scrubs. This wasn't a warm week and every day we'd assemble to be taken by coach to the prison. There was a huge amount of security to go through just inside the gate and we would then be escorted to the hall in which we'd be playing. These were grim places. On the first day I enquired if cells were empty because many thick window panels like pavement skylights were missing.

"Oh no," said the trustee, "the inmates knock them out when it's stifling in summer and they don't get replaced."

I think it's different now.

We were introduced and opened the show. Coming out and seeing an all-man audience was daunting. There were some pretty scary looking guys down the front. We seemed to go down well and spent some time talking to warders and trustees. The sound system was surprisingly good, I thought.

The second prison was Wandsworth where executions were held. Although it had been some years since one had taken place, the abolishment of Capital Punishment had only come into law earlier in 1969. We expected the guards to resent the new law, but they were, to a man, in favour. None wanted executions any more. Larry Adler blotted his copybook that day by talking about having a "Captive audience".

I found Holloway to be the saddest place. Seeing all those women locked up seemed so unnatural. As we walked onto the stage, it sounded like The Beatles at Shea Stadium or a Bay City Rollers' concert with hundreds of girls screaming at the sight of two young blokes not in uniform.

During one of the backing band's tunes, Caravan, the drummer, a black guy who'd been touring with Sammy Davies, began a solo on mallets and it got more and more frenetic until a young black girl, got up from her chair, jumped across ten rows of seats, made it onto the stage and launched herself onto the drummer with drums, cymbals and two bodies crashing to the ground. The poor lady was pulled off the drummer and taken away. The unfortunate drummer, collected his kit, put it back together and the show carried on.

The last show was in the Scrubs and, as usual, the front rows boasted the guys with the most menacing looks. I asked a warden about this later and he explained,

"Who do you think are going to get the best seats?"

"Ah".

As it transpired, a few months later, David was in a phone box in Leicester Square when a large Jaguar pulled up and a larger gentleman got out and walked towards him. David was just about to give up the phone without argument when the giant opened the door..

"Saw you play in the Scrubs last Christmas, good on yer, mate; cheers!"

Chapter Five... **THE SEVENTIES**

It was well into 1970 when EMI at last gave us a release date for our first single: May 8th. The 'A' side would be *In The City* and we'd be on their Columbia label and, big deal, it would be a stereo single. David Seys had a few connections and we started to get some publicity... 'Rothschild goes pop' appeared more than once.

The most popular Mobile Disco company at the time, Juliana's, approached us as they sometimes used live acts to perform before the dancing started and asked if we'd like to be on their books. So, apart from the gigs we'd been doing, we had another source of work. Having a record deal and an 'up-coming single' didn't hurt either.

We received 'test pressings' of our single and I played the recordings to my family who were quite impressed'

"The seem to have spent a lot of money on you."

"Quite catchy, play it again."

And my Brother in-law,

"Turn that thing down!"

I remember this period with great warmth; there was hope, there were expectations and I think even my parents wondered if I might achieve something. Well, maybe not.

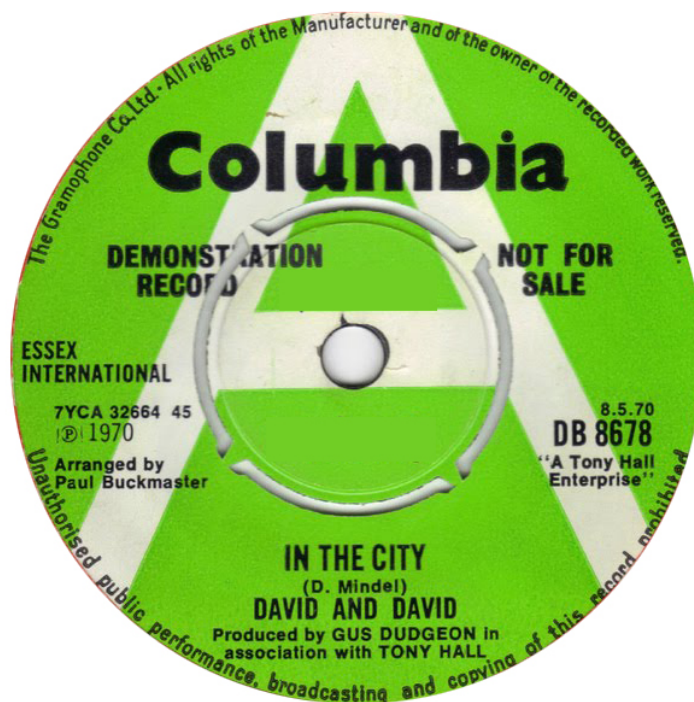
Different days. Apart from once on arrival from Geneva, I don't remember my father ever saying he loved me... or my sister. Parents didn't seem to feel the need to have to say it all the time back then and they didn't need to, we just knew. I recently dined in a restaurant with an American family. As the daughter got up to head for the loo, her father said "Love you honey"! FFS, can't she even take a return trip to the can without being reassured???

Parents never said:

"You can be anything you want to be" because they knew you couldn't. Kids today are given this unreasonable advice and have such high expectations that they leave university with some worthless degree and think that being boss of the company that probably won't even hire them is just around the corner. This brings tragic disillusion. At least my unrealistic illusions were my own. I was still five years away from what I took as a compliment from my father.

Picking up promotion copies from Noel Street was one HUGE thing off my wish list. Seeing my name on a record label. One side of a promo copy had a big A on it and Demonstration Copy, not for sale at the top. Under the titles I could see (D. Mindel) I probably did stare at that for quite a while. This was an absolute dream. These green promo copies were for TV and radio stations and the press. Tony employed a young promotion guy (plugger) called Dave Colyer and he would be servicing radio with our single.

The release date necessitated a small party and a trip to the Windsor Castle pub in Campden Hill off Notting Hill Gate, I think I probably wanted people to ask what I did and I'd present a single. Idiot!!



Definitely a bit of Pearly Spencer in there.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7wd9n6cGB8>

Dave Colyer called to say the record would be played by Tony Blackburn on his Radio1 breakfast show on the Monday and Annie Nightingale would play it as a new release on the Thursday. I remember listening and hearing this song and recording of ours on national radio for the first time. You don't forget a thing like that.

Between the two plays I was doing Soho deliveries in the cab company's jalopy and needed to cash a small cheque. I parked in Dean Street and walked into Barclays Bank and handed over the cheque. You could do that then. The gentleman teller asked me for identification, which I didn't really have as driving licences back then lacked a photo. I wondered...

"Hang on, I'll be right back"

I ran to the car and returned with a copy of that day's Evening Standard and opened it to reveal a photo of David and me sitting on a bollard in Piccadilly with the usual Rothschild Goes Pop headline. I pointed to the photo and then my name...

"See, that's me!"

I took my £5 and made my next delivery.

I was at home when Annie Nightingale played our record and, reading from the BBC press release, mentioned that we were both minicab drivers. I phoned Radio 1 and offered my services if Annie required a ride home, but I was declined. Just as well, she lived in Brighton.

The song received no more airplay disappeared into oblivion until streaming sites began listing everything and copies became available to collectors. Promo copies are currently selling at around £40 and it is available on an album someone illegally put together. The reviews were pretty good, but, overall, it has to be considered 'a stiff'.



Nice to be included with Simon and Garfunkel, Bob Dylan, Norman Greenbaum and Leonard Cohen, but 'Great' is pushing it a bit. But this was the Jewish Chronicle. Not that either of us was Jewish, However!!!

Not long after, our lease on the Beaufort Street flat was up. David Seys knew someone called Major Blockley. I don't know what his Christian name was as he insisted on being called 'Major', which is odd as it's not exactly like being a Brigadier or General. Anyway, the Major had a large house in Putney he wanted to rent out. We figured out that, with a couple of additions, we could afford it. So, some friends of Steve Wright's, Tony Vickers and Chris Langhorne, an England hockey player, joined at 27 Campion Road. A guy we knew called Peter Dick from David Seys' year at La Colline joined a bit later. Apart from the lack of heating, this was a rather fine house with a garden and I had my own bedroom at the back. I'd bought a Revox tape machine and a microphone so I could record songs there. It wasn't so easy to get into Soho, but my favourite days were when I wasn't working and I could be on my own in the house recording a new song in my bedroom. There were no fewer parties there than in Chelsea, but the house could hold more people.

We ate better here; we could produce decent meals in the large kitchen and it was warm in there. The place was even presentable enough for Lyn and me to invite my parents to dinner, I'm sure I sent the others to the 'Arab Boy', our local that evening.

My father was hugely impressed by the house and said I should try to buy it as there were enough people renting rooms to cover the mortgage. The problem was the deposit and the fact that, without a permanent job, no one would give me a mortgage and the price the Major was asking was £27,000.

Again we needed a new song for the next single and set about writing something. The Revox was stereo and two track, meaning you could record on one track and 'bounce' it across to the other track while adding another instrument and voice. Tape hiss and quality decided how many times you could do this and we'd ask whomever to listen to only the left or right hand channel. Still, we somehow managed get the basis of the song across.

Out of the blue, we were approached by an agent called Andrew Petre. He worked for quite a big company called Noel Gay Artistes. Noel Gay had been a very successful songwriter who formed a publishing company that expanded into an agency and management company. Gay's son, Richard Armitage, was at the helm and they represented some pretty impressive talent. Andrew thought

we should be doing TV, tours and concerts, which was music to our ears. Maybe we could be full-time artists rather than minicab drivers with a record deal.

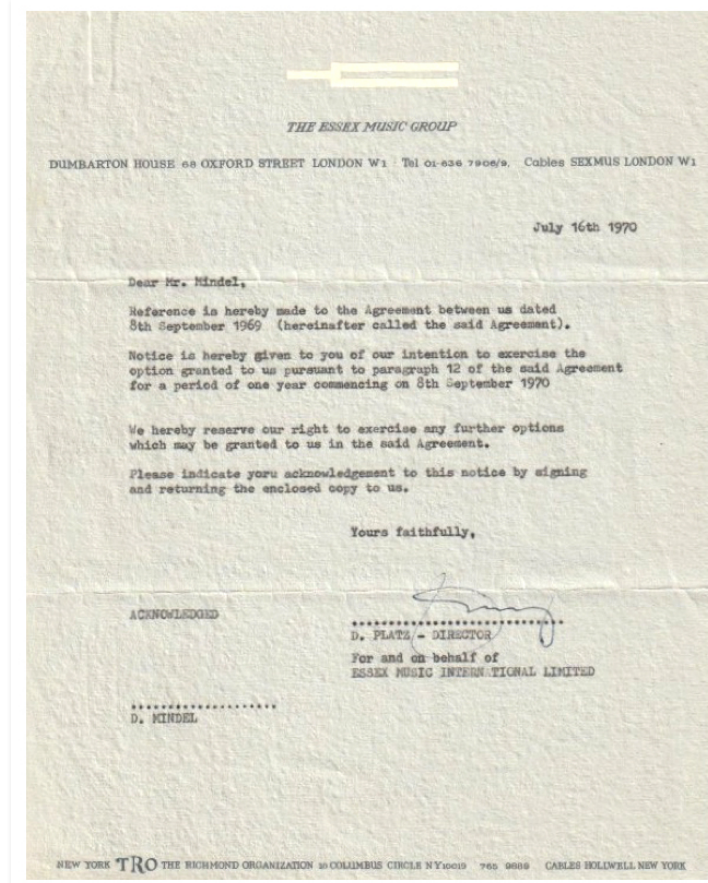
We already had a gig booked in Devon thanks to David's parents and Andrew tagged on another for an early evening show in a large club in Exeter. We were due to go on second and then disappear. There was only one dressing room and we found ourselves in there with four strippers who insisted we step outside so that they could change into their stage gear. Strange really as they then went on stage and stripped completely naked for several dozen early evening drinkers. We hardly set the place alight. I can't remember how much we were paid or even getting paid. The following afternoon we recorded an interview for TV Southwest followed by a live performance of *In The City*. We watched it played out on a TV in the station's bar by which time the place had pretty much shut down for the day.

One afternoon we took Gus some new material and there was one song that really grabbed him. I was pleased as I also liked it and it was very different from our usual 'folky' edge. It was called *The Woman I Love* with the hook being, 'The Woman I love is the woman I love' meaning the guy was faithful to just his girl. It was probably written for Lyn. Gus thought this could really be a hit, which gave us a real lift.

My parents were wondering what we were going to finish up doing, but I temporarily reassured them;

"Gus thinks this could really be the one, a hit and we trust him". And we did.

Jobs weren't exactly flowing in from Andrew, but I went to his office in late July and was introduced to Ron McCreight who ran Noel Gay Music, the publishing arm of the company. Ron said he loved our songs and if we should fall out of contract, he'd be very interested in publishing my material. I explained that, I was flattered, but Essex had just taken up their option for another year. I had received my £25 advance. Wow!



Gus told us he was talking a totally different approach to the new recording. He was using an entire rock band, Hookfoot to do the tracks and a smaller studio, the new Regent A to record it. Compared to the other Regent Sound, it was a palace.

We, as always, arrived early for the session and bumped into Rodger Bain who was just finishing up on a session and was keen for us to hear what he'd just completed. The track was called Paranoid by Black Sabbath. We were blown away once more with what would become a classic.

"That is just amazing, what a great feel... it rocks!" It still does.

Regent A was certainly smaller than anything at Abbey Road, but had a good vibe. This time there were no parts. David and I kept running the song and Gus made suggestion as did the band and so an arrangement was born. This amazing bunch of players rocked it as we sang a guide along with them so they knew not to get in the way of the vocals. 'Hookfoot' had played on a lot of DJM sessions including some for Elton John. Ian Duck on harmonica, Roger Pope, drums and David Glover on bass and the wonderful Caleb Quay on guitar recorded our track. Caleb and Roger toured with Elton for quite some time thereafter. Gus actually arranged a brass section, which was rare for him and helped on the chorus vocals.

We were pretty happy with it as were Gus and Tony, but Roy Featherstone at EMI wasn't and declined to release it. I seem to remember my singing partner phoning Roy to tell him exactly what he thought of this decision and I seem to remember phoning Roy to apologise. What next?

Tony and Gus called us to a meeting that we hoped would lead to a push for *The Woman I Love* or some other new songs. But it didn't

"Listen boys, Gus and I have been talking and, honestly, we don't think this is going anywhere."

"Tony and I agree that David M could/might have some kind of career as a songwriter, but I think you (looking at David Seys) might consider something out of the music business."

I was pretty crushed and David must have been more so, but I think he took it better than I did. We had no issue with Gus or Tony and I loved seeing them whenever our paths crossed... especially the time when Tony at last explained why he'd signed us after the initial rejection.

My parents were on holiday in Majorca and asked if I'd like to join them as they'd rented a spacious apartment so I went for a few days. After one good lunch the subject turned to my future and became quite heated with me telling them exactly what I was going to achieve and them talking sense.

When I got home, a relative of David's had got him a job in an advertising agency and he had been assigned to account handling. He seemed to like it there. In those days, agencies recruited people and actually paid them.

We hadn't made a conscious decision to stop doing gigs, but getting an agent seemed to put paid to getting live gigs. So I went to see Andrew our secret agent at Noel Gay in Denmark Street. After discussing the EMI situation and our having been dumped, I bumped into Ron McCreight their publishing head who asked if he could have a word.

"I'm sorry about your management and EMI... I don't suppose you'd consider a job?"

"A job?" "Well, what sort of job?"

"Professional manager... my guy is about to leave"

“What does a professional manager do?”

“Well, you’d be listening to songs, going to gigs (I could do that) and, hopefully be writing songs for us when your contract is up. And the big part of the job is getting our songs played on the radio.”

I wasn’t sure I liked the sound of the last bit.

“The starting salary would be £11 a week.”

I didn’t like that bit either. Even without any gigs, I’d earn that in three days or less by minicabbing.

“I can easily teach you about plugging and there are expenses.”

I quickly turned all this over in my head and coming to the conclusion I had no track record, no qualifications, no CV. I accepted and, if it worked out, a salary increase would be in place after three months. So I wasn’t going to be a star, I was going to be... er... something else.

Again, the right place, at the right time, for wrong reason.

Chapter Six... **LEARNING THE TRADE**

The following Monday morning I pitched up at 24 Denmark Street in a jacket and tie. Noel Gay was a very old fashioned company and its building had seen better days. Even the better days had seen better days. When you entered, there were two receptionists. These ladies had the old type of switchboard in which you were required to insert what looked like jack plugs across a big board to connect people. They also had a microphone with which they could alert a member of staff to an in-coming call. There was a telex machine and a Gestetner (don’t ask) for making copies. Behind reception was the accounts department and the office of a gentleman who was a kind of head of administration/finance. Ralph Walker really should have retired years before.

Richard Armitage had a large office on the first floor. Every Tuesday morning everyone would be obliged to attend a meeting there to discuss current business. RA’s chair was on a plinth so that everyone would be obliged to look up to him. Outside his office sat his P.A., a pretty, young blonde lady called Lorraine. The rest of the first and second floors were taken up with agents and their assistants.

Richard had a knack of spotting emerging talent, especially from the Cambridge Footlights Company and over the years signed David Frost, John Cleese, Emma Thompson, Stephen Fry, Hugh Laurie, Rowan Atkinson and many more. Richard managed the biggest clients and none was bigger than David Frost.

The top floor of 24 Denmark Street housed the music-publishing department. I was welcomed by Ron’s attractive assistant, Maeve, who let me know that Ron was away and that he’d left me a pile of Noel Gay’s current and upcoming releases to which I should listen. Also on this floor there was a store room and a small room with an upright piano along one wall. At the front was a decent-sized office that had been split into two extremely small ones: Ron’s and mine. Each had a turntable and Ron’s had a mono tape machine. This equipment seemed antiquated and unimpressive after 20 Noel Street or Essex Music, but there it was and we both had a great view over Denmark Street: Regent Sound right opposite, the Giaconda Coffee Bar and the Tin Pan Alley Club and inebriated musicians and publishers tottering along the street.

I was to listen to the records in Ron's office. There was a great album by Giles, Giles and Fripp, two of whom went on to be members of King Crimson. This album had been out for some time so I wouldn't need to promote it. There was an L.P. by the Big Ben Banjo Band because NGA (Noel Gay Artists) represented Geoff Love who sold a sack load of albums with different ensembles including this one and Manuel's *Music Of The Mountains*. Just up my street. Not. There were a few singles. One was an EMI release by a John Lukas, written by Noel Gays' best current songwriter, Gary Benson. Noel Gay also published songs by The Scaffold, a group that boasted Paul McCartney's brother as a member and who had had some big, novelty hits in the 60s so their new one was there and some tracks from Gary's upcoming album, most of which were pretty good. Then I was required to acquaint myself with Noel Gay's back catalogue that contained standards like, *La Vie En Rose*, *Leaning on a Lamppost*, *Me and My Girl*, *Lily The Pink* and lots of songs from my childhood like, *Run Rabbit Run*, *Hole in the Ground*, *Right Said Fred* and a whole bunch more.

Andrew Petre, our former agent introduced me to the other agents. David Wilkinson who represented John Cleese. David, Andrew and John Gaydon, who had turned down David and me, had all been in a group called Band of Angels with Manfred Man singer Mike D'Abo. I immediately took to David who later managed Cleese and made a fortune when John sold his video company for millions. I also became chums with Al Mitchell who handled several actors including Christopher Lee and Richard O'Sullivan while Andrew looked after singers: Deena Webster, Danny Williams, Gordon Waller, the less talented half of Peter and Gordon and RA's later signing, a terrific Canadian singer called Nanette Workman.

The White Lion, the pub at the end of Denmark Street was the local and lunchtimes were often spent playing darts, drinking beer and eating sausage and beans. There might be a few pints after office hours also.

When Ron came in on the Tuesday, he explained more about the job. No1 priority was getting the songs played. He would, over the next few days, take me to Egton house where he would introduce me to Radio1 producers and staff, Aeolian Hall for Radio2 and to Hertford Street for Radio Luxembourg, which was still an important station.

I've never been very good at remembering names, but I must have met over a hundred people during the next three weeks and had to remember most of them. Once I started going on my own to meet producers, sometime with an appointment, sometimes without, I got to know a lot of the other 'pluggers'. They came in all sizes and ages: Paddy Fleming who'd been doing it since sheet music was the main source of income; kids starting out; those guys who can sell anyone anything; real pros and bullshit artists and many became my friends for life. Some went on to run record and publishing companies; most eventually fell by the wayside and some are actually still doing the job.

Every record company had a promotion department with a Promotion Manager and a set of pluggers. Promotion was all these guys did and with just three radio stations, it didn't seem like a taxing job to me. The companies also had regional promotion teams so just working London didn't over-stretch them. Publishers, like Noel Gay had pluggers, but we were known as 'Professional Managers' with various other duties and even some management companies had a plugger. Starlight Artists had a young guy called Steve Elton who became a great friend and still is.

Radio One was important with some pretty untalented people having a huge amount of power over the music business. Some of the producers were ex-musicians and real gentlemen. Tim Blackmore and Bryant Marriott were unfailingly welcoming even if you were the last person they wanted to see, whereas Ron Belchier was an unpleasant bastard. Ron McCreight was pretty tight with the producer of some evening shows, Malcolm Brown, who was musical, knowledgeable and called me 'Mindels'

and was the only one who would actually buy you a drink. Jimmy Savile's producer, Ted Beston, was a complete letch despite his diminutive stature and gnome-like appearance. His show was important so many evenings were spent taking Ted to England football games at Wembley, to the Playboy Club or to where one of his 'protégées' was performing. Their talent was rarely singing, I presume it lay elsewhere.

The ultimate aim was to get a producer to go with you to lunch. You would usually avoid talking about your music hoping that, at the end of the meal, your guest would ask what you were plugging. Ron instructed me that, if the guy wanted to go on to an afternoon drinking club, I should stick with him and continue to buy drinks. Now, I can't for the life of me think of a producer who didn't drink so there could be gin and tonics, wine, brandies and then the beer during the afternoon while playing darts. I'd often get back to the office far the worse for wear. I once forgot not only the name of the song I was plugging, but the artist also.

I was also required to listen to the tapes that members of the public who were aspiring songwriters or unsigned writers sent in. I think, in 50 years I've only signed up about 4 or 5 songs. I'd then dictate a letter for each to Maeve who would send it back with the tape. Some evenings we would go to hear a band or writer. Gary Benson was a regular diner and Playboy guest as he was on the verge of really breaking as a writer.

However my favourite work evenings were spent recording demos. Depending on the writer and the material we could record two songs in a couple of hours in Regent Sound and only have a drummer to pay. Ron played some piano, his old friend, Ken Slidders would play bass, I'd add some guitar and everyone would add vocals. On most of Gary's recordings that were always, 'The best song I've ever written', the more proficient Bill Pitt would play piano and a bass player called Alan Tomes would be hired. Gary and I would probably play guitar and he'd do the lead vocal. Alan was more commonly known as 'Barney' due to his resemblance to Barney Rubble of the *Flintstones*. Ron had produced a lot of sessions and I watched everything that went on; always learning.

The lunches and dinners meant that expenses kept me fed half the time, but I soon discovered that record companies held 'receptions' for a lot of their releases, albums and even singles and the pluggers would get their mates an invitation. I made friends!!!

One of the plugging guys I really got on well with worked for Burlington Music, Decca's publishing arm. His name was Martin Kitcat and he'd been in a progressive Rock Band called Gracious. He owned a strange pre-sampler instrument called a Melotron that had tapes inside so you could choose string or brass sounds. The Moody Blues used one also.

I was learning by the day and enjoyed just about everything that came with the job except plugging; I wasn't a salesman, I never will be, yet I was picking up some radio play on very average records.

Somehow, Ron had become friendly with a wealthy Lebanese businessman called Henry Hadaway. Henry loved music and was dying to become a 'player' in the business and recognised Ron as having knowledge, contacts and integrity so clung on him like a barnacle. This was great for Ron and the company because Henry would always take Ron's advice on which songs to record (ours) and what to release... all ours. Henry had found a young singer who was popular in Malta. Meeting Ron, he was persuaded that *Can't Afford To Lose*, Gary's latest song would be ideal so it was recorded with a fairly large orchestra. This was the Jon Lukas single I found on Ron's desk on my first day. On the label, Ron and Henry Hadaway are credited as producers, but, at that time, Henry didn't know a B flat from a furnished flat.

Henry wanted this promoted as heavily as he could so, apart from the EMI promotion department, Henry was willing to spend a sizeable amount of money on the single so he and Ron went to Roy Featherstone - yes the same guy who ended the David and David career - at EMI in Manchester square. Henry had some ideas,

"What about posters?"

"They don't sell records."

"Press ads?"

"Useless!"

"TV adverts,"

"Have never worked."

Ron couldn't really understand why someone from a record company would be so dismissive of people trying to actually pay to promote an EMI release. Yet he was.

Eventually it was decided to hold a lavish reception, Quaglino's was chosen as a venue that would attract the great and the good of the press and radio and a menu for lunch was selected. Along with Ron and the EMI press department, I invited as many radio people as I could... and a few freeloading pluggers; it was only fair. A free lunch at Quaglinos obviously appealed. Andrew, John's agent hired Paul Rodrigues, a talented arranger, to book a small orchestra, sort out a repertoire of about five songs including the newly released single, and arrange a rehearsal and conduct the band on the day.

I travelled by cab to Quaglinos with Andrew and Nanette Workman (a bit of added glamour) in order to make sure all was in order there. The room filled and people started on the Champagne until the meal was served and, after the main course, the star turn was announced. The trouble was he didn't have a clue where to come in on most of the songs so we had Paul shouting, "Missed four bars!"... "Repeat eight bars" and the brilliant musicians picked up on this. Sadly, Jon really messed up his single. Poor guy was probably a decent singer and went on to be a DJ and TV personality, but he didn't impress that day. During this song while Andrew Petre was attempting to cave in his own head on a speaker cabinet, Ron Belchier came up to Ron,

"Where did you say this guy was from?"

"Well, he should fuck off back there."

He was followed closely by Henry's father who, in a very strong Lebanese accent, added,

"He's better than Tom Jones!"

Andrew beat his head on the speaker cabinet several more times.

I don't think Jon remained a Noel Gay artist but Henry stayed loyal and the single was a hit in Malta and in Lebanon. I was glad because Jon's a lovely guy.

Often I would be dispatched to Regent Sound with tapes of new songs so that acetates could be cut and sent to producers for their consideration.

Gary's album had been produced by David Paramour, nephew of the famous EMI producer Norrie who oversaw many hits including those by The Shadows. David had just replaced Tony Roberts, later head of Warner Brothers Music and Arista, as Ron's flat mate in Ewell, Surrey. David taught me more about production also. I had some good teachers. Gary's album was on Larry Page's Penny Farthing Records and it rather underperformed. That elusive 'Hit Single' wasn't on there. The unusual thing about Gary was that he had a day job working for a cigar importing business. Even when he had hits and was touring, he always dovetailed that career with his music. He still does.

Before Christmas, Lyn told me that Vogue Studios were having a party and wanted a live band. That would be us... not a band! Gary, Ron, Barney, Andrew and my new friend, Martin Kitcat, met in the local pub to discuss he repertoire. No rehearsal, just beers and a discussion.

We turned up in Hanover square to set up. The studio where we would be playing had been magnificently decorated. We were pretty dreadful, especially on Hey Jude, but I guess we were concentrating more on all the gorgeous models gyrating around than our performance. Someone fired up the disco earlier than was anticipated and that was our sign. Still, we didn't rush to leave; the scenery was too enticing.

Ron and I went up to Coventry for the Elton John Christmas concert, which showed what a great performer he was also. Most of Hookfoot were backing him. Ron introduced me to Ray Williams, not only Elton's manager, but the guy who put him together with Bernie Taupin, sourced them the record deal with DJM and took them to the States. Ray is still one of my favourite people.

The Noel Gay Music Christmas parties were far from lavish (squalid might be a better description). The offices were tatty and there was little in the way of food, but there was plenty of alcohol and the store cupboard saw quite a lot of action. There was certainly a lot of behavior that couldn't be allowed to happen today. I do believe Maeve might have been involved.

The day after my first of these events, I was listening to Radio One early the next day when Tony Blackburn, top Radio1 DJ came on.

"At this time of year, people tend to take advantage of you"... He didn't sound at all well.

I hadn't much time to write songs, Noel Gay was a pretty full on job. The place was infested with memos, done in triplicate and sent to relevant members of staff. Mine usually came from my nemesis, Ralph Walker, or his assistant (and possible object of his desires) Mrs. Hickey. The memos I received were usually about my expenses that did take some considerable creative ability to fill in and my tardiness in getting to work. We were actually required to sign in every morning. My favourite memo started, 'Would you care to explain why, when we have an account with perfectly reliable messenger service, did you deem it necessary to hire a cab at extra expense?'

I replied,

'I did indeed consider booking a bike and the keyboard player might have fitted on it, but I'm pretty sure that the drummer with his entire kit would not have. It won't happen again.'

In January, Ron and Andrew drove to Cannes for an event called MIDEM, basically a music market. I certainly envied them the trip and was given a list of what material I should get together for them to take. I know they worked hard there, but came back with stories of enormous jollity. Jealous? Hell, yeah; it was France and on the Côte d'Azur!

The hours we were working were extremely long, if enjoyable. We used to go to a lot of gigs, take people to dinner, the Playboy club or a sports event and rarely get home before midnight. One evening, Ted (the letch) Beston wanted us to go to a pub near Oxford to hear a brilliant singer he'd found. What we did for some radio play!! Neither the girl nor Ted was in the pub when we arrived and we suspected what they were up to so grabbed a bite while awaiting their arrival. When they appeared, this girl was no beauty so we presumed she was an amazing talent. In the back of the pub a 'Folk' evening was taking place: lots of dodgy singers performing with one finger inserted in an ear, one foot on a chair and someone else strumming an acoustic guitar. Painful, but that's where she would be doing her 'turn'.

In the break, Ron went up to enquire of the organiser what time Ted's girl was going on.

"I'm not sure we can fit her in tonight."

Ron grabbed him by the lapels...

"Look, we've driven for two hours to get here, have ben listening to this crap for an hour and a half and she's going on... get it?"

Sadly, he did; she sang and was atrocious.

On the way home, my car overheated; I had to find a stream to enable me to top up the radiator with water from a plastic bottle and, after dropping Ted home in Bromley, got home at 5am.

I arrived at my desk at 10am to find a memo for Ralph Walker, 'It has come to my attention that you were yet again the last to arrive for work'.

'Fuck right off' would have been my preferred reply, but my explanation was more polite. Ralph Walker left the office for home at 5:30pm every day!

One evening I took Lyn to see The King's Singers, a Noel Gay act at the Festival Hall. Later that evening she broke it to me that she had been with me since she was 18 and now needed to spread her wings and meet other people. I was devastated and soon found that the first 'other person' was an assistant at Vogue. I'm sure I would have married Lyn, but it was not to be, but she was a great girl and is now a great lady and I am friends with her, as I am with Jeannette. But that was a bad moment.

The period that followed wasn't easy. I very much missed Lyn, was worried about money and even defaulted on rent once and so was given a bollocking by Major Blockley and found myself with a sense of humour failure. Noel Gay agent, Al Mitchell, was a great support and I appreciated it, but, after a big event, I found myself passing blood. I was sent to a specialist and after some very unpleasant tests the doctor told me that I had colitis, which is often caused by worry and stress along with a poor diet. This could progress into an ulcer and, eventually, even to cancer.

I decided there and then that, if worrying can make you ill, then I wouldn't do it and since then haven't... managing to completely put those thoughts out of my head. I'm lucky... and I increased the fibre in my diet.

Noel Gay wasn't to generous with holidays so I didn't get away that year. RA held an event at Stebbing, his country house, every summer that involved a cricket match with celebs v the local team followed by dinner and a cabaret of his new signings. I was the lowest in the food chain at Noel Gay so never got an invitation until way after I left.

No one ever thinks their boss knows how to run the company properly. I knew the salaries were very poor, but I also felt that charging artist for letters, stamps and telexes on top of their agency percentage was petty, but not for me to say. If Ron was away it fell on me, during the Tuesday morning meeting, to give progress or lack of it on the music product we'd just signed, made or had released. Ron however, was a great boss and working for him was pretty straightforward, but I was still a lousy plugger.

One place I didn't mind plugging was radio Luxembourg. The programme director, Ken Evans, was the nicest human being you could meet. I'd go in to a cheery greeting and then play him my crappy record and he'd say, "Well, I'm not sure it's a hit, but how about we put it in for 8pm on Tuesday next and 10 20 on Friday?" What a lovely guy!

Anything I'd written I held back until I was out of my Essex Music contract in July and could publish through Noel Gay. Richard Armitage had his great friend, Norman Newell, produce Nanette's first UK single. Norman was a lovely guy and superb lyricist, but just wrong for Nanette who really was a raunchy rock singer... or should have been whereas Norman was a very M.O.R producer. However, she was booked to sing live on a Sunday afternoon Radio2 show: her single and another song. I had played Ron a home-made demo I'd done on my Revox that he really liked so we had some acetates cut at Regent. I was, however, surprised to hear Ron play Nanette my song and also that she liked it and agreed to perform it on that show. *So Let Him Go Home* became my first ever song to be performed by another artist although Nanette has no recollection of doing it. Or of me. Not only was that my first performed song by someone else, but an American producer called Donny Marchand was listening to the show and, the following morning, called Ron saying he'd like to record the song with with his band Palk Salad and this became my first 'cover version' to be released. It was on the Philips label. I liked this.



Two more things off my bucket list.

Nanette's next single was produced by Herbie Flowers, the legendary bass player of *Walk On The Wild Side* fame. It was a song he'd written with Cook and Greenaway and I dutifully pitched up at Chappell Studios with Nanette for the session. It was my job simply to appear enthusiastic and I was, learning more about production and visiting more studios. I was also enlisted to add some backing vocals. How can Nanette not remember me?

Richard Armitage had two sons at Eton College: Charles and his younger brother, Alex, who was then still in short trousers and had a bad stammer. In the school holidays, they would come in and one of them might sit in my office asking questions. I took it they were either spying on me or learning the business for when they took over. Or both.

Through Martin Kitcat, I had met a lot of his friends from Surrey where he grew up. When Martin left Burlington for April Music, one of them, Mike Read, inherited Martin's job. I helped to show him the ropes at Radio's One and Two. Another was David Ballantyne who'd had a turntable hit in the 60s with *Love Around The World* and was also an actor and very good guitarist. He and Mike did a few acoustic gigs and when one wasn't about, I'd sometimes 'dep' at a Richmond or Twickenham riverside pub. It was nice to play again, even if people weren't listening. I think we earned a fiver a time.

One day, David Ballantine, Mike Read and I sat down to play and came up with a Rock 'n' Roll song called *Should Have Stayed with Mary*. A couple of weeks later I joined them at R.G. Jones' studio in Wimbledon where the two of them plus their friend Bill Heath were going to record this ditty with another song the three of them had written. I booked Bernie to play bass. On drums was the terrific Rick Parnell of Atomic Rooster who went on to be the drummer who spontaneously combusted in Spinal Tap. When Spinal Tap toured, Rick was brought back as his own twin brother. He may have spontaneously combusted again.

The track of the other song, *Crazy, Crazy* was sounding great with David Ballantyne on lead vocal and lead guitar. R.G. Jones was a good studio with a great young engineer, Gerry Kitchingham who went on to record a ton of hits including a-ha's *Take on Me* and a bag-full of Cliff Richard recordings. However, the equipment wasn't exactly 'State of the Art' with only four tracks available and rotary faders on the mixer. I helped out with some ideas and backing vocals and, because of the lack of tracks, we added some cowbell, lead guitar and BV's as the mix was going down, giving us the equivalent of five track with the last forever unavailable to hear on its own. If we made a mistake, we started all over again. This 'additional track' didn't really exist, only the four and the mix.

The discussion after lunch was mainly about credits. I was offered the 'Producer' role that I happily accepted as it would be my first credit as such and would prove my careers master (and to a degree, my parents) wrong. The songwriters were listed as: Heath, Read and Ballantine for the 'A' side and Read, Ballantine and Mindel for the 'B'.

I took a tape back to Noel Gay. Ron really liked it, made an appointment to see Hugh Grundy (ex 'Zombie') who was an A&R manager at CBS Records and they did a deal on the spot to release *Crazy Crazy* with a £500 advance. I think it still sounds good for its day.

Hear it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9lfQl63YA4I>



This band photo Mike Read, Barney and David Ballantyne.

I had never approached Gary Benson about writing together because, well, he was the star writer and I was a lowly plugger, but I think, because of the songs I'd had released, he suggested we stay on one evening in Denmark Street and see how we got on. We seemed to be a good fit and some decent songs came out of our collaborations over the next few months. By this time, Cliff Cooper, manufacturer of Orange amplifiers, had opened a basement studio in New Compton Street that lacked the egg box walls and smell of damp that Regent boasted; so Orange Studios was now where we'd record demos.

As a dumpee, I had more time on my hands and despite long hours at work, weekends were generally free. David Ballantine, Mike Read and I had been playing some pretty good new material and decided we might actually record some with a part of the advance we'd got from CBS. David Ballantyne and I would do rough demos of our songs on the Revox in my bedroom in Putney.

At the end of 1971 a lady called from 'Shelter, the charity for the homeless and asked if it would be possible to have a song especially written for the charity. George Harrison's *Bangla Desh* was in the charts and is acknowledged as being the first charity single and the Shelter lady wanted the second. I immediately wrote a song called *Roof Above Our Head*.

David Seys wanted to record again and liked a song I'd penned called *Only Friends* and I'd found two songs that sounded like hits to me: *I Need You My Friend* and a catchy novelty song called *Honeybunch*. Somehow I managed to record all four titles on one session. Bill Pitt, our keyboard player, had ambitions to be an arranger so I let him loose on all of them. We recorded the strings at Majestic Studios, a old cinema, in Clapham. David Seys dropped by, as did my parents on the way to somewhere to see me actually being a producer. My mother described the strings as being "Scratchy."

David Ballantine sang *Roof Above Our Head* with a choir of mutual chums who went under the name of Solitude. Barney sang *Honeybunch* and a plugger called Dave Hunter who had a great voice, sang *I need You My Friend* under the name of Spoof. David Seys picked the artist name of Hobbit. When David was putting his vocal on his 'B' side, *Everything's Turning Out Fine*, his voice kept cracking on a high note and Gary got onto the foldback button with some irony:

"Oh come on Elton!"

And that's how it came to pass; David became Elton to all except his family from that moment until now. So when I mention 'Elton', you know to whom I'm referring.

This is his Hobbit single: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4PwF2xvnoA>

No one in today's music business would believe that, late at night after mixing the Shelter song I left a tape in the letterbox at EMI Records in Manchester Square for Duncan Johnson in the A&R department. By the time I got to work the next day, there was a message saying Duncan would release it and shortly thereafter, Barney was placed with Phillips, Spoof with Decca and Ron placed the Hobbit single with Henry Hadaway's new label, Satril. Four songs recorded, four record deals done. Now I only had to record some 'B' sides, done mainly on free time offered by new studios. I wrote a couple, one was with Bill Pitt and one was a song by a Noel Gay licenced writer, done so that Ron could prolong her contract. She wasn't very impressed by our version.

"This is more like a X or a Z side."

Some gratitude!

And the insane Barney cut. As you see, it was released by RCA in Australia.

<https://youtu.be/arg1mu-TDQ4>

On the Barney flip, *Please Don't Drink My Wine*, I appear to be doing the lead vocal also. Don't ask why... perhaps it was a demo I'd recorded earlier. Either way, it's pretty dreadful.

Elton's Hobbit single gained quite a lot of Radio1 plays, but was not Henry Hadaway's first on Satril; that honour falls to a group that wasn't a group taking the place of another group. Henry had, according to him, discovered a brilliant duo called Black and White. As usual a Noel Gay song, *I Need Your Love* written by Hugo Pattison was selected. Henry (or Ron) had Paul Rodriguez orchestrate once again for a large ensemble and Advision studios had been booked. They had 16 tracks. Wow!

The White Lion, our pub at the end of Denmark Street included a very nice restaurant above and the head waiter, Joe, would cook a very decent Steak Diane at the table. Ron had booked lunch for himself, Henry and me early enough for us to get to Advision in plenty of time. Henry called to say his second in command would join us as he would be going through the song with Black and White.

The three of us had a good lunch and chatted about the business in general, but when Ron called for the bill, Henry's man disclosed in a very strong Lebanese accent, "Oh, by the way, Black and White, they are not coming!"

"What?!?!"

"I think they had a disagreement with Henry; they don't come."

"And you're only telling us now???"

The vocals were due to be added to the track that afternoon and the whole thing finished by the evening. Now there was no artist.

On arrival at Advision, Henry appeared to have no idea what to do. Ron took over and, once he had a good take of the track, he decided to do the lead vocal himself and we'd then double up on backing vocals. We left without mixing and later replaced Ron with David Ballantine, again taking lead vocal duty. Henry was happy with the result; all he needed was a 'B' side. He actually chose a song that Gary and I had written called *Sunshine In The Morning*. It was a demo on which Gary and I shared lead vocals and I played electric guitar, which was rare for me, but Henry said it as ideal as it was only a 'B' side. And so this was Satril Records' first release Sat1 under the (different) group name of Bollard (Middle of the road music, I guess) with the production credit laughably going to Henry for both sides.



Please remember this was only our demo.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WvECB8OY8E>

Ron introduced Henry to the partners at Boot Records from Canada who agreed a deal to put out Satril material in their territory. *I Need Your Love* was released, but some DJ's flipped the single so Boot did the same and, to everyone's surprise *Sunshine In The Morning* became my first (minor) hit record. Tick on Bucket List.

Campion Road was a happy place until someone left and we advertised for a new flat mate. One evening I got home and Steve Wright introduced me to the chosen candidate, Thomas Tobin. It took me ten seconds to recognise that he was a 'wrong 'un'. Within a couple of months he was seen beating the shit out of someone outside The Arab Boy and was asked to leave, he did, but returned the next day to take a few valuables and my cherished Gibson Hummingbird and another guitar. That night, Steve Wright and I drove to some of his haunts in Wandsworth but nobody admitted to having seen him. Probably saved us a lot of trouble... and a beating .

The following day we were interviewed by a Sergeant Constable and a Constable Beaver... yes really! Tobin was eventually caught and charged, but that's another story.

On relaying the sad tale at work, Liz Chrisopher, David Wilkinson's P.A. said she was looking for somewhere and so she moved in. She was not only lovely to look at, but cooked, cleaned and generally mothered us. Every Saturday evening, after closing time we'd wait for Tony Vickers to get home. We'd regularly peer through the curtains until we'd see his ancient Ford Cortina parked with its lights on. We'd go out and drag his slumbering body off the steering wheel and help him to bed. It later transpired that Tony suffered from Narcolepsy. I guess he stayed awake while driving, but the relief of getting home relaxed him. Not that he hadn't drunk a pint or four.

Tony worked for BEA, later to become British Airways. Computers were in their early days and Tony was a programmer on a fairly modest salary. A couple of years later he left with a colleague to set up an agency hiring out computer people, spookily called 'Computer People'. A little over ten years later he owned a detached house on the Thames in Teddington with a launch moored at the rear and a white Rolls Royce Corniche convertible parked at the front. He also owned a house at Redondo Beach, California with a yacht at the rear and similar Roller at the front. I recently wrote him a song for his 70th birthday celebrations cheerfully titled, *It Won't Get Any Better*.

Ballantyne, Read and I coerced Bill Pitt, Barney and Andrew Petre who was the drummer for the 'Band of Angels' into coming down to Surrey to rehearse a few of the songs we'd written in the hope that we'd sound something like a band. The Beatles, we weren't, but we didn't sound too bad and, after a few Sunday sessions, we booked Majestic Studios as it was well equipped, affordable and we thought their eight-track facility would be enough. We went in and recorded five or six songs with care, but not a surfeit of time. When done, I sent them to my old mentor, Gus Dudgeon, who said he liked the songs, but they sounded like good demos and needed to be 'finished'.

My father was still determined that I get on the property ladder so I became even more frugal and creative with my expenses. If more than one plugger took out a producer or artiste, we'd split the bill, but ask for a copy each! Legendary plugger and later football agent, Eric Hall, once claimed for 6 lunches in a five-day week. It was once announced that his expenses had gone Platinum.

At the house we kept a sheet of paper in the kitchen on which we would each note down what we'd spent on food and household necessities; at the end of the week we'd work out who owed whom. During a rent-collecting visit, Major Blockley discovered this and, as there were more names on the paper than people allowed (I can't remember how many), I stepped down as Champion Road was also a fair journey from town especially after a long day's work. Blockley wanted more of us to leave until Steve Wright asked him if he paid tax on the income. The status quo thus remained; good call!

Elton's house was paid for and he kindly let me stay there. I don't remember paying rent. The exterior was also being filmed for episodes of *The Persuaders* as Lord Brett Sinclair's London mews house. In the programme, the interior was about six times the size of the real one, which was absolutely tiny, but it was in a pretty mews off the Cromwell Road. The filming days paid Elton pretty well.

I started looking for somewhere to buy with a spare room I could rent out. The advances from the four singles had brought in some cash and Andrew Petre got me a gig one Sunday in Croydon backing a very old-fashioned Country Duo from Wales called Miki and Griff. I think Miki was the husband and on shaking my hand, handed me a pile of chord charts. I started strumming along with their first song and realised that no parts were necessary. You could hear where all the songs were going.

Before the encore, Miki announced, "And I'd like to thank, on guitar" ... Walked up to me...

"What's your name again?"

"David"

"David" ... small ripple. I was paid £15... a week's wages.

Noel Gay was to publish the songs that the new 'ensemble' had written. Ron and Andrew shared my opinion that one track stood out. David and I had originally done a demo of it in my bedroom in Putney. The song has a two-acoustic guitar intro and then Andrew and Barney joined in. Andrew played his early part on toms only and it worked. There was no piano, but an excellent guitar solo from David B. He and I shared lead vocals, mine low and double tracked, his higher and powerful. We decided we'd like to do some work on this, but it would cost! By chance and great luck, Orange had built its own one-inch 16-track machine. Most 16 track machines were 2" so our 8 tracks would have needed to be transferred to 2" and anything added would be done at an expensive studio, but with the Orange Machine, you could play the eight tracks you'd recorded and add 8 more 'in the gaps'. This was unique.

I was looking for something outrageous and original. Bill brought in his friends and relations who played a mostly 'chordy' string part. It worked, but I wanted more so Bill went off to write a second string part. Phil Spector lived on.

Meanwhile I received a call:

"Hi Dave, it's Mick (Read). I'm sorry man, but I'm having girlfriend problems and my head isn't together at the moment so I'm leaving the band (we were a band?) you'll have to do the tracks without me, sorry."

So, with more tracks available, I was able to replace both acoustic guitars, Mike's and mine. We used session guys for Bill's next string session as it was rather more complicated. I thought it sounded great and worked even with the first string section kept in. I'd asked Bill to double the guitar solo with violins and I now asked his wife, Helen, to sing the same thing in a soprano range. Why not go way over the top? It was nearly there.

I booked Orange for an evening's mixing. I liked the mix, but wanted one more thing, phasing (even more over the top). The analogue phaser did not cut it so we took the mix we liked and loaded it onto a quarter inch machine. Dave Humphries and his assistant mixed the track again while I started the quarter inch tape to be in synch after the count in. When it was, I gently touched the spool on the first master until there was a phasing effect, then I did the same with the one inch spool until it was completely synched and then slowed enough to flange again. We used this 'braking' system on the intro, the guitar solo and fade. If the track sounded 'doubled, we had to start again. Eventually, after about fifty attempts, and early in the morning, we got the desired effect. A totally over-produced single.

The next day, a Saturday, I was recovering from the long session. The phone rang. I ignored it and ignored it again. On the fourth time, I answered it. It was Elton who had been called in to work.

"Why didn't you answer?"

"I'm asleep."

"Well wake up!"

"Give me a break, I had a really late night."

"No, we have to do a jingle."

"We don't do jingles."

"Well we do now; we're about to lose the Carnation Milk account and can't get hold of any jingle companies and I said we could do it... and before Monday."

"Are you crazy?"

One thing I'll say about Mr. Seys, he was always very persuasive. I could have spent the rest of the day arguing, but I'd still lose.

"And the agency will pay for the demo."

"That's novel."

And so I got on the phone, booked Orange, Bill and a motley bunch of musicians and a couple of singers for the following afternoon. Elton returned to the house with the script. The intended camera shots were typed down the right hand side and the words (copy) down the left.

We kept playing around with it until we liked our melody, mostly Elton's. I was informed that the maximum length for a thirty-second TV ad was twenty-eight and a half seconds of sound to synch to film with a second's silence at the top and a half second the end and so we made sure everything fitted. The following day we recorded the tune with a ton of harmonies on the 'chorus' and mixed the thing and on Monday we both returned to work

Late that day Elton phoned to say that the agency had loved our track, played it in the client meeting and they'd loved it too so we'd saved the day, the agency kept a big client and we would receive a big, fat fee. I liked that bit. People PAYING us to write and record music. What a concept!

I was surprised to receive a phone call from Sergeant Constable about my stolen guitars. They'd caught Tobin and wanted me to be a witness. The trial was pure comedy. Thomas Tobin had been arrested, wearing rubber gloves, climbing over a wall into someone's garden. He explained to the court that he'd been walking home when he was 'caught short' so decided to climb over a wall into a garden and had put on the gloves he'd bought his wife for washing up as he didn't have toilet paper.

I was called as a witness and handed papers and was asked to confirm that this was the statement I'd made and signed, but it was neither my statement nor my signature, just lazy police work. It stated there were three guitars stolen rather than two, but I didn't want Tobin to get away with this so agreed it was mine. When it was read out, Tobin called over his barrister who then asked me:

"How many guitars were taken?"

"Two."

"It says three."

"I think the constable must have misheard me and I didn't notice when I signed. But if your client didn't take any guitars, how would he know how many were taken?"

I was accused of being a hostile witness (I was beyond hostile), stepped down, didn't hang around, but was assured, "The bastard is going down... again."

I presume he did.

Meanwhile, an agent had shown me a house; it was love at first sight. I wasn't looking for a house, just a flat, plus it was far too expensive at £18,000, but my parents asked to see it. They loved it, thought I should try to buy and my father was hugely generous in helping with the deposit... he was proved so right about the 'property ladder', though. The owner accepted £17,500 and I set about getting a mortgage and endowment policy.

Ron had been to see Dennis Burger at DJM with our 'masterpiece' and came back with a deal and satisfaction with the great enthusiasm shown by the label for the song. Dennis had lots of ideas and came up with the group name Esprit de Corps which hardly anyone could pronounce, but we accepted that. I took this master and a mix of a song I'd written with David Ballantyne (the 'B' side) to George (Porky) Peckham's place where he cut the masters.

One hiccup was that even before the release on October 13th (1972), David Ballantyne had accepted a booking with a covers band for the whole winter in Switzerland. Without aiming to perform live, we replaced him with a good-looking young singer called Paul Osborne for photos and publicity shots.

The Friday before release, Dennis Berger called to say that our record of '*If (Would It Turn Out Wrong)*' had been selected as Tony Blackburn's 'Record of the Week' on his Radio 1 breakfast show. There was no bigger deal than that on Britain's most important station and meant a play every day. I listened in bed on the Monday to hear him call it 'sensational' and talk about the phasing. What a start. The following day, Dennis phoned to say we'd been booked on *Top of The Pops* to go out that Thursday. I said he must have confused it with *Pick Of The Pops*, Alan Freeman's radio show as *TOTP's* only played chart records. He said that Robin Nash, the producer, had heard the song on Radio 1, really loved it and had told his staff that he was booking us, chart position or not. We couldn't believe it. That bucket list was shrinking.

The show was recorded at BBC TV Centre on the Wednesday, but, before that, we had to, under MU rules, re-record the track and Dennis booked Pye Studios for the following evening. Monday night was spent learning the guitar solo that really was beyond me, but I learned it note for note. By the time we got to Pye, Paul had learned the second acoustic part and the track went down easily. The guitar solo was a lengthier progress and, because my vocal had been double tracked, I was permitted to record one, then sing the other part live. Oooer! There was some bod there from the BBC who took away the tape. What I later discovered was that for most *Top Of The Pops* pre-recordings, at the last minute, a record company person will switch the new recording with the original track while the BBC person was being distracted. Damn; wish we'd known.

Mike Read called me,

"Hey man, I hear you're doing *Top Of The Pops*, can I join you?"

"Sorry, Mike, you left, plus we're already given them names and details."

"But I think I'd look good on there!"

"Sorry."

Cliff Cooper's wife owned Rhodes Music in Denmark Street and she kindly lent me a very nice Gibson Les Paul Junior for the session and TV show. Andrew picked me up in his minivan and we drove to the BBC TV Centre in Wood Lane and unloaded the gear and carried it to the studio. Producer, Robin Nash came up to me with Mike Read and another man.

"Hello dear boy, this chap says he's in the band and this fellow is from the Daily Express."

Daily Express man started,

"Mr. Read here says he's a member of the band and played and sang on this song and it's most unfair and wrong that he's not included in this broadcast."

"I'm sorry, but I'm the writer and producer of this record and Mike left the group so we replaced his performances and he's nowhere on the single."

Andrew backed me up.

"Oh, how embarrassing, I'm so sorry for this."

"Thank you, dear boy, now carry on!"

They left

"Thanks"

What a lovely gentleman Robin was and, as many of you know, Mike Read went on to present *Top Of The Pops* many, many times along with other programmers. When I next saw him, he came right over.

"Sorry man, my head wasn't together at the time; girl problems."

"No worries".

Back in TV Centre we were shown to a dressing room and at a certain time taken to the rehearsal.

Andrew's drums had been set up with a rubber pad on the snare drum and fake, plastic cymbals; Bill played a piano although there was none on the recording; it didn't make any sound and we were not permitted to move it an inch as it wasn't an MU piano! Johnny Pearson's orchestra played the string parts, Paul and I sang live and after a couple of runs through we left. We thanked the orchestra and one of the fiddle players called out "You'll be back, see you then." That made us feel good.

We retired for some interviews, photos and lunch. The programme was recorded with an audience in the evening and I don't think any of us felt any nerves; actually we thought TV was the perfect medium for us! After a trip to the make-up department we played our slot and watched Pan's People, the resident dancers. Everybody did. We were actually allowed into the hallowed BBC bar and after a couple of beers headed home. For the later *Top Of The Pops* recordings, artistes had entourages of managers, press people, assistants and flunkies. We just pitched up in the van and on the tube.



And the song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nb1u6YOzuUA>

The next day, I went back to plugging. The group was booked for the following week on a kid's TV show called *'Lift Off'* and in the evening I watched *TOTP's* at home at David's house. Sadly, the BBC erased that show, but we seemed OK and my dad actually called to say "You didn't disgrace yourselves", which was quite a compliment coming from him. My mother did tell me, though that he'd told everyone he knew that I'd be on the show.

The sales of the single were going up fast and we were sent to present some T-shirts to the employees at the Pye factory and see our single being pressed. We then posed for some photos and headed back to town. My fellow pluggers were very supportive, some actually talking about the record to producers after selling their own product. I was at Radio1 the day before travelling on the train to Manchester for *Lift-Off* and seeing some producers when Malcolm Brown beckoned me into his office.

"I'm sorry, Mindels, but Doreen (Davies-exec producer) has banned your record"

"What????? Why???"

"Well you saw the two exposés in the News Of The World about Radio producers and payola, well, Doreen thinks that, as we all know you, that this looks like 'favours for the boys' so, although it's not 'officially' banned, we've been instructed not to play it, sorry."

We should have had two Radio1 plays the next day so we listened on the train, but neither happened.

When we got back from Manchester, I popped into the pub for a last pint, pretty deflated; the record was gong to be a hit; now it wasn't. Out of the blue a guy walked up to me and started talking.

"You was on the telly last week weren't ya?!"

"Erm, yes I was, actually."

"*Top Of The Pops.*"

"Yes."

"Group with a funny name,"

"*Esprit de Corps.*"

"That's the one... singing and playing guitar."

"Yes".

"Thought so... shit weren't ya?"

Back down to Earth. A memo from Ralph Walker was on my desk,

'Would you please not add to the title of songs by using brackets, it makes registering them most complicated' so my next five compositions used brackets, the first being, *'Do You Remember Me, (Like I Remember You)?'*

As it happened, Doreen probably did me a favour. If we'd had a huge hit, we may have toured the band and I'd now be a retired road sweeper. I did stay friendly with Doreen and saw her quite regularly socially at Dave Mackay's house.

Chapter Seven... **HOME**

In November I moved into my 'own home' and loved it to bits. As soon as I could buy a sofa, Andrew Petre moved into the spare room and this helped pay the mortgage. The house was a simple two up/one down railway cottage in a cul-de-sac in Mortlake. There was a lady down the road who still paid the controlled rent of 53p a week! There was a cemetery opposed and just a church at the end of the road so this place was relatively peaceful; as peaceful as living under the Heathrow flight path can be. I was beyond house proud and even insisted on Andrew removing his muddy boots before stepping onto the living room carpet as you entered directly through the front door into the living room.



7 Worple Street.

This Mortlake area became known as 'Little Chelsea' to help sell properties. Former Apple records plugger, Tony Bramwell, announced that as we were now 'neighbours' I could give him a lift to work. He was now at Polydor and I'd drop him in Stratford Place off Oxford Street. Promoting Beatles and Beatle produced product must have been a tough job and Tony readily admitted to "Just giving away records to Radio1". I'd dropped into Apple quite a few times for a game of darts. Polydor had a lot of acts then and quite a notorious promotion department.

For those who don't know Barnes, which is joined to Mortlake, it's eight miles from central London and was a watering stop for horses pulling carriages on their way westward. Despite its proximity to the city, Barnes had a village feel, with a duck pond, the pub opposite, Barnes Common, a cricket club, lots of independent food shops and no tube station so that kept out a lot of trouble.

The Sun Inn opposite the pond was our Saturday lunchtime haunt with its bowls club behind. The landlord, John Fisher, became a friend as did staff members and regulars, many of whom were in the music business.

Many Sundays were spent with Andrew, Tony and fellow pluggers, Joey Reddington, Allan James and Chris Webb playing darts in the Edinburgh Castle near my house. At closing time (pubs did close for the afternoon then), we'd take a case of Don Cortez red wine (awful) back to someone's house to accompany a Sunday roast. The day ended with the guys playing poker and the girlfriends and me playing strip poker dice... much more fun.

Gary and I had been writing every week and had started to get more covers. I had another Esprit de Corps single to produce and had signed our singer, Paul, to a three single deal with DJM. I was still plugging, but was writing and producing so was pretty happy that I'd achieved some of my aims. On top of this, Ron had been asked by a friend of Richard Armitage's to write the British column for his new US magazine, *Record World*. This brought in a lot of invitations to lavish album launches and if there were two on the same evening or Ron couldn't go, I'd take his place. If he was away, I'd write the column.



This is the Record World launch party.

L-R Andrew Lloyd-Webber, me, a cutie, Mike Read, John Dummer (slightly hidden), Tim Rice.

Then my father had his second heart attack. A few days later, a Saturday, I was called by my sister to go to the hospital in Hampstead as the doctors were getting concerned. I arrived to find my father in distress having difficulty in breathing. His lungs were filling and his heart wasn't strong enough to help clear them. Unbeknown to me, Maxwell, my brother in law, had managed to get the phone number of the Queen's doctor, had phoned and actually persuaded him to see my father on this Saturday night. He suggested that we went to get something to eat for an hour or so.

When we returned my father was a different man. This highly respected physician had ordered the hospital doctor to give my father a huge dose of Cortisone.

"But that can be very dangerous and cause organ damage" protested the hospital doc.

"Well, if you don't give it to him, he'll be dead by the morning so is there really a lot to lose?"

So my dad got the Cortisone and the effect was almost immediate.

"Fancy a Scotch?" said the great man to my father.

"Can I do that?"

The family saviour brought over a mirror and said,

"See... does this really look like a dying man?"

I can't say my father was ever in great health after that, but we still had him around.

In the autumn I'd taken some time to record two new tracks with Esprit de Corps: *Lonely* and *Do You Remember Me (Like I Remember you)*. The latter was a song that David and David used to perform.

With the record company paying, we recorded at Morgan Studios, which was very popular at the time. This was the first of many projects done there. The place was owned by four partners, one being session drummer, Barry Morgan, after whom it was named. Our first engineer was Robin Black, but Roger Quested took over and we worked together thereafter on many occasions. Both songs were carried by a big string arrangement with three of us taking the vocals. Really, I should have done less!!! We missed David Ballantine's rock voice and guitar playing. I was quite happy with them, but they weren't as good as 'If'.

This is 'Do You Remember Me' with the same format as 'If':
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sA1Q2GimwVM>

What had become clear after my split with Lyn was that the world had changed. Girls no longer waited to be asked out by men and some were positively predatory, not that I was complaining, but it was an eye opener. Mind you, most women I wanted to go out with turned me down flat.

Ron had decided that, although MIDEM with Andrew was fun, an agent had little to achieve there so the two of us might work it better. I didn't need to be asked twice as I was still in love with France and to go to the sun in the middle of January seemed a perfect plan. I'd crossed Denmark Street countless times to get acetates cut in order to send songs to producers, A&R people and artistes, but we needed a large amount to take with us.

We flew down and arrived in Cannes on a beautiful, sunny afternoon. We booked into our room in the then rather jaded Mondial Hotel and went out for a drink and dinner and bumped into a great character whom Ron knew called Ziggy Jackson. Ziggy invited us to a party and all I remember is there was a girl in a green, hooped top, whom we nicknamed Celtic and then spending part of the night with my head in the toilet. Well, it was my first MIDEM

Early the next morning, we registered, collected our silly badges and 'MIDEM Guide' that contained everyone who'd registered with stand numbers (if they had one) and contact numbers. We didn't have a stand but a small room at the front of the old 'Palais' with desks, a record player and rather a lovely view over the Croisette and the Med.

Noel Gay had blanket deals with some overseas publishers that meant meeting or eating with them, many of whom became great friends. Ron had already made other appointments in the weeks before the event and we set about making more. Some people came to our office; sometimes we went to their stand and played either their product or they played us theirs. Single song or master deals were common then and some deals were done on the spot and some were finalised back home. Complete notes were taken so that the same song wasn't sold twice in the same territory. Lunch was usually a baguette and beer in one of the palais' bars and then back to work. Mostly I listened and learned and at the end of the day we went through what had been achieved and added up any advances that had been agreed upon. Several dinners had been arranged and I got to know a lot of people and a lot of restaurants. In the early hours many... too many people congregated in the bar in the Martinez Hotel. Before it was vastly enlarged, if you could get a table, it was great fun talking business and watching the ladies of the night arranging theirs.

One night, David Hunter whom I'd recorded while he still worked for RCA, left the bar saying,

"I think this girl really likes me."

A young lady followed him. I said nothing. Three minutes later he came back in, crestfallen. He discovered that money would have been involved. It always was.

We worked hard, but I enjoyed MIDEM and found it interesting and enjoyable; so much so that I've been to 47 since then.

On February 9th, the new Esprit de Corps single was released to universal indifference. The first single was released in various overseas territories of they didn't know about the BBC/plugger problem. This single was a kind of 'follow up' overseas.

I then recorded Paul Osborne's first single, a big balled I'd written with a song of Paul's on the flip side. Again, I recorded at Morgan, again with strings and horns.

Gary and I were starting to get covers and were actually being asked for songs. We individually had a new song, each with a strong chorus and neither of us could come up with a good verse for either. We were writing a lot and I somehow persuaded Ron to convince Richard Armitage to let me concentrate on writing, producing and seeking out talent. Ron hired the son of a friend of Richard's, Peter Golding, who was not really cut out as a plugger, but still I helped introduce him round Radio's 1&2 and set him on his way. Luckily for Ron, he later got poached By DJM who'd poached my predecessor, Dave Lons, but they soon found out that, unlike Dave, this one was useless.

I took a holiday by driving through France and spending a week in Cassis, near Marseille with Barney. While we were away, Paul Osborne's single came out and was getting airplay.

One Saturday, I was watching a TV talent show called *New Faces* and was impressed with a cute girl singer called Charlie James who had a terrific voice. First thing on Monday morning, one of the Noel Gay agents, Michael Cohen, came rushing into the publishing floor and started raving on about this star singer he'd seen... the very same, Charlie James. She had won her heat and would be in the final. She did well in the final that also featured Showaddywaddy who went on to have 10 top ten hits.

By that time, Richard Armitage had agreed to sign her for the agency and a record deal with Wayne Bickerton at Polydor had been done. We were on the lookout for hit songs. I would produce.

I was now a bona fide professional songwriter and producer. Who'd have thought? Well, only me, I guess.

Andrew Petre was providing much entertainment at home. A couple of times a week he'd cycle to the local pub that stayed open after closing time and so he would tend to over-imbibe. I would regularly be awoken by an alarming crashing sound. Some locals would help Andrew home and push him and his bike through the front door. I don't think I left him on the floor for long; I was too concerned about oil from his bike leaking onto my previous beige carpet. One day, the press officer from DJM came round to see me for some possible news stories. It turned out that she had taken a liking to me so decided to wait. She obviously wasn't too patient as the next morning she emerged from Andrew's bedroom.

Gary and I found a solution to our chorus problem; we used his chorus for the verse and mine for the chorus and, together, added a musical bridge. The finished song was called *Someday*. A matter of days later, it was announced that Olivia Newton John was going to represent the UK in the *Eurovision Song Contest* that was even a big deal in the UK back then. All the top writers entered at that time, even Elton John had entered and reached the UK final. Gary and I thought that *Someday* would be perfect for Olivia and someone recommended a singer called Shirley James from a duo called Johnny and Shirley. Johnny (Wheeler) recently sent me our original demo and it's rather good save for the dodgy upright piano they had at Orange. We must have bribed Bill's relations again because there

were even strings on it or maybe I borrowed them from another session. Shirley was perfect for this demo. Ron sent copies and lyrics to the Music Publishers' Association and we moved on and forgot about it for a while.

Cliff Cooper, apart from owning the Orange amplifier company and the studio managed a young man who always hung around the studio and recorded in down time. John Miles was hugely talented and a delightful bloke who went on to do rather well. He recorded a song called *Music at Orange* with Bill Pitt doing the arrangements, but the record company had Alan Parsons re-record it at Abbey Road and it became a worldwide hit. I don't think Bill ever got over that.

Because of Someday and some other demos, plus my other studio commitments and Gary's day job, we were behind with our writing. Not that the world was waiting for our songs, but a couple of people had asked for material and Charlie James still needed a single so we had to find some time. During a traditional Sunday morning newspaper devouring session, I spotted an advert in one of the 'rags'. It was for all-inclusive winter weekends in Spain for the price of a cheap airfare... seemed like a no-brainer. It was already cold in London and a couple of full days in a sunny climate with no distractions would be the ideal way of concentrating on the music and, hopefully, we'd come up with some decent songs. Gary didn't need much persuading.

So, one November Friday afternoon, we checked in our guitars at Heathrow and, with a small carry-on bag each, we boarded our flight to Malaga from where we planned to drive to our hotel in Marbella. Suddenly a familiar face boarded the plane and headed for the back... the smoking section in those days... hard to believe people actually smoked on planes... It was my old chum, James Hunt.

He blurted out "Good grief, what are you doing here?"

As we were on a plane, the answer seemed pretty obvious.

"Going to Marbella for a couple of days' work, and you?"

"I have a house there, going for the weekend"

"But why are you back here with the peasants?"

"Alexander (Hesketh, his Formula One boss) buys me a first class ticket and I cash it in for an economy one so I have a bit of cash for the weekend. What are you doing this evening?"

"No plans."

"Well, meet me at the Marbella Club at eight, I'm having dinner with some friends."

It goes without saying that not a single note of music was written that weekend, but, as far as I remember, a lot of fun was had and too much alcohol consumed. Back to plan B.

Just after the Christmas break, on January 1st, I arrived at Trident Studios to record 2 songs for Paul Osborne's next single. *Ice* was a song Gary and Bill Pitt had written and was very unusual. I loved it. Trident had been closed throughout the previous week and the three-day week rule had come into force on January 31st. After an oil crisis and miners' strikes, Prime Minister, Ted Heath, had ordered commercial properties to work just three specified days a week only and they would receive power only on those days. This day, a Wednesday was not one of Trident's days, but they had hired a generator. However, with the heating off, the studio was freezing after being closed for such a long period; so cold we all kept our coats on. Bass player, Brian Odgers, cut the fingers off his gloves and kept the palm sections on. Henry Spinetti kept warm by hitting the drums. Hard!

Dave Hentshell, the engineer, got the sounds we wanted, we had a run-through and then did a take. It sounded good, everyone thought it was worth a listen; so we did; and it was... until... the tone and tempo and pitch suddenly increased.

“What the hell???”

It took some time to find the reason: the tape operator had put on the kettle while we were recording and the generator couldn't cope with the extra load so the tape machine slowed down. At that section, playing back, it sped up.

Another take; no kettle. Bill arranged for a large string section, brass band and choir and I think, for its age, it sounds pretty damned good with some splendid drumming from Henry. It's certainly not under-produced!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkAbVUln4pl>

Also in January we discovered that *Someday* had been selected as one of the *Song For Europe* final 6. For us, this was actually a big deal and bucket list moment... Worst-case scenario, we'd have a track on Olivia's next album.

We went to Cannes again for MIDEM and this time I really got into the swing of it. It was hard work, but gratifying when Ron and I met up for a beer in the evening and went through the deals we'd been able to do. *Eurovision* really was a big deal back then so we managed to 'sell' *Someday* in quite a few territories.

Wayne Bickerton had found a really catchy little song that he wanted me to do with Charlie James. Again recorded at Morgan, *All Fingers and Thumbs* would become her first single with *I only Want To Be In The World*, a Benson/Mindel song on the other side.

The single again became Tony Blackburn's record of the week and did well on radio, but didn't chart.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LK1-t9AzOTU>

Elton (David Seys, remember!) and I were asked to do another commercial by his agency for a deodorant called Fresh and Dry and were beginning to like the extra income plus the buzz from seeing the ads on the TV. Noel Gay got the publishing.

As a plugger, one of the necessary obligations was to try to get into *Top of the Pops* and especially into the BBC Club. The doormen were notoriously pedantic, but somehow I usually managed to get in through some subterfuge or other. One day, my friend and fellow Sunday lunch club member, Allan James, asked me if I'd like to go along to TV Centre on the Wednesday to meet Pan's People who were looking for songs for a first single. I reluctantly agreed; I mean who would want to meet five gorgeous young ladies who were the main reason most males watched the programme every week? I watched the show being recorded and then Alan and I took the lift up to the club where for once, our names were actually on the door.

We ordered some wine and then the five beauties joined us at our table. One might have the impression that girls that pretty who were rather famous at the time might be aloof or tricky to interact with, but they couldn't have been more open and friendly and I specially liked the newest member, Cherry Gillespie. We discussed the kind of material they were seeking and arranged to meet in the near future so that I might play them some songs, both mine and other Noel Gay material.

The following week all the finalists involved in *A Song For Europe* were requested to meet at Olivia's manager's office in Harley House, Marylebone Road for a photo opportunity with the artist herself. Her manager, Peter Gormley, was well respected and also represented Cliff Richard, The Shadows and Labi Siffre. I knew some of the other writers, most of whom were top guys. Like the Pan's People girls, Olivia was as lovely as you could imagine and gorgeous as well. A terrible fisheye lens photo was to appear in *The Sunday Times* the week before all six songs were due to be performed on BBC1.



The writers of the 'Song For Europe Finalists 1974.

As planned, three of the Pan's girls came to the house and I played them some songs, a couple of which I agreed to send on tape or acetate for the others to hear. Cherry stayed later than the others and I invited her for dinner and, to my amazement she accepted and we had a lovely evening and our first kiss. Goodness!

The following Saturday the first two *Eurovision* entries were due to be performed live on Jimmy Savile's early evening chat show *Clunk Click*, but a strike forced the programme to be cancelled so, a week later, three songs were to be performed and the week after that our song would be the first of the second group of three. The third week, all six songs would be broadcast.

Gary and I, with some excitement and a little trepidation, went to see our song performed at the BBC's Shepherd's Bush Theatre. Before the show started being broadcast, the guests were presented to the audience. To my surprise, Pan's People were guests who would be interviewed and out they came to warm applause from the audience. I realised that Cherry had spotted me, pointed me out to the others who all waved and gestured that we should have a drink afterwards. I felt the people round me wondering who this lucky guy might be. Then Olivia was introduced and, likewise, pointed to us and motioned a glass to the lips. This might have been my life's finest moment. Ever!

It goes without saying, Olivia sang *Someday* beautifully!!!

Though we didn't expect to win, we felt our song was one of the better ones. We then set off for the BBC Club again where we were joined by the Pan's girls. Olivia had a very controlling boyfriend at the time called Lee Kramer so she wasn't permitted to socialise with us. No matter. The *Clunk Click* producer, Roger Ordish who happened to be going out with Ruth Pearson, another girl in the group, then joined us. I liked him immediately and we all had a fine, hangover inducing evening. I think everyone realised there was something happening between Cherry and me.

The following week, Gary and I were back for the performance of all six songs. Some of that morning's papers suggested that Olivia had a favourite song, but wouldn't divulge which song that might be. When she started singing ours, I heard Tony Macauley behind me complain'

"Now we bloody know which is her favourite!"

I later discovered it wasn't.

The viewers were then instructed to send the name of their favourite song on a postcard to...

My family all started drumming up votes for us; bless them.

We reassembled the following week for the results to be read out. As each total was delivered, the writers were shown on screen. When the first songs had garnered 15,000 and 27,000 respectively, *Loving You Ain't Easy* a super song by my friends, Bob Saker, Stuart Leathwood and Gary Sulch received just 5,900 votes and I felt really, REALLY bad for them. I was still wondering how to make light of it with them after the recording when our song's score came up: 5,300 votes, last! After my sympathy for my chums I couldn't help bursting out laughing, something that my mother who was watching couldn't really grasp. The writers of the winning song, *Long Live Love*, Harold Spiro and Val Avon were suitably joyful with Harold doing a jig as he received his award. We thought it was the worst song. What did we know?

Last was fine; the song would be on the new EMI album and we got a good handful of other nice covers on it. There was a good French version called *Je Crois* by Isabelle Aubret, a well-known singer in France, that didn't chart there, but did in Canada. The French publisher wasn't aware of this and the Canadian publisher hadn't known to register the French title so we probably never received any royalties from either place.

My next date with Cherry was at my favourite restaurant, Parkes in Beauchamp Place, Knightsbridge. I was very romantic with subdued lighting and the delicious food was served with real flowers on their huge plates. I was surprised by Cherry's choice of food: soup and chicken so I asked if her menu had prices. It hadn't so she thought she'd be careful choosing, not knowing it was a set price menu... My kind of girl!

A couple of weeks later, James Hunt invited us to the non-championship 'Race of Champions' at Brands Hatch. Younger Formula 1 fans will be amazed that we picked up James at his flat in Blenheim Terrace, Bayswater and drove him to the circuit. I was glad to be driving as James now had a Porsche Carrera and was a complete nightmare behind the wheel. We were ushered to a parking space in a field and James went off to the pits as we headed to the members' bar, which suited us fine as the weather was awful. James was on pole in the modest Hesketh, quite an achievement to be ahead of the Ferraris of Nicki Lauda and Emerson Fittipaldi.

James retired due to the handling of his car and joined us in the bar quite happy to avoid further risk in pretty awful conditions. These days, an F1 driver would have briefings, time with his physio, debriefs, sponsor commitments etc. So different from back then. James invited me to sit in his car. My arse didn't fit in the space, however. We'd been invited to dinner at Alexander (Lord) Hesketh's house in Chelsea and enjoyed an hilarious evening with a very entertaining bunch of people.

Back in Soho, I received a call from Wayne Bickerton saying he and Tony Waddington had succeeded in having a song accepted into the Tokyo Song Festival and would I mind if Charlie James sang it? I checked with Michael Cohen, her agent and we readily agreed she should go.

In March, Gary and I were invited to the real *Eurovision Song Contest* that was being held at the Dome in Brighton. Anne-Marie David had won for Luxembourg the previous year, but the country could not afford to stage the event so it fell on the UK to take it on. So on April 6th we drove down and checked into our very dodgy hotel and arrived to witness a new era of *Eurovision*. We asked a couple of BBC people we knew who was likely to win.

"No idea this year, there are some good songs, it will be close."

However after 4 bars of Abba singing *Waterloo*, Gary and I looked at each other... "Are they crazy, this will walk it." It did, but there were very good songs by Mouth and McNeill and Gigliola Cinquetti also. Abba apparently went on to do rather well. *Long Live Love* came a creditable equal fourth.

I received another surprise call from Wayne Bickerton:

"Hi Dave, I've just received my itinerary for the song contest and they've given me an economy seat. I'm not having that so Polydor will pay my first class ticket. Do you want my economy one and we'll put you down as a delegate so you'll get your room and expenses paid?" I consulted with Ron who talked to RA who thought I might be able to do a bit of business on the company's behalf. And so it was.

Before Japan I went to meet Cherry's parents who lived in Hemsby, Norfolk. We met in Norwich where Cherry was the guest opening a new branch of a chain of stores. I really liked Cherry's folks and sister and aunt, a wonderful family and I was made most welcome, but slept in John's office.

I remember another 'jingle' that Elton was offered by his agency. We recorded it at Orange and I'd just run it through with the musicians when the agency producer, a young lady called Nicki Barrington-Baird, came in the studio with a stopwatch, announcing, "Is everyone in place? Right then, 5-4-3-2-1-GO!"

To her fury, nothing happened. It took all of us to persuade her that we'd set the tempo and a 'musical count' was necessary to bring in everyone. I can't recall for which product this session could have been, but shortly after this, Elton and Nicki started dating.

After a fond farewell from my Cherry, Tony Waddington, Wayne's writing partner, Charlie and I boarded the flight to Tokyo. This flight would be via Moscow and, as the Russians had no 'Jumbo Jet' (747's), no one was allowed to fly one into or over the territory. JAL was using a DC8. Some time after take off, a gentleman came to the row in front of us and announced,

"My name is Akira Nakamuri, I represent the Watanabe family and would like to welcome you and will be taking care of you. Would you care for some sake?"

It turned out that four or five rows together had been reserved for European delegates of the song contest and it also turned into one big party. At one point, Wayne walked through the cabin to see how the poor people were getting on, only to be rather dismayed to find his choice of seat excluded him from the jollities.

We landed in Moscow and I noticed that the baggage handlers and fuel staff were huge, stony-faced women. Some of us went to a bar where there were large amounts of vodka and caviar on offer. Each round was totaled up on an abacus operated by another unsmiling harridan; each round totaled a different amount. After that, finding our aircraft was not an easy task. In my memory, the short stop-over appears in black and white; such was the greyness of the place.

Hung-over, we arrived the following morning. What we hadn't expected was to see cars and van loads of photographers and film crews driving into town next to us, taking footage of everyone on the bus. Charlie ducked down and applied make up.

The hotel was fine; we took a nap and I had a drink with Wayne before catching up on some more sleep, but not before seeing some extremely rough looking people arriving at our hotel on our bus on the TV news!

The week was a blast. There were highlights of course. In the hotel bar I got talking with a guy from the north of England. His name was Dave Bower; he was in a band called Little Big Man and their manager, Danny O'Donovan was a friend of Frank Sinatra's and David had written a song for a 'friend' of Frank's who was to be performing. Sinatra would be a judge. Suddenly a vision of elegance and beauty walked into the bar to meet David; she was an Olivia look-alike, but taller, just stunning and so nice. Her name was Susan Anton, Frank's 'singer friend' and after chatting for some time she said,

"David, do you think we could go up to your room to run through the song?"

Off they went. I still wonder if they did play any music.

"Charlie" I said, "if that's Sinatra's girlfriend, that guy's going to get his legs broken." Maybe she was just a friend.

First rehearsal, Charlie and Susan both sang really well but one song and act blew me away. The Three Degrees were performing *When Will I See You Again* for the very first time. There was the winner.

There were receptions with ridiculously terrific food. Polydor took us to a traditional paper-walled restaurant where we sat on the floor and a lady in kimono came in, did likewise and lit a fire in a pit in the middle of the room. She then cooked wonderful food including the famous Kobe Beef and handed every dish to us individually with chopsticks. I can't even imagine what that meal cost. One of the Polydor head honchos heads took us to a Geisha house where he and all his friends had their own bottles of Chival Regal or Dimple Haig. Some of the girls performed a play and sang and played Kotos and Nipponias for us; they even dressed up Charlie in the traditional costume. I learned a lot about their study and traditions from one English-Speaking lady.

Every night, the best club in Tokyo held a big, round, VIP table for song contest attendees. All drinks were free. Unfortunately. That didn't help with my morning meetings on Richard Armitage's behalf. I doubt that I impressed anyone.



Charlie dressed as a Geisha with Tony Waddington left, me, Akira and Wayne Bickerton.

The night before the final, we were invited to a party at the famous Watanabe family's home... the only house in Tokyo with a private garden. There was a white baby grand piano set up with a mic as "Frank is coming to sing us a few songs." He didn't. On the plus side, there was a sushi van in the garden that I visited on several occasions. I was sitting with Charlie when one of the judges came and sat at our feet. It was Joan Collins who was absolutely lovely and apologised to Charlie, saying she'd voted her into the final, but she thought the decisions were political. How nice. And how typical.

When Will I See You Again duly won the 'Best Song Award', Rene Simard, a brilliant 13 year-old from Canada was hugged and presented with the artist award by Sinatra and someone won the 'Cherry Blossoms Award'.

As Akira Nakamura drove us at some speed back to the hotel, Tony Waddington re-named him Mr. Nokemover.

It had been a great and memorable experience and I'd actually turned down the offer of 'uncomplicated sex' because I was 'taken'. No one had offered that when I was single.

We left Tokyo one afternoon, flew through a night and arrived in Anchorage the previous lunchtime after the pilot had kindly flown us round Mount McKinley "To get a great view". We took off once more, flew through another night and had no idea what time or even what day it was. We arrived in Frankfurt in the morning and Heathrow in the early afternoon. Knackered!

It was good to back with Cherry; I'd missed her. Since the early spring, Gary and I had been writing together a couple of times a week. One day we wrote what we considered to be a really strong verse. A chorus didn't come to us that day or the next time or any time throughout the summer although we both brought some nice ideas, we were determined that the song had to be 100% right... as good as it could be because we knew it could be special. However, one day in the Autumn, I played Gary an idea.

"That's it! We have it... a song at last."

We played around with some lyric ideas, but it was then finished pretty quickly. We recorded a demo in the usual way with Gary singing the lead and all the harmonies.

After another, delightful weekend with Cherry's family, her father suddenly surprised us with,

"Erm" it's obvious that you two are going to get married, so, as you have a holiday booked in February, why don't you have the wedding beforehand and treat the holiday as your honeymoon?"

I have no recollection of our response, but on our train journey back to London, we realised we were indeed getting married. It also dawned on us that our honeymoon would be spent with our friends Richard and Gaynor, which is probably a little odd, but Richard and I loved to ski and Gaynor didn't; Cherry couldn't because of her job and so the girls were going to spend time together while we set off up the slopes. It was fine with us as we both wanted this.

We set a date of February 14th, Valentine's Day and booked the Marylebone Registry Office for that morning. I called my parents who were happy for us, but pointed out that they'd have to return early from their long winter break in Spain that my father had been advised to take due to England's cold, wet weather.

I broke the news to my housemate, Andrew, who said, "That's marvelous, man. Errr... does that mean I'll have to move out?"

Yes, it did.

Cherry was invited to lunch by my sister who surprised her with the question, "Why him; out of everybody, why David?!"

Beats me!

When we learned that my favourite group of all time, The Shadows, were to perform at the next year's (1975) *Eurovision Song Contest* we decided to enter our 'took ages to write' song. It was called *Don't Throw It All Away*.

Before Christmas, the Music Publisher's Association boss, Peter Dadswell, phoned Ron to let him know that this song had indeed been selected as one of the final six. I took a while to grasp that the very group I grew up listening to the most were going to perform and record one of our songs. Mostly, though, The Shadows had been known as an instrumental group that backed Cliff Richard. It would be interesting to hear how they handled these songs. A lot of writers weren't happy that two of the songs would be written by group members so only four slots would be filled, but we held one of them so that was fine with us.

We spent Christmas with Cherry's parents, always a huge occasion there and I broke it to them that we wanted a very small lunch party, not a big event after the ceremony. I thought Johnny, Cherry's dad, was going to kiss me!!! We made a list of guests, Cherry's closest, my closest, Pan's People members and partners Ron and his wife and a couple of others. My sister didn't mind us using the same venue as her wedding... a private room at the Carlton Tower Hotel in Knightsbridge.

Another MIDEM arrived and a lot of interest in our new material. Ron signed a deal for *Don't Throw It All Away* with Billy Meschel of Famous Music in New York.

One significant event (for us) happened one day in Cannes: a friend, David Howells, a very knowledgeable record man who owned his own label from an office above Morgan Studios and

later ran Stock, Aitken and Waterman's company stopped by our stand. "Don't you guys ever leave this place?"

"Not really, we get more done staying here. That's why we come."

"Well, I'm coming by at noon on Tuesday and I'm taking you somewhere and you'll be grateful to me forever that I did."

"We have appointments."

"Move them!"

So we did and, Tuesday at noon, David drove us up to the magnificent village of St Paul de Vence behind Cagnes-sur-mer. We walked onto the gorgeous terrace of a beautiful villa in the village. Not only was it stunning, but people who have been there know that it's full of art; some of the finest work of the 20th century. It's now considered to be the most valuable private collection on Earth.

David was right and both Ron and I have returned to the Colombe d'Or and even stayed there many, many times. Thank you, David.

The Shadows performed a song (for Europe) a week on *The Lulu Show* on BBC1. We were on the third week and duly turned up to be introduced as the writers. We were astounded and delighted at what the group had done with the song. Boy, did they sing well!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Er43H-9EeKY>

Gary's record company wanted him to record *Don't Throw It All Away* as a single, probably assuming that, being a ballad, it wouldn't be chosen as the *Eurovision* entry and we were of the same opinion.

I produced it and had booked in studio time on the evening of February 13th, the night before our wedding for the mix. On the Wednesday of that week, Judd Lander, promo man extraordinaire... if you call streaking through Soho Square to promote a single, extraordinary... took it upon himself to organise my stag night. A bunch of music business and non music pals turned up for a really terrible meal in an Italian restaurant in Frith Street where the wine was almost undrinkable, from whence we headed to the tatty upstairs room in the Nelly Dean pub in the next street. Some dodgy looking ladies had been hired 'for entertainment'.

"Look" said Bruce (Bomber) Milliard, "Mounty (Dave Mount from Mud) and I held a whip round and the ladies are all yours."

I declined the offer and arrived home pretty sober and underwhelmed. Thanks, Judd. Judd later nearly redeemed himself with his harmonica playing on Karma Chameleon. Then he blew it on the next stag night he arranged, details of which aren't recommended for any of you of a nervous disposition.

The mixing session of *Don't Throw It All Away* at Morgan was interesting. People kept arriving in the control room with bottles of Champagne. The mix took us into the early hours and I was in bed when the phone rang the next morning. "David, it's Johnny, thought you might have left by now (read, 'should have left')."

"Not quite, I'll be ready soon."

He then seemed a bit panicky so I had a quick shower, put on the outfit Cherry had chosen for me... always let the woman do that... and drove to my parents' flat that was close to the registry office.

My mother poured me a stiff brandy and we headed off to Marylebone Road in a taxi.

What I was not prepared for was a hoard of press photographers that was waiting outside the registry office. They didn't know me from a bag of chips so we just entered and were put in a waiting room. Elton was to be a witness and acted as best man. Cherry entered and took my breath away; a gorgeous lady in a gorgeous dress.



I remember nearly nothing of the ceremony, but when we walked down the steps to our car, there were flashbulbs and journalists calling out until we agreed to pose for photographs: some with my bride and me, but mostly of her with the rest of the group. I answered some very silly questions and at last we could speed off to a lovely lunch. We both regretted having to disappoint some good friends who would have liked to be there, but we couldn't invite everyone.

At one point I remember Nicky Chin whose family owned the hotel and who had Mud under contract, cornered Sue from Pan's. She was going out with Dave from the group and Nicky wanted her to persuade the boys to re-sign.

"Nicky," I said; "please go away, this is my wedding lunch."

After a long lunch, our parents, Cherry's sister and aunt came for tea in our suite that was part of the 'wedding package'. They left to spend the evening together and we were left in peace.

The following morning, a waiter brought our breakfast trolley to our room. The reception staff had sent up all the daily papers. The tabloids had our wedding photos on the front page and even most of the broadsheets ran an item inside. Most had silly captions and quotes about me writing a song for Cherry. Fake news! The waiter told us that we'd also broken the hotel's record for telegrams received... for people who remember what telegrams were.

We checked out, did some shopping, bumped into Elton and Nicki and went home to pack and watch the final 6 entries for *Eurovision* performed together. The next day, Sunday, we set off for our holiday/honeymoon in Wengen, Switzerland; a storybook village where there are no cars. You reach the place by mountain railway and our chalet was a magnificent 18th century building on the edge of the village and ski slopes. The only problem was that it was designed for shorter people and Richard and I kept banging our heads.

We had a splendid time, skiing, eating, watching ice hockey and soaking up the sun. One afternoon, Richard and I put on swimming trunks and just skied the piste in front of the chalet in shorts.

About a week in, I found a pay phone at the station at the top of the slopes and called my mother who told me we'd come fourth in the Song For Europe voting. That was an improvement on the previous year's result, anyway.

In the chalet, we'd have a beer and start talking up the future. Richard had been working in the Lex Garage in Sloane Street and wanted his own servicing business and we talked about our own publishing/production company as things were going well, but when could be a good time and could we afford to do it?

Chapter Eight... INDEPENDENCE DAY

The last question was answered pretty quickly. After our return home, as soon as I went back into Noel Gay Music and greeted Ron, he broke the news to me that Richard Armitage had decided that my role as writer/producer for the company wasn't, for him, paying dividends and it would be better if I plied my trade elsewhere. I collected the fondue set that the Noel Gay staff had given us as a wedding present... well, it was the 70s... and went home unemployed. Again. I have never let Ron forget that he fired me, but I know it wasn't his decision. The poor man was left with his hapless plugger, Peter Golding who hadn't yet been poached by DJM.

I think I mentioned that the Noel Gay Organisation didn't pay well. At the time of my marriage at 28 I was earning £40 a week! I just checked and the equivalent today would be just £192, far below the poverty line. I had a mortgage an endowment policy and a car and now a wife. The commercials brought in a little more, but not really a living amount. Unbelievably, the BBC was paying Pan's People just £60 a week for their two days' rehearsals, plus studio rehearsal and recorded show and broadcast. Because they could. However, the group took a lot of bookings for working men's clubs and cabaret shows that brought in far more so Cherry thought we could survive on her income plus what I was starting to bring in with songs and productions.

We formed a partnership and called it Cherry Music and had some nice stationery designed by Tony Gillan, a Barnes friend. We registered with the collection societies and were on our own.

Gary and I kept writing and got covers, one being *I Only Want To Be In The World* by ex-Settler, Cindy Kent; *Sunshine In The Morning*, our South African 'hit' was covered there by Ronnie Joyce and Jonathan Butler, but we hadn't cracked the big one, Furthermore, Mountain Records' label Mooncrest decided they could improve on my version of *Don't Throw It All Away* for Gary and they did. Gary wasn't impressed with Steve Edgeley, the producer, but Rob Young did a brilliant arrangement and Ricky Hitchcock put the icing on the cake with his terrific solo guitar. It was good and far better than I had achieved in my pre-nuptial haste.

The new songs we wrote were now co-published by Noel Gay Music and Cherry Music so I was still seeing Ron regularly and still going to *Top of The Pops* and hanging round music haunts, 'networking'.

To my surprise it didn't take long to get our first real break. One Saturday morning, I received a call from Roger Ordish, the producer of *Clunk Click* and Ruth Pearson's boyfriend.

"David, may I pop round and have a word with you?"

'Sure, any time'.

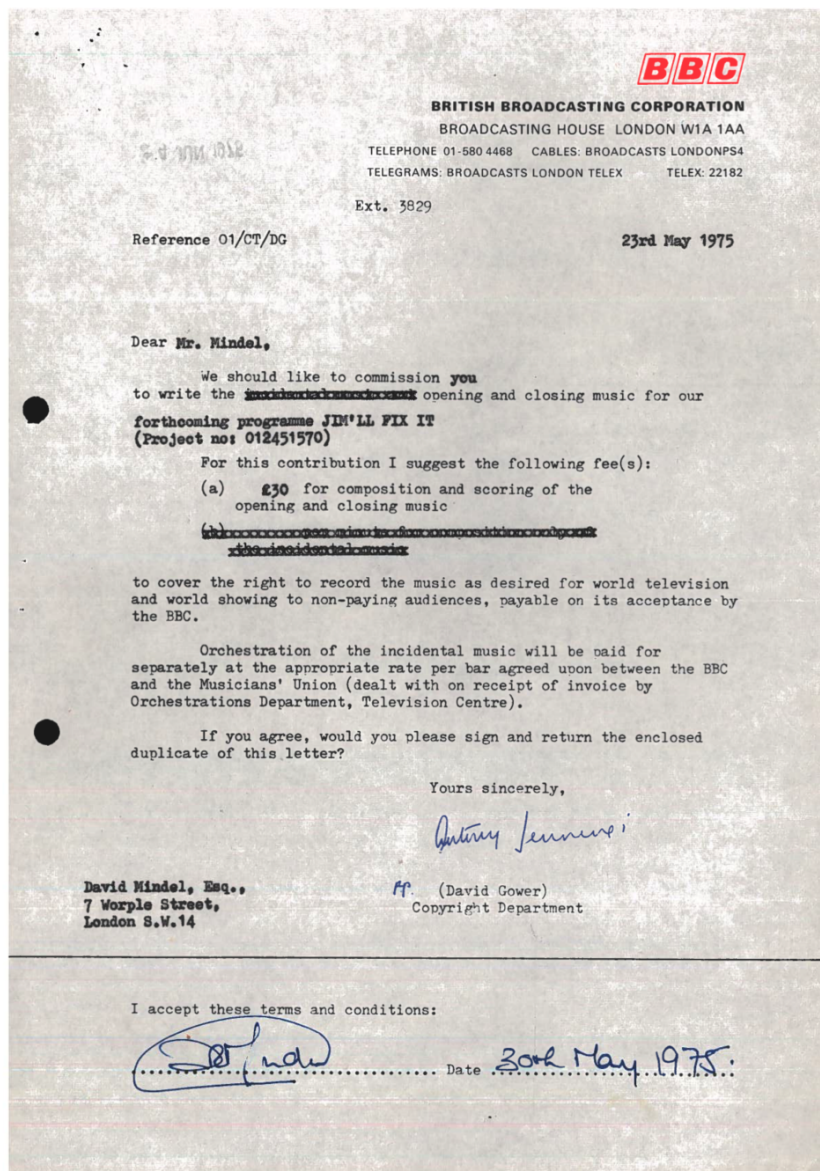
Roger was at our little house within the hour.

“Jimmy Savile has come up with the format for a new TV show we’re calling *Jim’ll Fix It* I’m producing and we’re going to grant wishes to kids and some adults who send their requests to the BBC. Do you fancy writing an opening and closing theme to the lyrics I’ve got here?”

I sure did fancy it. The opener was going to be a standard 12 bar Rock ‘n’ Roll piece and the close was more melodic.

Guitarist, Brian Willoughby had recommended a trio of very releted guys who sang harmonies like Crosby Still and Nash and one day they came to our house to perform a ‘set’, which was terrific and I decided I wanted to work with them. They seemed ideal for this new theme so I went into Orange with the them, Brian, Mike Thompson, Dee Dee Wilde’s (another Pan’s Person) boyfriend and a drummer and recorded a demo of each.

My music was liked. *Jim’ll Fix It* was given a prime time BBC1 slot every Saturday evening throughout the winter; I was involved in twenty series comprising 286 episodes. We changed the end theme after three years and did a new arrangement of both themes nearly every year, sometimes getting known artists to perform them. The show was well loved and the themes known by parents and kids alike. They spawned four singles. I’m glad I accepted the BBC fee of £30.00.



Another plus was a song I'd written with Dave Mount came out on the new album by Mud, their first on Phonogram. This may have been the first Cherry Music published song. I'd gone to Audio International Studios to hear the song and saw that guitarist, Rob Davies, had a small square gadget that his guitar was plugged into. On enquiring what it was, I learned it was an electric guitar tuner. When the needle was in the middle of the dial, the guitar was in tune. Whatever next??

Some years later we were accused of stealing the song from a Finnish band even though theirs came out ten years LATER! See what you think. Ours is first.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DQdylf2ObAA&list=RDDQdylf2ObAA&start_radio=1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8uHmW72RA1o>



With Cherry and Dave Mount.

One morning, I was giving Tony Bramwell a lift into town.

"Did you know that Jane Seymour has moved into your street?"

"I did not."

Jane was the Bond actress who always sat in front of us in the Chelsea FC directors' box and a couple of weeks later we were both stopped in a speed trap on Lonsdale Road, Barnes. She got out of her Beetle and I got out of the old 2002 BMW I'd bought from Ron. We started talking and I said she'd actually moved into our street and there started the friendship that has lasted over 45 years.

Songs I'd written while at Noel Gay were still being recorded.

One was put out by a great South African kid called Jonathan Butler:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aid2e2jFBNs>

With Little Ronnie Joyce, he also covered 'Sunshine In The Morning'.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFv13sPwEAs>

I had kept in touch with David Bower with whom I became friendly in Japan. His band, Little Big Man was expanding from a three piece called 'BMW' (Bower, Peter Morrison and John Woolard) and they were looking for a lead guitarist, drummer and keyboard player/extra vocalist. They picked a guy called Graham Walker for drums, John Danter for guitar and 17 year-old keyboard player, Andy Hill.

Their Manager, Danny O'Donovan, was footing the bills: paying expenses, for rehearsals and some petty nice gear.

I really liked what they were doing. They were a rock band doing originals and unusual versions of known songs with strong melodies and harmonies. One day, David announced to me that they'd like to record some tracks with me to see how things worked out. They liked the idea of a songwriter being involved. We just had to pick the songs and Danny would foot the bills.

Pan's People signed to CBS records' Epic label and were still seeking songs. Eventually a Kenny Young song was selected with a Nicky Graham (also producer) title on the 'B side'. They never cut one of mine, but at least I'd got to meet them and many thanks to Allan James for that.

The Shadows' album, Specs Appeal containing *Don't Throw It All Away* was doing well and Gary's version was coming out in June or July.

When the single did come out, it immediately started getting a lot of radio play and great reactions and even started selling and became a chart 'breaker'. Then, at the worst possible moment, the record company went bust! I really thought we'd lost our chance at our first real hit and, had it not been for Ron, the record would have sunk without trace, but he made calls and eventually met with Wayne Bickerton who had started his State Records label though Polydor and so with Wayne and Andy Stephens... the very same guy who had been the young tape operator on our first recording at Abbey Road, but now an A&R man at State... managed to work out deal so that the single would come out on State as soon as possible.

State was a really good, little set up that had been successful already with Mac and Katie Kissoon and The Rubettes. I went in to meet them all one day and was happy to see an old mate, Ronnie Beck running the publishing arm and a dynamic young lady called Annette Barrett who had joined from Carlin Music and has since gone on to be one of the most successful women in the UK Music business. And a cherished friend. And Ron's wife!

Ronnie Beck was a real music man; I'd actually parked his car when he worked for Feldman and Co and he had signed Queen on a £1,000 advance and 50/50% deal. On renewal, the band got 100%.

The change of label may have slowed things down, but the single entered the top 50 and Gary featured on *Top Of The Pops*, after which my father, to my surprise came out with, "You know, you might possibly make a career out of this business"; the nearest thing to a compliment I was ever likely to get, but I haven't forgotten it; it had taken a while, but, honestly, none was previously warranted.

Our first proper hit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pflc5oEE4Wg>

The record kept climbing the charts and into the top 20 and then, on the evening of August 12th, my mother called to say that my father might have had another heart attack. I could hear her trying to stay calm. I rushed into town to find an ambulance at their flat. My dad was about to be wheeled into the lift.

"Don't worry" said my mother reassuring him.

"I'm not worried" was the reply and the last thing I ever heard him say.

At about 2am he died.

My sister and I brought my mother back to the flat late the next morning and stayed with her through the day, but she didn't want anyone there overnight.

I got home and waited for Cherry to get back from the *Top Of The Pops* recording. We shared some tears before she said, "Nicky Graham sent his condolences and said to please tell you that Gary's single sold 13,000 copies today," our best figure to date. A nice thought.

My mother coped, but was never the same again. I visited when I could, but now not working in Soho any more, I was further away so I didn't go enough.

Chapter Nine... **ANOTHER ERA**

For our next 'jingle', ex Coronation Street actor/pop star, Chris Sandford, was booked in to record a voice over. He'd featured on several of the ads we'd worked on and, away from the client said, "I really like what you guys are doing, what would you say to starting up a music company? I think we'd do really well."

I was all for it, but Elton had a job so thought it too risky for him. We all stayed in contact, though.

Apart from Gary and The Shadows, England's Vince Hill, Lori Balmer (Australia) and Carl Graves and Fire and Rain from the US all released versions of *Don't Throw It All Away* that year.

In September the Pan's girls and partners were invited to the CBS conference in Eastbourne so that the group could be presented to the promotion and sales teams. We were all staying at the Grand Hotel where the rest of the guests seemed to be geriatric and I wondered if they were required to pay each day in advance... just in case. Two other signings played at an event one afternoon: a terrific band called Sailor and a duo called Bugatti and Musker. Phil Pickett from the band is still a friend and went on to co-write Karma Chameleon and Frank Musker and Dominic Bugatti did extremely well and we have been chums since that day. All three are members of S.O.D.S. (Society of distinguished Songwriters). I recall that Leonard Cohen was top of the bill and, after three songs, we retired to our room. When we returned, he was still droning on. Great songwriter, though.

Gary and I considered that one new song, *Whenever I'm Away From You* might be good for *Eurovision* and so waited to see which artist might be selected. That year no artist would be nominated, only the song. This led to writers approaching existing acts or the writers would put a group together should the song be selected. Gary sang the demo and decided he would like to be the artist, if it was chosen.

Alan James had heard our demo and wanted the song for a group he was promoting for Purple Records, the Deep Purple label. We said the group, Reflections could indeed record the song, but they'd be better to wait and see if it was selected for *A Song For Europe* first.

Just before Christmas, we learned that this composition hadn't been chosen as a finalist so I told Alan and Graham Nolder from Purple Records that they could go ahead with their Reflections version. They asked if I would produce it.

I had been routining songs with John Danter Andy and Pete from Little Big Man and we booked Morgan for a couple of days to record the two songs we'd chosen for Reflections with Phil Chen on bass. This was all good news for Cherry Music and the advance on the single would top up the coffers a little.



Reflections.

We spent Christmas Day with my mother and it was then time to prepare for MIDEM as the only representative of a new, very small firm. Cherry, like me, believed in the appearance of success to attract business partners so, with the help of Eaton Music owner Terry Oates, I booked a room at the Majestic hotel. I didn't dare ask how he got us such an amazing rate, but I seem to remember some cash being sent to a concierge when we booked. I thought I should take a small booth in the exhibition hall, but a single space was tiny and unimpressive. I was friendly with songwriter, Ben Findon, and his wife Linda who also had their own company so we decided to get bigger 'office' together that gave us a good space with a reception area that looked more impressive, plus we could take messages and arrange appointments for each other even though our businesses weren't connected.

After registering and a greeting Ben and Linda, I started setting up my area of the stand, putting up singles and photos we'd been involved in and chatting to Ben as I did so.

"Brought any hits, Ben?"

"I doubt it, but this turned out OK."

He played me *Love Really Hurts Without You*, a Motown-style song performed by a singer I knew called Les Charles who would now be known as Billy Ocean for the songs he recorded with Ben.

"You're kidding, that's a bloody hit; I love it!"

I was right and the rest is history.

The success of *Don't Throw It All Away* did us no harm at all and I did some overseas publishing deals for all Cherry Music material and some individual song deals. One lovely American guy I'd met with Ron was now with a company called Midsong/Midland International Records. So Eddie O'Laughlin and I had a meeting and he was interested in *Whenever I'm Away From You* for the U.S. He told me he'd make a final decision on it when he was back in New York.

Working for myself, I was now able to take the decision to get some fresh air and decent food at lunchtime. The beach restaurants in Cannes are very tempting when the sun is shining. One lunch was taken with Ron, back at the wonderful Colombe d'Or and this became an annual 'must do' event. My last night of MIDEM, like most of the others, was rounded off with a drink or five in the Martinez bar when at about 2am, Eddie O'Laughlin came over and enthused, "I'd like to do a deal on that song." So we did. "I'll get you a good cover on that" he reassured me. The Cannes trip had worked out well.

After a few days in the studio with Little Big Man, on February 7th Cherry reached her 21st birthday and we celebrated with a big party the following Sunday in the new Morgan Studio 4, which they'd given us for the event. The Little Big Man guys brought their gear for a jam session and the studio booked a really good caterer who had unfortunately brought a punch that turned out to be completely lethal. There were casualties. One of Roger Ordish's many talents is being able to talk backwards... really!!! You can give him a sentence and he'll say it backwards so he gave the band a while to work out the chords of *Happy Birthday To You*... backwards... and they then performed it with Roger singing gobbledygook. An engineer recorded it, reversed the tape spools and there was 'Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you, happy birthday, dear Cherry, happy birthday to you'... that astounded us all. I later found Roger asleep in the studio flowerbed.

There was a change of personnel in Pan's People and choreographer, Flick Colby, decided to add a couple of male dancers and called the group Ruby Flipper. Cherry was beginning to consider a different career path and we'd agreed that I should take a look at the American market so when Tony Bramwell announced, "I'm going to LA next month, wanna come?" My response was,

"Very probably."

Tony booked two charter flights although they were TWA operated. He also booked a hotel he described as, "A bit of a shithole". I was able to make quite a lot of appointments in advance and they all appeared to be on Sunset Boulevard so I thought, "No need for a hire car".

Our LA flight landed late in the evening. I thought the cloud cover must be really low, but it was smog. The motel-style hotel was a bit rough and was called the Sunset Marquis, later to become one of the coolest hotels in LA, but not then. Still, most of the rooms were around or looking over the pool. Close enough for Keith Moon to once chuck in a TV set from his room above. Fortunately there was no one swimming at the time. Most likely about 4am.

The next morning, we went out for breakfast, but, before we set off, Tony handed me a sweatshirt...

"Put this on."

"Why?"

"I have one also, put it on!"

Printed on the front in big letters was printed: BEATLES REUNION TOUR 1977. We walked to the Head and Tail pub and the first person we saw was our local greengrocer from Barnes. On my previous visit to the US, I hadn't encountered one single British person; this time, the first person I saw was from down the road. After breakfast, we sauntered down the road to Gil Turner's store and loaded our cart with Vodka, Bloody Mary Mix, crisps, cheese, Tequila and other necessities. At the checkout, the manager suddenly saw Tony's sweatshirt,

"Holy shit, they're not actually touring, are they?"

"Yep". Tony is a man of few words.

"Are you involved?"

"Yep."

"Any chance of tickets?"

'Yep... if you give me your name and details, no tickets have been on sale yet'

"Holy, fucking shit, thanks so much."

"You're welcome, what does all this come to?"

"Oh, don't worry about that, tickets will more than cover it"

"Great, thanks a lot."

And so it was, in the next store and the next store and bars... what a scam!

Tony had a few meetings and I had quite a lot so we'd often go out separately. Despite the meeting all being on, or just off, Sunset Boulevard, the fact that the road is twenty three miles long meant that many taxis would be required and Los Angeles isn't much of a taxi town; pity there was no Uber then.

I went to see ex-pat, Lionel Conway at Island Music, situated in a lovely, half timbered building... on Sunset... and we had a good chat before he remembered,

"Oh I think the Olivia album is out with your song on it,"

"Oh great, I'll check it out."

I'd heard she might record, *Don't Throw It All Away*, but had no confirmation. As I was leaving, he added,

"Did you know that Nigel Haines and Martin Kitcat are here for their new company, signing anything that moves? They're staying at the Château Marmont (on Sunset)."

I didn't. And I'd not heard of this Château place either.

Later that day I dropped into the huge Tower Records store (on Sunset) and asked a sales person if they had the new Olivia Newton John album. With his palm up, he motioned towards six huge piles of the new album on the floor. There must have been well over a thousand copies. I picked one up and looked... the photo of Olivia on the front was stunning and there it was, 1st song on the second side. John Farrar who had performed it with The Shadows the previous year had produced the album. This was great!!! I'll never forget that feeling.



I called Martin Kitcat and Tony and I went to the 'Château' for a drink before going to dinner. Martin and Nigel had a two bedroomed suite and I thought,

"This is more like it, if we do OK, I'll stay here next time."

In between meetings, Tony and I would sometimes hang out by the pool. There were some fun people including a lovely bunch of guys from Birmingham that comprised a band called City Boy who'd had a couple of hits and a new band from New Jersey. These guys had a very attractive tour manager and it didn't take long for Tony (now single) to announce that he'd be occupied for the weekend.

"Oh, thanks a bunch!"

I called to see what Martin and Nigel, whom I'd known at Essex Music, were planning.

"We're thinking of driving to San Francisco; fancy a trip?"

Rather!!!

We left early in the morning so that we could drive up the 101 and see as much of the coast as we could: Santa Barbara, Big Sur, Santa Cruz and so on. It's a spectacular drive and we managed to check into the Holiday Inn at Fisherman's wharf in time for a dinner on the wharf.

The following day, Nigel had arranged a meeting with his lawyer, Bob Gordon in Mill Valley, across the Golden Gate Bridge. Bob owned a gorgeous house in a stunning forest in Mill Valley and served us some sumptuous, American, red wine from Napa. At one point he said,

"There will be a client who's going to drop in; do hang around."

The 'client' was Van Morrison and I can't say I've ever met a less charming individual. Bob recommended we visit Sausalito and the way back so off we went. I was interested in seeing the place as Gary had written a song of that title for his first album. It didn't disappoint; it was very unspoiled back then with mainly wooden buildings right on the water... some on stilts. We selected a very charming bar.

"Where are you guys from?"

"London, England".

"No way, we've never met anyone from Britain. Do you know the Beatles? May we buy you a drink?"

This nice man who told us he managed the Holiday Inn in Fresno and his mates bought us seven tequila sunrises before we were allowed to stagger off to consume something solid.

Back in Hollywood, when Bramwell finally emerged he informed us that we'd been invited to Phil Spector's house after dinner that evening. There were so many weird stories about this guy, but I'd so loved a lot of the records he'd produced so couldn't miss this opportunity to meet the great man. Phil actually came to the door to welcome us. He seemed far more 'normal' than I had been led to believe. Well, he was until his second bottle of diabetic wine kicked in, but was still able to talk fairly coherently about records he'd made. When he left the room, Nigel started talking about Phil and Tony shushed him, whispering that the Kessel twins listened in to everything... but everything! The twins were the sons of legendary guitarist, Barney Kessell, and acted as Phil's right hand men and bodyguards. I'd known that Tony once fell asleep while Phil was spouting forth and the twins wanted to take him out and shoot him for being 'disrespectful'. It seems that only the arrival of Spector's lawyer, Marty Machat, persuaded the boys to call off the hit.

At about 3am, having got the nod from the others, I stood up,

"Phil, we mustn't keep you up any longer, thanks so much for a lovely evening."

At that point he whipped out a pistol and pointed it at my nose.

"Nobody leaves until I tell them to leave.

"Fair enough."

Nigel walked to the pool table and was about to pick up a cue when the pistol was pointed at him,

"A friend of mine died playing on that table; nothing has been touched since!"

"OK."

Phil then decided he'd play us some truly dreadful tracks he'd done with John Lennon... and other rubbish and then we were exposed to a tirade against his ex-wife, Ronnie.

"I'll shoot the fucking bitch if I ever see her again."

Harsh!

Finally, around six o'clock in the morning, our host stood up and said he was going to bed and we thanked him profusely for his wonderful hospitality and fled, shaken but alive, into the dawn. That afternoon, Tony received a call from Devra, Phil's assistant,

"Phil says he had the best evening in years and so would you like to join him at the house this evening?"

Click.

Phil rarely ventured out because he once turned down an 'offer' from the Mafia to buy his record company and was convinced they were still after him, when, most likely, they'd all been shot years ago. After this experience, I wasn't surprised when he was charged with shooting and killing a woman at his house

As it turned out, the unknown Jersey boys staying at the Sunset Marquis were Bruce Springsteen and the East Street Band. Who knew!

I felt the trip had been very beneficial, but also most enjoyable. Many people don't 'get' LA, but I most certainly did and it was a wonderful place to be in the 70's. I couldn't wait to return and hire a car so I could see more of the place and listen to the wonderful Soft Rock songs on *Radio 93KHJ* while cruising along Sunset.

On my return, I enthused to Cherry about the place and we wondered if we'd get the chance to go together

Our new friends and neighbours, Jane and Geep (Geoffrey Planer) had set a date to get married and wondered how everyone would feel about having the 'party' in our street as it was the Queen's Silver Jubilee year and these types of events were encouraged. It seemed like a great idea so they applied for permission. We also had dinner a couple of times at their house with Olivia Newton John's sister Rona. Rona was hopeful of matching her sister's singing success and thought I might be able to help.

She wasn't a great singer, but I thought she might appeal to some record label or other.

One day, Ronnie Beck introduced me to a young singer called Steve Glen. We hit it off and went on to write quite a lot of songs together. Steve had a group with his wife, Nicola Martin and three others called Love Together. They did sound great harmonically and had a deal with Phonogram and Steve asked me if I'd like to produce a single for them. So I recorded my second boy/girl group of the year after Relections. This was the first time I'd made a record at Phonogram's Studio at Marble Arch. The young engineer introduced himself as Steve Lillywhite,

"Please bear with me, this is my first session as an engineer."

It wasn't and he told all new clients that bit of nonsense. Music people will know that Steve went on to be one of the most successful record producers and a Grammy winner.

Like the guys in Relections, I really liked these people and was happy with *Don't Do Anything I Wouldn't Do*, the 'Blue Eyed Soul' record we made. With these two, the Little Big Man sessions and a third Paul Osborne single, I was spending all my time either writing or recording. I would have loved a little chat with my careers' advisor from school.

We had many very enjoyable dinners with friends, but two stood out. One was with Ben and Linda Findon at their lovely house in Islington. Ben was a member of the Harvey (Bristol Cream Sherry) family and had been gifted some very fine wines indeed and was most generous with them. There and then I decided to learn more about wine, drink better wine and stop drinking aircraft fuel. Wine has brought me so much pleasure over the years since that evening.

The other dinner was with with Nigel Haines and his lovely wife, Verity. Nigel had decided, with his backers' dollar, to rent a house in Los Angeles for a month and invite some of the writers and artistes that he had signed in order to promote them to the US market. He said that the house he'd chosen had plenty of rooms if we wanted to take on the cost of one of them. I decided I'd be daft to turn down the opportunity of widening my US contacts so agreed to take the room. When Cherry made the decision not to stay with the latest incarnation of the *Top Of The Pops* group, she thought we should both go and have some down time.

Because of the late decision we were obliged to take separate flights. I arrived on a Saturday afternoon, picked up a Rent-a-Wreck hire car and checked onto the Beverly Hills Hotel (a treat) as the house wasn't going to be available until the following day. I drove back to LAX to pick up Cherry from the much delayed flight she'd taken with Gary Benson who also needed to be there. We didn't get to the hotel until 3am and room service had finished, but a lovely bellboy offered to out to get us burgers and fries. What great service. Great burgers too.

The following day, the Sunday, we arrived at the rental house in Hancock Park. It was bordering on being a mansion and as an agent took us round, he pointed out that the pool was the biggest in the Los Angeles area. We chose the third biggest room as we were the only invitees paying to stay. The next day we went shopping and in anticipation of the first arrivals, we cooked a huge leg of lamb. Nigel and Verity arrived with Martin and then a couple of others including Terry Dempsey who had written David Cassidy's *Daydreamer*. This wasn't going to be a teetotal month by any means. The next morning, Terry decided that the huge, silver samovar in the dining room would be ideal for Bloody Marys (mornings) and Harvey Wallbangers in the evening. And so it was.



A water polo game, Stan Withold this end, Martin Kitcat, me, Terry Dempsey.

More reprobates who spent time with us included Junior Campbell of Marmalade, Robin Lumley of Brand X, Stan Withold the smooth French publisher who was called 'Frogman' by Terry and Junior and an assortment of other characters. After breakfast the Bloody Marys were on tap.

Olivia had been given some studio time at Universal so that Rona could record a song that Gary and I had written. I would produce the session. Nigel suggested I use one of his bands who were in LA at the time for the track. This group included Raff Ravenscroft of Baker Street fame. On arrival on the Universal lot I found a parking space with my name on it. How I wish I had a photo of that. We finished the track of *Which One Of Us Was Wrong?* and were able to add Rona's vocals and do a rough mix in an afternoon

While I was in the studio, Cherry went to Disneyland with some of the inmates who weren't in the least impressed with the absence of alcohol there. Junior added,

"But at least I got to go on a ride with one of Pan's People between my legs."

"Don't push your luck, son!"

I'd met Junior before and enjoyed his company immensely, even his wicked sense of humour and I still speak to him regularly. I also liked three of the other Marmalade members; the fifth one, not so much. The recording was pretty awful, by the way.

We had enough time for business and a lot of fun, deciding our bar of choice was Cyrano's on Sunset; favourite eating place was the Hamburger Hamlet further along that road; best food - a lobster at The Palm that Cherry and I shared and still took home the claw the made a salad for six people. Tony Roma's was the rib place. Most have long gone, sadly.

Towards the end of our stay and after Cherry left to fulfill some gig obligations, we held a party by the pool with the obligatory Harvey Wallbangers and a Bar B Q. Olivia was about the first to arrive and dived straight in. Peter Hebbes who'd worked for her management was there. Peter had moved to Australia to run a record label and publishing for Rupert Murdoch and he'd signed up Cherry Music at Midem. He's today still one of my favourite people. One guest, Michael Sandevaala a young guy from CBS songs seemed perplexed,

"At Hollywood parties, the more important you are, the later you arrive and the earlier you leave. I don't know when I should go"

"Michael, we're mostly Brits and Aussies here, enjoy yourself!" And so it was, a trifle untidy, maybe. Olivia is as many of you know, completely down to Earth.

Chapter Ten... **A CHANGE HAS GOT TO COME**

Back in London, Polydor had scheduled a single from Little Big Man from the first songs we'd recorded and gave the green light for us to finish the album. We spent a long time choosing and running through the routines of the songs. It was good to get to know the guys well so that the atmosphere in the studio is really relaxed. And it was. The core of the band comprised the three from the North; old, no nonsense friends who really ran the show and the three who'd just joined, two from south of London and the drummer. Graham Walker from the north of Scotland. We were back in Morgan for a month with Roger Quested. Roger was a great engineer and terrific fun in the studio. We'd only record one track at a time and Roger would mic the drums differently every time. Guitar solos were done with only John Danter in the control room and vocal parts were recorded with just the singers in the studio. Being a multi-studio complex, Morgan had a bar that also served decent food. I learned to eat fast otherwise someone's fork would be plunged into whatever was left on my plate. We also mixed with musicians working in the other studios. Alice Cooper was recording an album and turned out to be a lovely, unassuming guy.

All through recording, I received regular calls from Nicky Graham at CBS,

"Are you sure you can't get them out of their contract, I'd sign them tomorrow?"

"Sorry, Nicky; they're signed and, anyway, I'm not their manager."

Said manager wasn't about a lot as he'd started 'seeing' Diana Ross. Still, we got good seats for the lady's show in Victoria.

Mixing the album took nine sessions. Back then, if you didn't like something on a track you'd mixed and someone else had been in the studio, you started from scratch the next day. I normally gave Roger a couple of hours to get the sounds as he wanted so I came in with fresh ears. After making any changes I wanted, we'd keep going through the song, 'rehearsing' the mix: marking faders, getting levels, muting and all the things needed to get a perfect mix with three of us on the board with a set of faders and 'groups' each. Our usual tape operator was Chris Tsangerides who went on to be a massively successful producer. One night, as Andy Hill was asleep at the back of the studio, Roger threaded tape through the tape machine, over a light and attached it to Andy Hill's glasses. On cue, Chris hit the rewind button and Andy's specs flew across the room at impressively high speed. Such children!

If we'd got the mix to the band's liking, the most we could hope for was John Woolard's so northern comment,

"It don't offend me!"

My old plugging friend, Steve Elson, was now in management and production. We met for a drink and he brought along an arranger called Don Gould. I'd known about Don, but we'd never met and he told me he was friendly with Charles Armitage, Richard's son, who used to come and sit in my office to learn what not to do. We agreed to meet up and another old mate, Miki Antony, joined us as well. Charles had been working in New York and Los Angeles for his dad's friend, Larry Utall, at Bell records, but had returned with his girlfriend, Di Evans, whom he'd met out there.

While Ron and I were at Noel Gay, we'd made one bad call. Ron gave me an album to listen to in order to get my opinion.

"Not impressed really, sounds like a thousand other folk singers"

"I agree, Richard asked me to take a listen as a friend of his sent it, I'll say it's not for us."

Instead we signed Miki Antony's concept album 1776 that was about the USA's 200 year history. RA got it signed to EMI. It cost rather a lot of money and was mostly recorded at Olympic in Barnes that meant I could drop by on my way to town. I even played rhythm guitar on a few tracks. It sank without trace. But it started a friendship with Miki who got together regularly with Don and Charles. Now, so did I

The album Ron and I turned down was by a guy called Don Mclean! Oops.

Being unemployed, Cherry was looking for something different and one day announced that she was going to audition for *A Chorus Line*. Those who've seen it know that it's about the excruciating casting process for a Musical. In fact the casting for this show was even worse to the point that I urged her not to return for yet another callback. But she did and was included in the original British cast. Rehearsals would be over many weeks leading up to the pre-Christmas opening.

I kept most recordings to daytime, as, when the show opened, we'd have very few evenings together. Problems with the director of *A Chorus Line* caused the opening to be delayed until after Christmas.

Steve Glen and I decided to drive down to Cannes for MIDEM so we could take extra samples plus my Revox tape machine as well as acetates. Steve had a flight booked, but decided to join me on the way down and I'd take some of his stuff. I filled in the customs forms and carnet that we had stamped in Dover and we arrived in Calais in the evening with the idea of driving down to arrive in the morning. Once at Calais there was a big argument over the authenticity of the British customs stamp and we were instructed to wait until the boss arrived in the morning. We spent a freezing night in the car before we were allowed on our way. This was how doing business in France was before we joined the E.U. And might be again. We arrived in Cannes at 9pm, checked into our hotels just in time for my dinner with Ronnie Beck who thought I wasn't turning up.

While in Cannes the opening date for *A Chorus Line* was announced, but I'd be driving through France at that time. Steve very kindly gave me his plane ticket (you could do that then) and drove my car back. I was in town just in time to be extremely nervous prior to curtain up. The cast got rave reviews.

It's an odd thing about this Musical: as far as I know, no one ever went from being in *A Chorus Line* to stardom; in fact there seems to have been a bit of a curse on the show. From the English cast alone, there was a suicide and four deaths from Aids. But It was a great show that I saw seven times. There's one scene between Cassie and Zach when I would retire to the bar for twelve minutes, but other than that...

We recorded other radio ads with Chris Sandford who, again, reiterated his idea for the three of us to start up a music company. Elton again rejected the plan on account of his job, but a week later, he was fired. So he was now on board with us as long as we could get some finance. The right place at the right time for the wrong reason yet again.

When the three of us met up again, Elton decided that, if he moved in with Nicki, now his fiancé, he could rent out his house and live on the income from that. Cherry would be earning good money for as long as the show ran and we had enough to, between us make that work. Just in case, I went to see our assistant bank manager who said he'd hoped my wife would be there in stead of me but agreed an overdraft would be available if needed, but he'd keep it to himself as his manager didn't trust musicians and actors; harsh yet fair. Chris was doing very nicely, anyway, so we needed just enough money to buy some equipment, construct a demo studio and survive a few months. One of Elton's

talents is raising money and, instead of going to a London bank, visited his local bank manager in Devon who, knowing the family well, readily agreed an immediate loan of £7,500 and an overdraft facility. Keith Moon rented Elton's house (with a large deposit) and we set about looking for premises. With our budget, we were aware this would not be easy.

While we were looking, I was still working. Danny O'Donovan had got Little Big Man a gig, opening for Roberta Flack at the Apollo Victoria. Not thinking this was a particularly good fit, I agreed to meet the boys prior to sound check.

Typically, they were left very little time to set up and get a sound and the rather offensive sound guy (name of Trevor-married to a well known singer) didn't help matters.

"You can't move Ms. Flack's piano."

"So where do we put the drums?"

"Not my problem."

"Graham... can you get a blanket and set up your kit on top of the piano?"

"Sure".

The piano got moved, but Trevor wasn't willing to make our lives easy. Eventually he offered a target,

"Why do you think I've worked with all the biggest artists?"

"That would be impossible to imagine"

"So you think you could do better?"

"My cat could do better"

He then uttered the immortal cliché

"Do you want to make something of it?"

"No problem"

I'm a peace-loving bloke, but he'd got to me and suddenly five burley musicians were nowhere to be seen. The board was marked so, for the first and last time, I mixed the live sound and it sounded OK apart from Danny coming down during the second song,

"Can you turn down the bass a bit, it's killing us up there?!"

Oh yes, and someone unplugged John's amp during a solo. And we were told,

"Ms. Flack won't be needing an opening act for the second show; she has a tickle and doesn't want to go on too late."

So, we packed up and went to dinner. Much later, the lovely, Dave Dee, who worked at 'Ms.' Flack's record company, came into the restaurant, approached our table and apologised profusely.

My next visit from Dave Bower brought bad news, especially for the band.

"Danny's having some problems and has pulled the plug!"

That meant no more salaries or support and the band couldn't continue without that. The album was finished, but, without a tour to promote it, Polydor would be very unlikely to release it. I'd enjoyed making the record and had been paid, but this was very disappointing and awful for the band. The album STILL sounds great, though.

Billy Meschel who published *Don't Throw It All Away* in the North America was doing a great job picking up covers on the song. He'd played it to Arista chief, Clive Davies, who loved it and had cut it with three of his acts without huge success. Then one evening Ron received a call from the great man himself,

"Barry (Manilow) has just recorded the song."

"That's great news."

"And I can pretty much guarantee it will be the first single."

"Even better."

"The thing is... Barry has changed it about a bit and would like a share of the song."

"OK, I'll have to get back to you."

Gary and I agreed that, as much as we'd love a Manilow cover, hell, there was no bigger artiste, this was immoral and we'd refuse. So the song didn't even go on the album, but was added when the CD version was released. It's awful and Bazza changed but ONE WORD: 'Up' to 'Down'!

I'd done a publishing administration deal with Ronnie Beck at State, whereby, in lieu of an advance, they would buy me an economy return ticket to the US each year. This would make my trip affordable and I'd promote the material that went through his company. This time I decided to return via New York. In LA, I stayed for the first of many times at the Château Marmont. It certainly needed some loving care, but it was such a great place to be. I always bumped into someone I knew who was staying and, when I had time to sit by the pool, there were always fascinating guests, many of them, famous. Martin Kitcat was also there as he'd fallen for a Jap (Jewish American Princess) who had revealed her carnal desires for him during a game of 'Truth and Dare'.

Close to the Hamburger Hamlet was Cyrano's Bar and opposite that Le Dôme where you could always be sure to find some music business Brits late at night.

Having stumbled on Martin in LA, I discovered that Terry Dempsey, the fellow inmate in Hancock Park the previous year, was staying in the same hotel in New York. After a Martini, I left him and his friend in the bar when I went to dinner with Eddie O'Laughlin and his wife, Cathy. When I returned quite late, Terry was still leaning on the bar, eyes as red as road maps of central London. This was the result of a car accident so that when Terry drank a lot, the blood vessels in his eyes turned vampire red.

The next day, as previously arranged, I went to see Eddie and his boss, Bob Reno at their offices. Eddie put on a tape.

"See, I told you I'd get a cut on this song."

He played *Whenever I'm Away From You*.

"Oh dear. He's an awful singer. Sorry, Eddie, good job, but it's just" ...

"The kid is the biggest thing on TV at the moment. This will be a hit, I promise you." And it was... the 'kid' was John Travolta.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZNwgFZnttA>

I'd been to the Big Apple twice before, but doing business there is a real buzz. I was given 'The Tour' of ASCAP, seeing how they monitor all the songs being played on radio, which was fascinating and had time to listen to some bands in the evenings. It was, and still is, an extraordinary city.

Elton and Chris still hadn't found a building. Elton and I had seen many before my trip. We'd taken on an agent to see what he could find. Oh, but it was depressing; one place in Brewer Street was in such poor condition that you could see the people in the office below through the floorboards. But it was within our budget and with our specifications: centrally located, with office space and light industrial for the studio. It would have cost too much to get that dump in good order, but the agent was getting a bit frustrated.

"Look, I have nothing else except one place you wouldn't want. Nobody does."

"What's wrong with it?"

"Its office space is in on the third floor and the light industrial space is on the fourth... with no lift!"

"Worth a look, I guess."

"Hardly ideal for a studio, but OK ." I agreed with Elton.

And it wasn't so bad. It had a nice, airy office of about thirty square metres, a smaller room above; a double loo (his and hers) with washbasin and a storage cupboard; it was perfectly placed in Greek Street, a few doors up from Old Compton Street and we thought we could afford it. We wanted to make it work so, although the studio space was small, the two of us decided we wanted to take it. On the second visit, Chris concurred; the studio would be small, but it was only going to be for demos so it would work.



*Our building in Greek Street as it is today.
The studio was where the small windows at the top can be seen.*

While Elton was sorting out the lease and financing details, I recorded a single with Cherry. Mike Beaton at Private Stock had wanted to sign her so we recorded a Junior Campbell song, *Here Comes The Band* and a song I'd written with Steve Glen for the flip side.

I was also looking at equipment and thinking about the building. I spoke to my cousin, Steven, whose company designed and built exhibition stands and he said he could help with materials and some manpower. That was hugely appreciated.

On our last two jobs, we'd used the Little Big Man 'back line', John Danter, Andy Hill and Graham Walker as the session players. Andy was not only a good keyboard player, but very handy on bass and vocals. I suggested that they become our 'house band' provided they were available. On our last job, I'd also booked my chums Dominic and Frank (Bugatti and Musker) for an evening session at Morgan. The equipment in two studios broke down before we got the thing recorded in the third by which time it was the early hours with the boys and the client rather worse for wear. Back then equipment was always causing problems and when a good thump didn't rectify matters, a maintenance guy would have to be called; there could be a worrying moment with twenty string players waiting to add their parts.

Roger Quested offered to make us some speakers at home and another Morgan engineer, Martyn Webster, agreed to 'plumb in' our equipment and do any repair work.

Shortly after we moved in, the bricks arrived for the wall between the studio area and the control room. Elton and I carried them all up to the fourth floor. Steven's guys, both Irish came to build the wall between the studio and the control room. They then fitted the double panes of glass with putty rather than rubber surrounds so we then had several Irish fingerprints inside the glass. They tested it, one in the control room, one in the studio.

"Hey, Tom, seems to be fitting foine."

"Lovely job, Seamus!"

"Er, guys... you're not really meant to be able to hear each other, you know."

So a third, heavier pane of glass was fitted, but to little advantage. We would be aware, until we could stretch to an upgrade, that singers could hear what the clients were saying about them despite the wall, thick door and three panes of glass

The next few weeks were spent with us stapling the wall covering that we guessed was brown trouser material, fitting ceiling tiles and bamboo beading to cover all the joints. Then it was the skirting boards and some cork on a wall in the control room. We started each morning around 10am and continued until Cherry brought us some food after the show came down. We'd eat and then go home. Sometimes friends would come to town to watch *A Chorus Line* and we'd then go out to Joe Allen for dinner and this was the only way we could see friends for the next eighteen months.

Andy Hill, bless him, helped us all the way though, spending long hours getting the studio done. Chris was doing his voiceovers and seemed completely unavailable to help with the donkeywork. Elton and I lost about 20lbs each.

The Microphone, headphone and guitar jack sockets had been put in early and when the equipment arrived, it just had to be plumbed in. We had done a 'package deal' with Andrew Stirling of Turnkey. We had to get what we could afford: a Brenell 8-track recorder, an Allen and Heath mixer, an assortment of mics and headphones, music stands and so on. My only complaint was the mass of cables emerging

from the back of the mixer was visible so Andrew Stirling removed the output tube from his wife's tumble dryer and fitted that. I doubt she was too happy, but we were. When Chris brought in the first potential client, I was still Hoovering up.

We started pitching for jobs. Chris tried to sell us to clients when doing voice-overs and Elton made appointments with agencies and we did get a few jobs done quite early on. Elton, as well as selling our services, cleaned the office, made the teas and coffees, took care of the clients and did the books. I took care of the sessions, made copies, cleaned the studio and toilets and was now writing most of the music. All copyrights were registered under Mindel/Seys/Sandford and Mingles Music, the publishing arm administered by Intersong.

Back then, every music company charged for demos, unlike now and we weren't going to start offering free demos, but many agencies had budgets that allowed them to commission two or three companies and choose a track from those. Sometimes ours was selected, which was really rewarding financially, emotionally and for our CV.

Elton was very strict on the money front, keeping a close eye on all costs. Chris and I were often in need of a small scotch at the end of the day, but we didn't even have alcohol for clients at that time. As business picked up, Graham left one of his drum kits in the studio that saved a lot of time on sessions... and the need to carry it up and down four flights of stairs for each day's sessions. Our 'house band' was doing all the demos and we'd sometimes augment with a sax or fiddle player or even banjo (heaven forbid) and then record the 'master' in another studio.

We had a client and that would be the advertising agency or production company and our client had a client and that was the company whose product was being advertised. In 1977, scripts were typed and were either brought to us by the agency or via bike messenger. Sometimes a script from a regional agency would come by post!!!! Luckily, nearly everyone had a cassette player so acetates were no longer necessary. If our client stayed until the mix was done, he or she would probably take a cassette or two back to the agency. If they didn't, we, again, would send them by courier. Sometimes the client's client would come to the studio, but this wasn't recommended. Masters were recorded onto 15 i.p.s. tape; for TV mono on the left channel with timecode down the right.

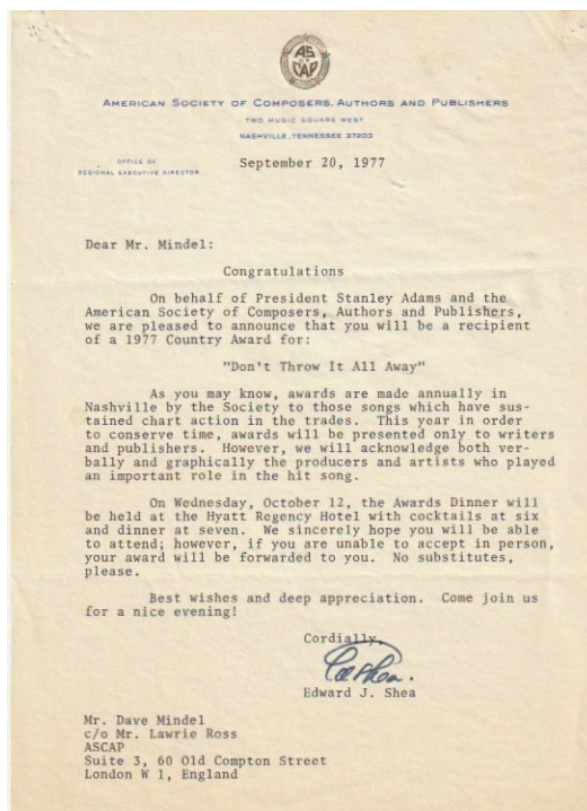
An early session I enjoyed was for KP Nuts. The client brought in Dudley Moore to record something to an old tune. I was a bit concerned that our Knight upright piano might not be good enough, but Dudley wasn't concerned about that. After a few takes the client was happy,

"That's terrific, love it"

"I really think I can do it a bit better."

And so it went on until Dudley thought it was acceptable; a real professional, but such a joy to work with.

In September I got a letter from the US, saying that we'd won a couple of ASCAP awards with an invitation to go to the awards ceremony. I rather fancied going and Cherry said I should to make a bit of a presence in Nashville, but Elton insisted we were too busy so I acquiesced and stayed put. Gary and I eventually accepted our awards at the ASCAP office in London from one of my musical heroes, Hank Marvin.



I also remember getting call from Don Black, a terrific bloke and Britain's best lyricist.

"Is there any chance you recording a few demos for us in your studio?"

"Of course, but you know we're just 8 track here?"

"That's fine, we're just doing piano and vocal demos; it's new Musical I'm writing with Elmer Bernstein and we'd would like to come in and hear how the new songs sound with great singers. Any idea of the cost?"

"Is £100 OK, I can't afford any more than that!"

I think I really would have paid to work with those two so we simply couldn't charge them: Don, an old friend and the chance to be in the studio with Elmer Berstein who was as easy to work with as Don, was too good to miss. Bob Saker and Kay Garner sang as brilliantly as ever.

As the work came in, we tried out more and more singers. Some we knew of and some were recommended and there were far fewer session singers back then and they were pretty much cleaning up. The busier we got, the office became more like a waiting room for musicians and singers as one session would follow on from another. If we didn't get a good vibe from a singer, we simply didn't use him or her again... others were so good.

I was pretty much learning from day to day. If I wasn't knowledgeable on a style of music, I made sure I learned damn quickly as I didn't want to get anything wrong. The busier I got, the better I worked. I loved the adrenaline when I only had hours to come up with something.

Anyone who watched Two and a Half Men would come to the conclusion that jingle writers come up with lyrics, often to known tunes, but that's not the way it's done at all. In 90% of cases, where there's a sung section, the agency guys, often a copywriter and art director, will arrive with copy (lyrics).

With TV these would be down the left hand side of a page with the description of the film shots down the right. Sometimes they'd bring sheets from a 'story board' with drawings of what the shot would look like. For radio we only saw the copy and on other occasions we'd get a finished film; on video to write to. Only with small, regional agencies did we ever get a request to write the lyrics also.



1st studio set up with the Brennell 8-Track, Allen & Heath mixer and rare cork screw.

As business picked up, we discovered that half the time the client tended to want to broadcast our demo. In most cases the sound quality, if totally fine for them, would not, in my opinion, be of the quality of top studios and could even damage our reputation. So, as soon as possible, after a short chat with our amiable Devon-based bank manager, Elton announced that we could acquire the second hand 3M 16-track machine I'd spotted. To my mind there has never been a better sounding tape machine and the extra tracks and superior head width made a big difference.

With the 16-track we could overdub instruments in another studio, either with a 16 track head or a 24 track head that gave us 8 more tracks and then mix at that studio. In the same way that the Orange 16track 1" tape allowed us to add 8 tracks, so a 24 track tape machine allowed us to add 8 to our 16. It seems hard to imagine now, but 16 tracks were often enough. The bass (kick) drum and snare had a track each and the rest of the kit was routed to two more tracks. The hi-hat and each tom had a mic each plus two overheads and all of these were balanced over the stereo pair of tracks. Sometimes we used the Glyn Johns method of two identical mics, one being two stick lengths above and the other two stick lengths to the right of the centre of the snare. It's a very quick way of getting a very decent string sound. Bass took up a track, guitars, maybe two and piano; that leaves eight for vocals and other overdubs.

Business was growing and our reputation seemed to be also. If there was more than one job to do, I'd be in the studio (cleaning) by 6 30am. Then I'd start writing. Chis would arrive about 7am.

"Morning, everything sounding good?"

"I can't say; I'm just writing them now."

This panicked him every single time. The truth is that even with five days to write something, I'd probably do it very close to the session time. The adrenalin seemed to help.

Again, Gary and I had written a song that, I, as controlling publisher, decided to enter for *Eurovision*. Ron, being Gary's publisher, and I had agreed that we would take it it turns to be the controlling publisher of each new song, but sharing proceeds .

After All This Time was selected for the final twelve, the largest number of *Song For Europe* finalists so far. With *Whenever I'm Away From You* failing to make the cut despite soon being a hit, it was up to us, for the first time, to find an artist who wanted to perform in *Eurovision* or invent a group. I invited Wesley, Park and Smith to be the act so, without a record company already representing them, we'd need to record, routine, stage and dress the group and to negotiate a record deal, which Ron achieved with RCA. Back then, every finalist was offered several record deals, mostly on the off chance of winning. The single was recorded at Morgan once again with the legendary, Barry Morgan, on drums. Barry's son is now one of Britain's top session drummers, appearing regularly on *Strictly Come Dancing*. Bill Pitt again arranged the strings.

In March, the contest was going to be broadcast live from the New London Theatre in Covent Garden, which gave the BBC cameramen the perfect opportunity to go on strike. My boys thought this might help them as they sounded better than they looked (their words not mine). A meeting of all the acts and writers was held in the make up room. Singer Carl Wayne from the Move was sitting in a chair with rollers in his hair and I thought he seemed a bit of a 'luvvie'. My friend and oft collaborator, Steve Glen, was in a group called Rags with his wife, Nichola and Jill Shirley; The Foundations were involved as were friends, Lyndsey de Paul and Mike Moran and Lyn Paul from The New Seekers.

In the end, we all accepted that the artistes would perform without being broadcast and the recording of the show would be played out later that evening on Radio2 with a phone in, listener vote. Lyndsey and Mike won and we came fifth of twelve, which wasn't honestly a disappointment. And as it happens, Carl Wayne later recorded hundreds of commercials for us, I produced a record for him and he and his wife, Sue Hanson, became dear friends. He was a great singer and marvelous man and I, like so many others in the business, still miss him today.

Cherry's single was released and getting airplay, but her label, Private Stock had David Soul's Silver Lady selling huge amounts and he was getting all the label's pressing quota from EMI so our single died.



Cherry's single: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mbww5qwYes0>

Elton and Chris were selling Mingles to agencies and our client base was building. I found I was learning all the time, the little tricks, the way to feel the tempo of a film edit, the best ways of leaving the correct amount of time that an inserted voice over would take. The more I did, the better I became and I felt we'd been lucky enough to get away with our rather mediocre first efforts.

Bearing in mind that I'd never had a music lesson save for the chords that Bernard Beddard had taught me in Switzerland, I experimented with new chords and inversions and started trying to teach myself to play the piano that was in the studio. I found that finding chords on the piano, rather than the guitar that I'd always used gave a new dimension to our work.

After Mingles had been running about a year, Elton announced.

"I think we can afford to take someone on to help around here."

Chris had a request.

"Can we get a sixteen year-old with big tits?"

That wasn't really politically correct even then.

One applicant seemed to fit the bill when she came for the interview. When I say 'interview', I mean she brought her father who interviewed us. We passed and so Debra Stone was hired and was terrific and we became, and still are, friends.

Getting into the top agencies got us better work that got us more clients and so it went. I can't begin to name many of the jobs we were doing back then; after I'd done a few hundred they started to blur into each other save for the really successful ones.

Elton announced that his cleaning lady had a son who was very keen on getting into the music business; a bright lad and very hard-working. Within an hour of him being with us, Chris had named him 'Bungalow' as he had nothing upstairs; almost the first thing he said to me was, "What time do we knock off?" and he sealed his fate by calling Elton, 'Mate'.

London's Soho back then was a wonderful place to work. Just walking through to Trident studios, you might bump into three people you knew. Most of the music and film production companies were there, editors, post production houses like Molinaire, John Wood and De Lane Lea and, of course, recording studios. We could overdub strings or brass at Trident, Advision, CBS, Audio International, Berwick Street, all within walking distance and many more including Abbey Road for the big ones.

Now we had had Doobrie (Debra) Chris decided that lunches in the office would serve us better than taking people out as he could mix up agency people, directors, voice-over artists and the odd luvvie and I'm sure this worked well and made for some interesting lunchtimes. Doobrie would pop round the corner to Fratelli Camesa in Old Compton Street and buy patés, hams, salads, superb cheeses, chocolate fudge and lots of wine.

The next move was to start taking modest salaries; then we were able to hire someone to help me and I don't mean a psychiatrist. We were beginning to despair over the dearth of good candidates when Doobrie introduced us to a young man who lived close to her, Charles Mace was a good looking lad, very upbeat who'd turned had down a university scholarship to go to work at the BBC.

It was clear even then that schools really didn't prepare students for job interviews or what working might possibly entail. Over the years we allowed dozens of 'work experience' kids to come for a week or two and nothing changed. Only two had any 'nous' whatsoever. And one was Greek.

Charles was hired on a three-month trial and became 'Chuck'. So we had Elton, Doobrie and Chuck. I didn't have a nickname... at least that I was aware of. Chuck was excellent, picked everything up quickly and became not only an engineer, but a great writer and music producer.

I do remember one session early on a small job that required some brass. Elton knew a guy who played trumpet and was in a band so he asked them to come along in the evening to overdub the brass section on our demo. Unfortunately the Red Hot Goolies were a Trad Jazz band who on seeing the written parts exclaimed,

“Dots!!! Haven’t seen any of those for donkeys’ years!” I was obliged to sing each player his part so he could learn it, but it was still dreadful and unusable.

Singers were obliged to be members of Equity a union that represented actors and entertainers. Equity insisted people join in order to work, but wouldn’t let them join until they’d worked. That makes sense, doesn’t it! Even people coming from three years of drama school or ten years of ballet didn’t qualify. What Equity did achieve for singers and actors though, was an excellent contract with the advertising body for good rates with extra for radio usage and repeat fees for TV. One commercial could net a singer thousands of pounds even then so there was no shortage of great singers who were delighted to be booked for commercials. Equity also demanded extra fees for harmonies and double tracking and this applied for singles and albums, but, realistically, it was in the singers’ best interests that the demo was chosen by the agency as the returns could be so high that they’d do as many tracks as were required in order to produce the best sound at our standard demo rate.

Musicians received nearly as much for a one-hour ‘jingle’ session as for a three-hour ‘record’ one. 8-9am was known as ‘greedy hour’ and the guys loved fitting one of these in before their regular 10-1, 2-5, 7-10 sessions. Yes, some were that busy in those days. Our in-house guys were paid less than scale on demos, but were more than compensated if the track went on air. Accordingly, Elton fastidiously kept details of every session in a blue book that was known as ‘Blue Book’.

We started to try out different vocalists and some really stood out. I loved the way Doreen and Irene Chanter sang, but they were LOUD and tended to blast the levels. Listening to our early show-reels, you hear a few people a lot: Bob Saker, Nick Curtis, Kay Garner and Stephanie de Dykes especially.

I must mention Bob who must have done literally hundreds of sessions for us. We’d met when we both had songs performed by Olivia Newton John for *Eurovision*. For me, he’s the most talented singer of all time. He had a great voice, but few people actually knew what his own voice sounded like because he could change it to any style from crooner to Rock Singer. Not only that but he could do perfect sound-alikes of so many singers: Presley, Adam Faith, Johnny Cash, Nat King Cole, Sinatra, you name it. Once I asked him if he could do a David Clayton Thomas of Blood Sweat and Tears fame. He pondered this for a moment and then launched straight into a brilliant impersonation of this slightly obscure singer. Not only this, but whether he sang loudly or softly, the needle on the meter hardly moved; great control. And he was a fine voice-over artist also.

Bob had little tolerance for clients who made stupid remarks and, although always charming to them, would sometimes stand out of their sight in the studio brandishing a mic stand or guitar as if he was about to commit murder. He once set fire to a script.

We used Stephanie de Sykes a lot. Stephanie (Peph) had been a hit solo artist and was now doing sessions. She had an excellent voice and ear for harmonies, but was also a joy to work with and the clients loved her. She, Bob and Kay Garner spent nearly as much time with us as with their families. Kay (the world is my ashtray) Garner was great singer and wonderful person and if something funny happened she’d start laughing and get louder and louder until she was crying and her infectious laugh started everyone else off. Sessions often over-ran for this reason.

These singers did, and still do, have agents and sometimes we'd call Hobsons to get recommendations for specialist singers. We were doing quite a lot of these 'sound-alikes'. Sometimes this meant copying a record exactly and sometime the agency had obtained the right to change lyric to suit the add. There is a contractual clause called 'favoured nations' where the publisher and record companies agree to charge the same fees for a recording. If the publishing rights cost \$15,000, then so would the use of the recording and our fee would be a fifth of that so...

We did a Beach Boys mash-up for a mouthwash and were introduced to a singer called Alan Carvell who knew every vocal line to every Beach Boys' song so we used him quite a lot. If you booked two from Bob, Tony Burrows or Gordon Neville, with Alan, it sounded pretty close to authentic. We recorded *Sunday Sunday* (done like Mamas and Papas) for The News Of The World and *Do You Think I'm Sexy?* for Gloria Vanderbilt so I was learning what to listen for and whom to book in order to get the authentic sound. Over the years, we did hundreds of these tracks. I was really learning as I went along and loving it all.

Another type of track is what we call, 'In the style of'. This can vary from, "Can you do something like Motown?" to "How close can you get to Johnny Cash?" The latter could be risky, not getting Bob to sound like Cash, which is the easy part, but when the agency has a particular song in mind and wanted us to get "As close as possible" I'd start at a safe distance. If they then pushed us to get closer, we'd ask them to sign an indemnity contract freeing us from any litigation. In most cases they'll then back off, but in the case of Saatchi with Gillette and Johnny Cash, they signed and pushed us closer and closer. And got sued.

One night Chris brought in the actress Susan George who was a good friend of his. She arrived with TV presenter and journalist, Michael Parkinson who was interested to see the recording process. Susan (Susie) had a good singing voice and had written some very nice songs that she recorded that evening with our in-house boys. Susie and Michael we great company and the session was fun.

Although she loved the show, Cherry decided to come out of *A Chorus Line* in the autumn of 1978. It was tough. Apart from only seeing our friends only after they'd seen the show at 10:45 for the usual Joe Allen dinner, the physical effort took its toll. Despite eating large amounts she was losing weight and was taking Complan to counteract the loss. Sunday was her only day off and most of that was spent catching up on sleep. My salary was now decent and Cherry, who had a good agent would go after more theatre, TV and voice-over work and she also started house-hunting for something a bit bigger than our railway cottage.

Jane Seymour and her husband, Geep decided that this long distance marriage wouldn't work so, sadly separated, but remained friends to this day. They didn't sell the house in Worple Street and Jane's sister, Annie and Rona Newton John moved in. I'd stayed with Jane in her lovely little house in the Hollywood Hills that spring. Chris came out as well and was staying with Susan George. I probably had too much fun. Jane's birthday was certainly memorable, only I can't remember much after sitting on the floor eating with our hands at Dar Mahgreb restaurant on Sunset. I think I also got some business done.



Jane reading a script at her lovely, little house.

I certainly hadn't forgotten France. Cherry and I had grabbed a few days on the south coast during the run of *A Chorus Line* and I showed her Cannes, the scene of my past six MIDEMS. She really liked the Majestic hotel so I was obliged to take a tiny room at the back and mostly live off pain bagnats. But we were at the Majestic. We also took my mother to the Champagne area for a few days. France has so many beautiful regions.

One day, Charles Armitage, Don Gould, Miki Anthony and I decided to go to La Grenouillère, our favourite restaurant over the Channel, for lunch and to pick up some wine and French delicacies to bring home. After a marvelous meal, Don was driving us to Calais when we were slowed down by a huge truck. Don, driving a right hand drive car had to check with Miki in the passenger front seat if it was safe to overtake. Don pulled out a little.

"Clear!"

So Don pulled out to overtake only there was another truck approaching and much too near. Having a very close brush with death, I had learned a lesson.

"Right, next time we'll spend the night near the restaurant, it's safer."

And we did. And the next trip one after that was two nights, then three, then further afield and four and others joined us including Charles's bother, Alex, legendary promotion man and *Karma Chameleon* harmonica player, Judd Lander and then we invited Elton. He hardly drank so was a welcome addition as van driver. This tawdry bunch was known as The Junketeers.

Things at Mingles were going very well, but agencies took 90 days to pay our invoices while we had to pay wages, office bills plus musicians, outside studios and everything else pretty promptly so building up a sum of money was never easy.

In late September Chris and his wife, Carol, came to dinner. Cherry had received a call from an old ballet school friend who had found a job with The Lyon Ballet. While there, she had fallen for a French photographer and they had just bought a ruin in a tiny village towards the south coast of France. After dinner, having put away a few bottles, we told Chris and Carol about the ruin and had a map spread out on the floor trying to work out where this village might be situated, it wasn't on our map.

Just at that moment, Tanya, Cherry's friend phoned.

"You must come over and see this place it's wonderful."

"I'm sure we will."

"And there's a house for sale there."

"We'll we don't have money for that!"

Cherry rang off. Chris said something about visiting that surprised us so Cherry phoned Tanya right back.

"How's Friday?"

"Fine."

So early Friday evening we took an Air France Caravelle with some strange rear-facing seats so the four of us were able sit together and landed in Lyon. Jacques, the boyfriend and Tanya picked us up and took us back to their beautiful mansion flat in the city Centre. It was just like one of those high ceiling Paris flats you see in movies. We had dinner and slept there and early on Saturday we took the A7 autoroute south for about 2 hours. We turned off at Bollène, just north of Orange and drove another hour, which I discovered was in order to show us a little of the area which was spectacularly beautiful, especially bathed in the warm, autumn, Provençale sunshine. Eventually we turned off a small road and at the end of a short valley appeared a Medieval village. I'd been to Mougins behind Cannes and St Paul de Vence and this was similar except there was no one about and no café, restaurant, shop and almost no people. We visited the ruin, which really was a ruin, but, like all old stone houses, could be rebuilt by masons with the skills that had been passed on for generations.

Near to Jacques and Tanya's ruin was a larger house. We hadn't realised that Tanya had arranged for the seller to show it to us. I felt quite bad that this lady had no idea we couldn't afford it.

There IS love at first sight. It WAS love at first sight. The house had a small courtyard, a large living room, big dining room, simple kitchen and outside stairs that led to a terrace off which were situated the bedrooms, one huge one normal sized and a tiny one.

The terrace was of about 25 square metres with a captivating view of the picturesque river Cèze just below and the tree covered hills opposite. The whole place was quite magical. Joined on the back towards the river was another house that belonged to the same couple and was, likewise, for sale. Chris asked the price of the main house and was told however many millions of francs!

"Combien???"

Tanya explained that many older people still quote old francs, but the price actually converted to £45,000. That we didn't have.

"Il faut se dépêcher, il y a beaucoup de monde intéressée". Or the usual sales pitch of "hurry, we have other buyers". To be polite, we agreed to go back the following day.

We walked around Montclus a few times. M Dreyfus, a retired Renault director showed us round the ancient 'Château', which was a tall, oblong building where the village's inhabitants hid from marauding Catholics until the attackers became bored and moved on. The village people got to the Château through each others' houses that were joined in order for them to get to safety without being seen. The kitchen was still fairly intact and at the top there were protruding stones.

"Pour le caca."

Those were the disposal slides for the toilets!

We walked to the bridge that crossed the river just outside the village walls. The other side of the river there was a campsite.

“The owner is a great cook and in summer you can book to eat there.”

We found the owners of another house for sale were at home. They showed us round as Tanya thought we should see at least one other place. I didn't care for it.

We drove out and along a narrow road that had a steep drop on the right down to the river. This section was known as the 'Gorges de la Cèze... beautiful and then, five miles from Montclaus we turned off into a gorgeous village called Goudargues. Jacques had booked rooms in the Hôtel du Commerce; we checked in. The rooms were as simple as can be.

I decided to ask Cherry, “Was there anything you didn't especially like about that second house?”

“Yes, that top room, I got a really creepy feeling in the top room.”

“Me too, horrible atmosphere and I had a strange feeling that a child was involved.”

“Exactly!”

We went down to the tiny bar where Chris and Carol were already installed.

I asked Chris the same question about the last house.

“We've been discussing exactly the same thing; definitely something to do with a child.”

I still wonder what happened there. Something did.



The tables outside the Hotel du Commerce and the hotel on the left.

I loved the food in the Commerce, cooked under the direction of the owner, M Coste, a jovial ex-Rugby player. There was nothing fancy, just good food; gambas flamed with Pastis and duck with olives. I found the wine a bit 'sudden', but had a great evening talking of France and houses with one, last cognac across the pretty canal in the Café de France.

Our slumber was only disturbed by the antiquated plumbing. We re-visited the lovely Montclaus house after which we enjoyed a splendid lunch in the only local Michelin local starred restaurant that Jacques had booked, but Chris and I paid for as was only right and then we set off for Lyon airport.

In the office on Monday morning, Elton's reaction to our enthusing over all things Montclaus was not what we expected so, again to my surprise, that Friday, Cherry and I took the same Air France flight,

but with Elton and Nicki. There was a complete repeat of the Friday night and Saturday morning with Elton and his fiancée just as enamoured of the place as the four of us had been the week before. This time we stayed in an even more basic Hotel in the charming town of St Martin d'Ardèche that is right on the Ardèche river. Despite it being October 6th, we ate outside the Hotel de Touristes and I seem to remember an excellent feuilleté de fruits de mer and a delicious rabbit dish. Did I tell you I never forget a meal?

Over dinner, Elton announced that he was going to try to find a way of buying that house. Knowing Elton, I thought he might actually pull it off so we went to a bar to celebrate. As I mentioned, Elton is not a drinker, but had an assortment of sticky, coloured 'digestifs' that re-visited in the early hours.

We went back to Montclus to let the owner know of our plans, but she wouldn't budge on the price. Elton loves to haggle, but, for once it wasn't working. However, we did agree a good price on renting the smaller house from the Nordins. This gave us an apartment for extra guests and, more importantly, a bigger terrace, lower down, looking right over the water.

Tanya had found her ruin during a weekend's visit with the lead dancer of the Lyon ballet whose family's house overlooked the village. Her friend was at home and we were invited for apéros. Apéros in France are rarely just that and the father had some merguez sausages (originally from north Africa) on the Bar B Q that we ate in torn off chunks of a baguette with mustard washed down by copious amounts of local rosé. As we sat there looking at the village basked in the hot sunshine, I knew this was absolutely where I was meant to be. We returned to London and I left Elton to do what Elton does best.



Montclus.

Chapter Eleven... **FRANCE AGAIN**

Apart from his other responsibilities, Elton would often listen to tapes that were sent or bought in. One day the boys from a band left their tape; Elton listened and liked what he heard. He called the number on the box right back and arranged to meet with the band, Last Orders. He played it to me as he wanted to record some stuff with them. And so he did; they were living in a van so he found them some accommodation while they were in town. He and Andy Hill with Chuck engineering recorded both at Mingles in the evenings and Polydor. I was really concentrating on the commercials side and my other artists, but Elton suggested a commercial song of mine in an attempt to find a first single for Last Orders and wanted to adapt one of theirs for a rice commercial, but the older members refused and the project fell apart, sadly. The youngest member, Steve Hampton, was the most open-minded and ambitious and could not accept the intransigence of his bandmates. However, our paths would cross later. Much later.

We had a very busy end of year and were seriously considering upgrading to 24 track and after a very good couple of months, Elton gave the go-ahead. I ordered an MCI 24 track and 2 track and a 32 channel mixer from the same company. My old MIDEM pal, Siggie Jackson worked there and gave us a great deal.

We also attended the Abbey Road sale and bought two of their Neumann microphones at a good price. Andrew Stirling who'd supplied our other gear bought one of the 4-track machines used by The Beatles. I don't imagine the value of that has dropped!

As I said, agencies took 90 days to pay us so we needed a bank loan to cover the new equipment while we were owed more than that amount. Doesn't really seem right, but our hands were tied.



The MCI Mixer

My old plugging friend, Steve Elson and I had been wanting to work together. Drummer, Graham's, girlfriend, Jackie Challoner, who had done various sessions for us and had done extra vocals for Wesley, Park and Smith on a *A Song For Europe* had a voice that was not easy to blend in with others, but he had a stunning voice. Steve and I asked her if she'd like to record some songs of her choice. She picked four; a cross-section from Country Rock to Blues to ballads. Graham brought in few talented mates and we spent quite a lot of time on the demo recordings.

On December 17th, I called my old mate, Dave Dee of Dave Dee, Dozy, Beak, Mick and Titch fame. He was now head of A&R at WEA records.

"How's it going son?"

"All good, thanks, I have an artist I'd like you to hear."

"Come right over, it's my birthday, we'll crack a bottle of bubbly."

“Several bottles of bubbly later, I left a tad wobbly, but with a deal for Jackie, not the album deal I’d hoped for, but three singles with options. I was still happy with the outcome. That’s how things were done back then.

Just after Christmas, Elton announced that the company accountant, Colin Campbell wanted in on the house and would put his share down right away and that would cover a deposit, making a mortgage easier. He arranged this without too much problem so we were actually going to own a house in France like I’d always dreamed. We decided I’d drive to MIDEM, Elton would drive from a ski holiday and we’d meet up in Goudargues on my way back in order to see the notary whom Jacques had already notified of the sale. All property sales in France go through one or two Notaries.

Our Intersong administration deal meant I was working again with Ronnie Beck and was reunited with Dave Colyer who had been the plugger for Tony Hall. Phil Read made up the creative team. We had a good MIDEM.

Ronnie and I had a nice dinner with Bruce Welch from my teen favourites, The Shadows. He had clearly not got over his recent break up from Olivia Newton John. I liked him a lot. Still do.

Our appointment with the Notary, Maître Roverly didn’t start well.

“I think buying this house will be impossible. All the boundaries are too difficult in Montclus as most houses were ruined and rebuilt by Parisians. May I recommend a gorgeous mill house in Le Coureau?”

“I’d heard that flooded most years.”

“Oh no, no... well, very rarely.” Insisted Maître Roverly.

In fact it floods so often that, after the flood of 2002, the Dutch owners finally abandoned it and it stands, a ruin. The Notary was patently on a percentage of any sale of the mill. After that I called him ‘Daylight’ (Roverly).

“Well, it’s the Nordin house or nothing!”

Slightly, deflated we headed home.

Mars was one of the biggest advertisers in the UK with their confectionary brands and Pedigree pet foods. The bigger the brand, the better it was for our showreel that we updated every three months or so. The better the showreel, the more work it brought in. Mars jobs were spit between various agencies, but most have changed names so many times or have been taken over that I hardly remember which was which.

This one agency, Masius, in St James Street started giving us a lot of work. Each time an ad was presented, we seemed to get a call from another copywriter or producer and each one was really creative and nicer than the last. We worked a lot for one team of writer and art director, Patrick Burston and Vernon Churcher. Patrick was very un-advertising indeed, so charming and down to Earth and all his copy (lyrics) always worked really well. I was beginning to find that, as I read good copy, on the first or second time, a melody would come straight into my head. When the meeting was over, I could pick up my guitar or go to piano, work out the chords, select the appropriate key and time out the piece in well under an hour. Then I’d pick a lead singer and others if there were harmonies and ask Doobrie to book the musicians and relevant singers. I’d try to be flexible with the time so that we could get our first choices, but sometimes they were so busy that we would book my second choice.

If the lead singer was going to be female, setting the key was easy. Most session ladies tended to sing exactly an octave above me and I'd probably then take it down a tone or three semi-tones for a man. I'd try to keep the top note as an A for a girl and G for a guy unless it was a rock track and then it could be higher. Stephanie generously recommended Kate Robbins and Lynda Hayes to us and we were also regularly booking Tony Burrows, Carl Wayne, Gordon Neville, Mae McKenna, Maggie Ryder whom I knew from my Barnes days, Graham's girlfriend Jackie Challoner and an amazing rock singer with a huge voice called Stevie Lange. Stevie had been in a hit band, Night, with Chris Thompson, ex singer of Manfred Mann's Earth Band and they worked with us often over the years.

As far as Mars was concerned, I found the set up rather weird. As I discovered by a necessary visit to their offices in Slough (in itself worth avoiding) I discovered that everyone worked in a huge space with each desk the same size; same phone, same number of pens, paperclips and only meetings were held in the bigger spaces round the outside. Employees worked their way up through the company by spending a certain amount of time in each department including marketing, so, despite having no experience in advertising, these people had the final say on any film or music presented to them.

Even worse could be when they attended a recording session. The few who understood music were fine; those who admitted, "I know nothing about music so I'll leave it to you" were great, but those who THOUGHT they knew about music were a nightmare. Because they knew nothing, but wanted to appear in charge, they would come up with something pretty ridiculous through trying to appear knowledgeable.

Our first Maltesers commercial had a pretty big line up in CBS studios, arranged and conducted by Don Gould. After the first good take, there was a voice from the back.

"The flutist (sic) played it different from last time."

Me..."But the part is written and he's playing it."

"Will you tell him he played it differently last time?"

"He's the lead flautist from the LSO, I didn't hear anything different. I think you'd better explain it."

"He then attempted to tell a very confused flautist what he'd done wrong."

Apparently, on the next take he was back to doing it right!

A job Chris brought in required a Lonnie Donegan (king of skiffle) sound-alike. Recording this, we learned that no one could emulate this artist, not Bob, not Burrows, not Chris. This was a first and the only other artist we realised could not be copied was Aretha Franklin.

Chis had been enthusing about a young engineer he had been working with at Molinaire studios.

"His name is Nick Angell and the best I've worked with. He should really have his own shop and someone is bound to poach him so it should be us."

"But we have no money."

But Elton did what he does best, got a promised loan from the bank with our houses as collateral and even my mother greed to invest. We had a meeting with Nick, a very personable young man and he seemed very excited about the project. Again, the search was on for premises.

The good news came through that the Notary had sorted out the problems with the Montclus house's boundaries and a 'Compromis de vente' could now be signed. This is the first of two contracts that must be signed on each property sale. Often the buyer can back out if the financing could not be achieved, but otherwise it's binding. We gave Jacques power of attorney to sign this and, in early March, Elton and I drove down and signed the 'Acte de Vente' after we were talked through page after page of the actual contract. We were now the excited owners of a house in the South of France. We, with Jacques were staying again at the Hôtel du Commerce in Goudargues and had a celebratory dinner in their old-fashioned dining room after which Jacques had an idea,

"Why don't we take a bottle of wine to Christen the house, you have the keys."

So we did and drank the first of many, many bottles of wine in the living room. We were very happy indeed.



There has been some conjecture about who found the Angell premises in Floral Street Covent Garden. According to my memory, I saw it first and Elton and Chris claim they did, but either way we all liked the space. Like Mingles, didn't seem ideal, but affordable. It was below ground, hence no light and was rather like an underground car park with what seemed like too many pillars. A very excellent architect appeared to come up with workable plans and Elton, Chris, Nick and I assembled one evening to pace it all out. There would be three studios, a reception area, a transfer room/library, storeroom and small kitchen. The studios seemed too small in this open space so Nick paced them out and then went back to Moninaire to discover that two of the three were bigger than the space in which he was working. The plans were signed off and a building start date arranged.

Chris was pretty obsessed with awards and had everything he'd won plus my ASCAP plaques on the wall as he thought they impressed clients. He entered our work in some events and we started winning a few, not that it interested me in the least. To keep parity, all commercials were still credited to Mindel/Sandford/Seys and my own songs to me and. Chris wrote the odd tune, but Elton was pretty involved with Angell and was now writing nothing. Back in 1966, he was the better writer, but I progressed quite quickly, whereas he seemed to be a bit stuck with the business side of things. He was brilliant at finding finances and starting up businesses. He took care of all the business side of Mingles allowing me the time to write and record.

I never turned down a job. If I wasn't aware of a particular requested style of music or had never written anything like it, I made darn sure I learned pretty quickly. I even did an Ad for the Middle East one day in a relevant style. A voice-over artist was found through the embassy and the client insisted on a translator being present. Apparently on a previous job, at the end of the script the voice over had added "And come down to my brother's restaurant on the corner of..." with no one understanding that he'd added this.

One of our last sessions on the 16 track recorder was for Simon Weinstock, a lovely guy and producer at our favourite agency, but he wasn't so musical, which was fine. That was our job. He called late on to apologise that he wouldn't make the session,

"I'm sorry, we're still at the edit so would you mind playing it over the phone for me?"

I hated doing this as often the wrong instrument will be brought to the fore by the limited sound quality of a telephone. Before I played it, I heard him again,

"Oh, and could you play it on the small speakers?" as if that would make the slightest difference. Doh!!!!

As we were a music company, we received a lot of tapes and, as I said, most were awful, but one stood out. A guy with a Middle Eastern accent sent in a cassette explaining that his song was 'of a sexual nature'. It comprised him bashing out a four beat rhythm and making sexual sounds... nothing even approaching a melody or lyric. Then one day a lady sent in a tape of a tune she'd written that she said was exactly the same as something I had on air. I listened and she was right; the melodies were near identical. I wrote and asked her who might have heard her melody before me and she replied, 'only my husband' so I had to point out that I couldn't have plagiarised something I could never have heard. I think my very favourite was a lyric a lady sent in that began, 'Goodbye my Derek'!

This was also a hugely exciting time: we had the French house, Angell had opened and was looking great and picking up most of Nick's old clients. We were updating our studio and I was enjoying my job so much and getting home in time to spend time with my wife who wasn't working evenings any more and, not only that, but we were able to afford one of the mass-produced fax machines. Scripts no longer had to be delivered and agencies could phone to say that a fax of a new script would be sent and suddenly, there it was. The paper was on a roll so had to be torn off and it tended to curl up as you put it on a music stand or piano so I'd Sellotape it to a piece of board before standing it up. This seemed totally revolutionary.

Cherry and I drove to Montclus for Easter with Chris, Carol and their son Jamie in their underpowered BMW 318. We hadn't considered the Easter traffic and arrived very late at night. We had acquired most of the furniture with the house, but shopped for bits and pieces and Elton did the same when he took his first holiday there in the Summer.

Don Gould was doing more and more sessions with us. If Don played piano, that allowed Andy Hill to play bass with Graham on drums and John Danter on guitars. I loved the variety of music we were doing, but my forte was those American-type tracks with powerful choruses with layered harmonies. I always booked as many singers as the budget would allow. Don, Chuck and I might well add parts to thicken out the 'choir'.



Don in the studio directing Kay Garner, Jebb Million and Tony Burrows. Those two Neumann U67 mics I bought for £500 are now worth nearly £20k.

From the first incarnation of the Mingles studio, we twice refurbished in a pretty major ways. This rebuild coincided with the second floor of our building becoming available and we jumped at the chance to expand our space. The girls would be on the first floor and Elton and I would have an office each on the second. Elton did a very good deal with Wayne Bickerton's Odyssey studios so we could record there while Mingles was closed.

The builders arrived at Mingles and looked at the plans. The conversion was going to be fairly major, instead of us facing the studio, it would now be on our right with us facing the northern wall. In stead of an Irish window, there would now be two soundproof sliding door between us and the artistes; a small separation booth for guitars and air conditioning that was turned off with the red recording light. According to the foreman, the old wall came down in under 5 minutes.

One morning, I received an alarming call,

"What equipment did you buy for Mingles?"

"MCI."

"I thought so; they've just gone bust."

I put in several panicky calls to Ziggy Jackson, before he eventually called me back.

"Don't worry, I got all your gear out before the Receivers came in."

What a star!

We occupied Odyssey most days. It was a really good studio and we didn't suffer too much financially as we charged studio fees for final recordings on to the client and we didn't have to change studios for orchestral sessions.

We took this opportunity to record Jackie's first single *Mama* written by Steve Fergusson there one Saturday. Pete Wingfield played piano, Rob Young, the brilliant arranger for Gary's hit version of *Don't Throw It All Away* arranged the strings. The song opened on piano alone, a string quartet joined and then the large section we'd booked. I love that sound and I would imagine we made use of the string section on something else.

After lunch, Jackie recorded her vocal. Like some other artists, she liked to be out of our view when singing. We'd got everything except the last ten seconds that requires a very strong, stirring high note followed by a gentle falsetto ending.

Jackie held this amazing crescendo longer than she'd previously done and then... nothing.

"What's she gone and done now?" was Steve's sympathetic take on this.

We went down to find dear Jackie crumpled on the studio floor. The long note had used up so much oxygen that she'd passed out.

Being a trooper, she sat for a few minutes and carried on. It really is, even today, a great vocal.



Jackie even painted her own portrait for the sleeve.

Getting back into our own place was really exciting with its new board and tape machines, soundproofing and aircon. We had, until now, been working on a pretty crappy mixer without a particularly transparent sound, but the MCI was completely different. Some of the best studios had MCI boards including DJM and Criteria in Miami where the Bee Gees had recorded so many hits. I made sure I knew how it worked before any clients came in. The 24 track sounded perfect and 'drop-ins' were silent and easy to read. Again Martyn Webster designed and plumbed in all the wiring and every input and every channel worked right off the bat. He'd also installed 'tie lines' into my office so that we could record vocals or extra instruments down there. The builders had put in two partition walls on the third floor making a short corridor with a door to each office. These offices also made good meeting rooms.

Montclus was as wonderful as we'd hoped. I have been known to deride people who have seen one house in a foreign land and have bought it without giving it the appropriate amount of thought, but that's just what we had done. For us, it worked out perfectly, but it doesn't always. Leaving after two weeks was most difficult

On our return, Cherry found a nice house in Acton and I made an offer that was accepted. Unfortunately the property had 'moved' after the hot, dry summer of '76 and no company would give us a mortgage.

One morning I was in early to write that day's jobs when I walked Andy Hill and John Danter at 7:30am, a full two hours before the session. This was not a usual event.

"What are you doing here at his time?"

"We've been up all night recording two songs for *Eurovision*. Do you want to hear them?"

"Absolutely."

They played me a really catchy shuffle, *Making Your Mind Up*.

"Hey that's great, honestly it could win, it really could."

Then they put on, *Have You Ever Been In Love?*

"Wow, that's REALLY beautiful, great work."

"Thanks, good to know, you're the first person to hear them."

Both songs reached the UK *Song For Europe* finals and *Making Your Mind Up* reached the final and won, launching Bucks Fizz onto a successful career. Andy actually performed *Have You Ever Been In Love?* in the UK contest under the name Paris with Steve Glen's wife, Nichola and others. It turned out Steve and Nichola were splitting up and Andy had fallen for Steve's wife. They later married and Nichola, along with ex *Love Together* singer, Jill Shirley, managed Bucks Fizz. I always suspected that the song that was co-written with Pete Sinfield, was actually about Nichola. It's an incestuous business. The song was later covered by Leo Sayer, Pete Cetera and Westlife; great song and, as far as I know, apart from a B side he wrote with Elton, these were the only songs John ever wrote. Great hit ratio.

Having heard the songs, I wrote my day's commercials and recorded them with a slightly jaded guitarist and bass player.

Gary Benson, although we were still writing when we could, told me one day,

"I think I'd like to write some jingles." I gave it a moment's thought.

"You could do it very well, but what would you do if you'd done something you liked and the client said it was crap?"

"Well, I'd hardly take that!"

"Then this isn't the job for you"

Jackie's single came out to great acclaim and was played every morning on Capital Radio by Michael Aspel who adored it. It was great start and we started considering material for her second single.

We hardly ever had jobs completely rejected. Sometimes on a pitch, one of the other writer's tracks would be selected over ours, but our 'win' ratio was pretty good. Sometimes the client would ask for small alterations or a different singer or instrumentation, but, as the client was king, we'd always go along with it and do everything to keep him or her happy. They're the clients. The client is king.

Listening to old show-reels, it's evident that the ones I think turned out best are the ones the agency didn't mess about with. If Patrick Burston asked for a change, then it invariably improved the thing, but he was a rare case indeed.

As I said, we charged for demos, but, of course, if a regular client didn't have the budget or was pitching for new business we'd offer our services. One time a couple of good clients were starting their own agency working from a hotel room. They were pitching for Spar, a chain of small independent supermarkets that traded under that name and were able to bulk buy along with the big guys and advertise as one. Given the well-written script, the melody was in my head before they left. We did a pretty good demo of a 60" version with Bob, Kay, Stephanie and Nick Curtis singing. Our friends won the account and the agency was on its way.

I loved it when this happened: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRgwXdAEEKA>

At the end of 1980 Cherry and I drove down to Montclaus with her parents and spent our first Christmas there. I think we'd come to the conclusion that the food in the area was wonderful, but the wine, except for two producers, was pretty poor. Most of it finished up in the European wine lakes. Today the situation is completely reversed.

Mingles was doing well and Angell soon opened it's second and then third studios with engineers, Bill Gauthier, Rob Townsend and Mike John. Even during the quiet Christmas New Year period, it broke even. Every other month it turned in a profit and had a great reputation. Once a month, Chris and I being directors and shareholders would meet with Elton and Nick to go over company business.

I attended MIDEM and then Chris and I took a quick trip to New York, Nashville and LA. New York was bitterly cold as was Nashville. We had some good meetings there, but got bad information and heard little of the great music I found on my next visit. Perhaps it was just too cold for us to wander into bars along Broadway. LA, on the other hand was enjoying February weather in the 80s.

I made one unintentional error. Rona Newton John invited us to her new apartment on the beach in Malibu. We spent a lovely afternoon on the sand with Rona, her husband, Geoff, who was starring in Taxi, Susan George and Olivia. Back in the apartment the thought it would be nice to call Cherry. It seemed it wasn't. While we were sunbathing with good mates, the heating at home had packed up; it was freezing and there was no hot water so she was in bed trying to keep warm. I felt not a little guilty.



Back being silly at Rona's Malibu beach apartment.

Chris and I were amused by the Hollywood bullshit and need to appear successful. At an event we attended a guy came up and before asking anything else, asked what we did and how well was it going. We'd rehearsed the answer,

"Well, we had a couple of businesses in the UK that both failed so we came out here to see if we can do any better."

The guy fled as if we had the Plague.

Any jobs that came in while I was away, Don Gould or another great arranger, Nick Ingman would handle. They never let us down. Often clients would await my return, but sometimes they need tracks in a bit of a rush like our first Carnation job, especially when the account was in danger. One day a regular client called in a bit of a panic.

"If I were to bring a script round at four o'clock, when could you have a track done by?"

"Give us a clue of the style and what length?"

"It's thirty seconds, for fresh eggs so maybe a bit Country."

I knew that his scripts normally inspired immediate melodies so I gave him an estimate of the time required,

"If you're here at four, I'll book musos for five, singers for six and you'll have something mixed by seven thirty."

"OK, perfect."

We booked our rhythm section plus Bob Saker and Kay Garner knowing they'd cover all eventualities. Four o'clock arrived. Four fifteen, thirty... five pm and no client and no script to be seen. The musicians were set up when our copywriter eventually turned up. The script needed approval from the advertising authority and that's what had held everything up. I asked Chuck to get sounds together and sat down to discuss with our client.

"That works, it scans perfectly, give me about fifteen minutes will you?" He sat with a glass of wine chatting to Elton. It took no more than twenty minutes to make sure that the tune in my head worked, find a suitable key and tempo so that it lasted EXACTLY 28.5" with reverb and scribble out the chords.

Lisa made copies and I took them to the studio to play it through to the musicians. Before six we had a good track and added a couple of overdubs. Bob and Kay came in and I sang it through to them and they sang most of it in harmony with just a couple of solo lines. They double tracked the harmony section until everyone, including our agency person, was happy. I mixed it, Chuck made cassettes and we were out of there ten minutes early.

It was on air two weeks later with no changes.

'The Daylay drivers in their Daylay van deliver Daylay eggs as fast as they can...'

That's one of the few I can still remember.

I had written a Wheetaflakes commercial that had been popular so Chuck and I elected to extend it into a song and Steve Elson and I produced it with brilliant saxophonist, Mel Collins featuring heavily.

Steve Elson had a partner called Ollie Smallman, a notorious promo guy and he thought we should start a record label. My songs were now being handled through ex ATV man, Len Beadle and with him, Elton, Steve and Ollie we started Radioactive Records with a snazzy label designed by Tony Gillan. We started discussing potential product and distributors.

Another commercial I enjoyed doing was was a kind of *Raiders Of The Last Ark* dramatic orchestral piece for Barbican beer. In the film, the two guys piloting an aircraft become sick and a young guy lands the plane because he's been drinking this no-alcohol beer. Seeing it recently, I realised that the young man was Sean Bean, a totally unknown, young actor then.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Za1kByepckA>

Most Saturday lunchtimes were spent at The Sun Inn on Barnes Common. There is a bowls club at the back where Tony Bramwell, Chris Bryan-Smith, an MCA plugger, Roger Chapman (Family), John Wetton (UK-later Asia), Dave Brown and others used to play bowls while we sat with their W.A.G.S. The landlord John Fisher was a friend and we got to know a lot of people there. Bramwell, after parting ways with Julie Ege, was with a lovely lady from Polydor called Bernie who was living with Jane's sister, Annie, in a flat in White Hart lane Mortlake. I presume we'd introduced them.

Steve and I recorded a second single with Jackie Challenor, *Back On My Feet Again*, written by my friends, Domnic Bugatti and Frank Musker, that had been a hit in the US for The Babys. We recorded it at RG Jones, the scene of my first, 4 track production, but this was now at top notch 24 track with SSL desk. I asked John Wetton to play bass and he enlisted Simon Kirke from Free to play drums. Steve's friend, Jamie Moses was on guitar and terrific he was too and Don was on synth and acting as MD.

The track sounded great, Jackie sounded great and I asked Dominic (Bugatti) and Frank (Musker) to help with backing vocals. They took quite a while as Dominic kept disappearing from the studio. Little did I know that he was getting married the following day. Being a pro, he still came and completed the session. Jackie's first two singles are amongst the very few I've produced that I still like. VERY few.

At the end of the year (1980) we had arranged a distribution deal for Radioactive with Pye, whereby we would receive 17% of retail on all product and £500 per single release. It sounded pretty good to us. The deal would be signed at MIDEM.

Steve and I drove down to Cannes in January. Once again the weather was glorious. One day, he and I with Len Beadle took a cab to The marina at Golfe Juan and boarded the Pye Records' boat. Derek Honey, who headed the company, and Trevor Eyles talked us through the deal and at some point, Derek added,

"Listen boys, it's Christmas, I'm going to add another point, making it 18."

I thought Trevor was going to spit out his Champagne. He still hasn't got over it.

The following day I played in Eddie Levy's annual soccer Match, England v The Rest. Ron, Dave Dee, Miki, Lionel Conway, Tony Atkins, Derek Green, Dave Most and a load of other faces were in our team and I was in goal. The ground was so hard that my knees were completely covered in blood by half time. Dave Dee lent me his tracksuit bottoms, but the damage was done. I didn't even bother to dive to save the last goal. Miki called me "a c**t", but I didn't care as I could hardly walk and so, due to my injuries, Steve was obliged to drive all the way home, which we did in one hit. On limping into the house, Cherry announced,

"You're never doing that again!"

"No, dear."

But I did.

One morning I was in a session, Oliver Smallman phoned and insisted on talking to me.

"Do you listen to Mike Smith on the Capital Radio Breakfast Show?"

"Of course, every day."

"Well have you noticed that, on the traffic report, there's a train that's always cancelled?"

"Barnhurst, Blackfriars?"

"That's her!"

"Well, he should have a song."

I decided to base it on a quirky hit called *Day Trip To Bangor*. Jackie sang lead and helped with the lyrics and I recorded it with the house band and volunteers the following day. The next morning Mike played it and it went straight to No1 on the Capital Listeners' Chart. Jackie's label, WEA, released it, but too late.

Fun to do, though: <https://youtu.be/ISMHEleQ6mY>

My mother had been diagnosed with cancer some time before. She'd been in an out of hospital and had some treatment, but was getting worse.

By this time, having always wanted to work in a recording studio, I was now spending half my life in one. I considered I had the best job in the world. In the morning I might do a Rock track; in the afternoon, a typical jingle and in the evening something completely off the wall. I loved it all. I was in the enviable position of trying new singers because, as I said before, everyone wanted to do TV ads. The studio was generally a pretty happy place although, I admit I was a tough taskmaster.

We had also added to the equipment we could use in the studio... I snapped up two Neumann U67 valve microphones that were being sold by the Bay City Rollers' studio. I paid £500 the pair. They'd now be worth around £16,000. Oh but they were lovely, except when Stevie Lange was singing, they would shut down for a few seconds.

One ad I still quite like was for Patrick and Vernon: Brooke Bond Red Mountain was aimed as an alternative to Nescafe or Maxwell House. The ad was shot in the States on a ranch with horses and cowboys and required a masculine, Western track that I managed to knock up with a great lead vocal from Bob Saker and Stephanie and Kay backing up. I recently discovered that Jane Seymour's current beau, David Green, directed it. Small world!

This was one I liked: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YY9ldMEUJ8o>

In the late Spring, Charles, Miki, Don and girlfriends went to Burgundy for the weekend, bringing back a particular brand of berets from an old-fashioned shop in Beaune. We were then required to wear them at each get-together. Nobody had grown up yet. I still haven't. I wasn't about to go on a jolly while my mother was so sick so stayed in England visiting when I could. My sister who had my mother staying with her for a while arranged a 70th birthday lunch on June 15th, but not long afterwards my mother returned home with a full-time nurse.

On his return from Burgundy, Charles called me up.

"Have a good time?"

"It would have been without **** (Don's girlfriend)."

"Why, what happened?"

"She's worse than Don, won't spend any money; we walked away from three nice restaurants because she said they were too expensive. She has to go."

"How do we do that?"

"Find him someone better... shouldn't be difficult."

By now, working was complicated as we didn't know how long my mother had left. I couldn't let down clients, but I had to take things day by day. Elton kept pressing me to confirm dates for sessions, but I knew one day I couldn't be there and I trusted Chuck to make sure everything ran smoothly. It was what it was. On July 7th, the nurse called us to go over and my mother died with my sister and me holding her hands. Cherry was again working so I didn't see her until the evening. Like for everyone who loses a mother, this was a difficult time.

In June, Don had set off for New York with Barry Mason to put on *American Heroes*, a Musical they'd written that was to be performed off Broadway to see how it would work.

Meanwhile an invitation had come from Jane, inviting us to her wedding to David Flynn... her boyfriend and business manager to many Hollywood players, her included. Cherry couldn't go, but wanted me to be there on behalf of both of us. Sarah in the office had a friend who was a travel agent who always managed to get us ridiculously low rates on flights. I spoke to Jane's sister, Annie, who worked for TWA and I booked a flight out to New York on a Friday morning with a return that would get me to work on the Monday morning. Only one day out of the studio. Annie told me to ask for Brenda when I checked in. I did and found myself, not in row 46, but upstairs on the 747 in business class. There were only four rows of four seats up there, like a private club. I liked it... a lot.

Annie picked me up at JFK and drove me to Long Island. We were all staying at the Burt Bacharach Motor Inn (yes, really) in Norfolk. That evening we had a 'families' dinner with David and his nearest and dearest at an Oyster Bay restaurant. The next day was as hot as hell and more humid than a steam room. I wore a jacket and tie and was so uncomfortable I didn't know what to do. The venue was John and Lori Barry's gorgeous house on the water and several guests arrived by seaplane. The ceremony was held on the water's edge with the bride, groom and registrar under cover with the rest of us sweltering in the sun, but it was a splendid event with a few faces I knew. I was standing watching the ceremony when I heard voices behind me.

"Isn't his lovely, would you ever consider doing this again?"

"I would and we absolutely could."

How nice, I thought, but I couldn't turn around to put faces to the voices, but during some laughter, I did. These delightful people were Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward!

While we were standing, drinking and nibbling, my friend Don Black came over with his lovely wife, Shirley, for a chat. After that, I was talking to Annie when a diminutive man came up smiling,

"Hi, Sammy Cahn! I'd chatted to Britain's best lyricist and now America's, maybe the world's also. Surreal!

My last task before returning to the hotel was a request by Jane to find her groom. I did eventually locate him with John Barry, his best man, both comatose in the back of a limo with a bottle of brandy. Oh dear, inauspicious start.

At dinner chez Bacharach I noted a few ladies who might be potential candidates to replace Don's girlfriend. I tagged three, one being Annie. I must say the Caesar Salad at the Burt Bacharach Motor Inn is still the best I've ever eaten. How odd.

After breakfast the next day three ladies and I set off for upper Manhattan and took the lift up to Don's rented apartment, I thought I'd better take out my beret and when Don opened the door he was wearing his also. As were the rules. He recommended a restaurant called Number One 5th Avenue so

we set off and had a great lunch there. Wanting to be sure this ended as intended, we then set off up the World's Trade Centre to 'Windows On The World' for Margaritas, me having changed out of my jeans in the car... jeans not allowed!

My work was done and I was dropped at the airport for my comfortable flight back and the tube to Soho for my Monday morning session, a tad weary.

Our Radioactive label released *What A Shame* (an extended version of our Wheetaflakes ad) by Trick Dog.

This actually featured Chuck on lead vocals. It sank without trace:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmE5RuDI8iY>

The success in *Eurovision* for Bucks fizz meant that Andy was now far too busy to work with us. We were delighted with his success. We used a great guitarist/bass player called Steve Donnelly, Nick Ingman or Pete Wingfield on piano and synths and various other players who added a new dimension to our sound.

Hearing from Annie Frankenberg, it seemed like she and Don had hit it off. They'd had a couple of dinners and what seemed to have swayed her was one evening she spilled red wine down her dress and was rather upset about it, so much so that Don offered to swap clothes and they finished the meal with Annie in trousers and Don in a dress. "He must be OK" she told me.

It took a while for Don to get rid of tight girlfriend and commit, but he did and they have been married now for about 35 years with three great, grown up kids.

Cherry and I had two weeks planned to go to Montclus in September, again after the school holidays. Cherry suddenly announced that she had seen a house in Richmond and had arranged for me to see it the evening before we were going away. I wasn't concerned about the proximity to our trip because I'd seen, and rejected, so many places.

We got to Park Road Richmond, just a hop across the road from gorgeous Richmond park. The outside looked really lovely, and I walked around the house a couple of times.

"This is the one, I just love it."

"I knew you would, such lovely, big rooms."

"How much is it?"

"£***,000."

"We can't afford THAT and, anyway, we're going away tomorrow"

"I know, so I've told Elton you'd love it and he's going to take care of the whole thing."

So we left Elton to do what Elton does best and set off in the morning. With my increasing income, we were able to stay at rather nicer places on the way down and back. While there we mostly had Bar B Qs on the downstairs terrace and spent a lot of the day on the stony beach in front of the house with towels, lunch, a deck chair and parasol and a flask of rosé. We swam in the crystal clear water to keep cool and I enjoyed fishing as a way of relaxation. I found a cherry on a single hook would generally catch a decent sized chub. Sadly, they taste awful.

Back then, Montclus had no mains water, it was delivered to and stored in the church tower. When we took our evening shower, if two other people in the village were doing the same, the water stopped running, invariably when you were covered in soap and shampoo. We tried not to think too much about the house in Richmond. Cherry was about to do a two-handed play in some obscure theatre and was learning her lines... half a novel's worth. Montclus was just what I needed to relax me after the crazy hours we put in at Mingles and my mother's death.

The next day, I caught up with Elton on business matters and then he announced, "And I got you the house."

"No!???"

"Yep and I discovered that several sales have fallen through, they need the money and they're pretty desperate so took a low offer. Because there's no emotional attachment, I went for it and if it didn't work it didn't, but it did."

Neither the sale of our Morlake house or the purchasing of the new one went smoothly, but, eventually we moved into my dream home carrying a large mortgage and a bridging loan.

Not long after we moved in, a very fortunate event occurred. One day, Cherry answered a knock on the door. Some young people were standing there and said that they were from the local horticultural college and had to present a project so, if our garden needed designing or redeigning, they'd do it for the cost of materials only.

The garden was a wide strip of scruffy grass with a flowerbed along the side so we jumped at the offer and these talented kids left us with a gorgeous two-level garden with lawn, raised beds, a York stone seating area and a pond with fountain. we loved it.

I had written a song I considered very commercial and quirky as, in the verse, all the EmPHAsis on words was on the wrong SyllABLEs. It worked with Bob, Peph and Don singing. I had also done a commercial for Patrick Burston for Weetabix. I have to say we were both very happy with it, but the client didn't buy it. That happens. I told Patrick that I thought it could be made into a very decent song, so I re-wrote it and recorded the demo and then entered both these for *Eurovision*.

Back then songs could be entered by publishers who were members of the Music Publishers' Association or by members of the public who were required to pay a fee; hence hundreds of songs were entered. Elton, Don, Chuck and I took our turns to sit on a jury to judge the songs. The initial sitting was 'unfiltered'. About 10 of us sat in a room supervised by Peter Dadswell or Janice Cable of the MPA and listened to the songs. If, after a minute you thought it was awful (most were) you raised your hand.

Later I was invited to the second judging and then the third that sent 20 songs to the BBC and once I actually sat on the BBC panel at TV centre with a publisher, producers, DJ's and BBC dignitaries to select the winner. This was worth doing as it involved lunch and wine in the TV Centre restaurant... you don't get invited to many of those.

The first two visitors to the Richmond house were Chuck and Stephanie de Sykes (Peph) who were going out together. There was an age difference and when Peph told Chuck,

"I used to perform a song every Sunday on Esther Rantzen's '*That's Life*' programme."

He replied,

"I know, my mother let me stay up late to watch it!"

Ouch!

Cherry and I decided to host Christmas at our new house for her family and then immediately fly down to Montclus. We also invited nearly 30 people to join us in France!!! I booked restaurants and a simple hotel not far from Montclus and all the plans were ready for three days of partying.

One of the enjoyable music events of the year has always been the MPA Christmas lunch. So many friends worked in publishing companies and it's always an extremely jolly affair. There has always been a 'turn', many of which have fallen flat in front of this very difficult, alcohol-fueled audience. We knew that the Song For Europe finalists would be announced at the lunch, just after the meal. As Patrick Burston had co-written a song, we invited him to attend. As each successful song was read out, the composers would go up on stage and receive a diploma from British acting legend, Diana Dors. Third song in was *Every Step Of The Way* and I was very pleased it had been chosen and accepted my piece of paper. Heaven knows where that ended up!

A little later, *Every Day Of My Life* was called out and a delighted Patrick and I headed for the stage. Two out of eight wasn't bad at all. But artistes had to be found.

While doing a round of the room I spotted Louis Rogers (brother of Clodagh and Frank) and Martin Sunley who were both promotion guys for CBS and had a song in the song contest that hadn't been selected. They were good looking guys and fine singers.

"Look, guys why don't you sing one of our songs, you'd be perfect?"

"Really?"

"Sure and see if Lavinia (another singing sister) would like to also."

"Wonderful!". So we had one group so now for the festivities.

Chapter Twelve... **THE MADNESS CONTINUES**

If I give you an idea of our first New Year; the rest were just as appalling.

We arrived in Montclus on about the 27th December. Most of the motley crowd we'd invited arrived on the morning of the 30th so we arranged to all meet up at a simple, local restaurant called 'Lou Pescalou', known as Paco's after the donkey who resided there and tended to wander into the dining room after meals. He also stuck his head through people's car windows and when patted, large clouds of dust would fly.



Paco.

Drinks on the terrace were quite joyful, everyone meeting up in a completely new environment; greeting our chums from the UK who over the years included: Chuck and Stephanie, Elton and Nicki, Charles Armitage and Di Evans, Don and Annie, guitarists John Danter and Steve Donnelly; Jackie Challenor and Graham Walker, Dominic Bugatti, Bruno Kretchmar (Chrysalis), Wendy Baldock and Judy Gridley from *A Chorus Line*, Judy's drummer husband, Howard Tibble, Martyn Webster and his brother, Gary; Miki and Menzina Anthony, Nick Ingman. Heather James (friend from Barnes) with her boyfriend, Tim Dann; Cherry's parents and sister, my sister and partner, Allen, Alex Armitage, Nick Ingman, Martin Kitcat and a few one-timers. Every year Judd Lander was there causing mayhem.

The menus in 1982 were very different from today... 5 courses were the norm: probably a plate of charcuterie or hors d'oeuvres, followed by stuffed mussels or frogs' legs, then a main course of meat and Dauphinoises potatoes, cheese (of course) and dessert. After the desserts Judd would perform one of his 'magic tricks'. One he always does (to this day) involves pushing a lighted cigarette into a sweater (This time the restaurant owner's sweater) and make it disappear. While risking a sanction from the Magic Circle, I have to tell you that a rubber false thumb is involved where the cigarette ends up as does the salt with his salt trick. The patron was so fascinated and determined to conquer this amazing illusion that when I returned a few weeks later, his sweater was covered in cigarette burns.

Leaving around 5pm, people returned to their hotel to freshen up before reconvening at the Hotel du Commerce in Goudargues for another five courses, ending the evening in the Café de France with 'digestifs' and table football matches against the French locals.

On New Year's Eve people tended to explore the area while some met up for lunch. We prepared the house for the party. The first year we cooked dinner; the second was cooked by the mayor's wife and served in his cellar. Very good it was too except it became noticeable that anyone drinking red wine would very quickly display black teeth and gums. The mayor didn't really understand the English habit of bread throwing. From the third year, I collected each course in turn from Tim and Fiona's restaurant they'd opened just up the road in the village and, after a glass of wine served before my return, delivered them to our dining room.

Later there was a mix tape for dancing and people staggered back to the hotel between 2am and 4am. The first year Judd decided that it would be a good idea to play his bagpipes down the loo in his hotel bathroom at 3am, waking all the other guests and getting us a ban for the following year so I had to find another place for them to stay. Actually, this second venue was even more basic than the first and many guests would need get up at 5 or 6am to guarantee a shower with hot water.



The culprit.

Cleaning up the house took several hours and numerous rubbish bags. A messy lot, the Brits.

New Year's Day was spent back in Montclus where we plied the survivors with spicy Merguez sausages from the Bar B Q in buttered baguettes and mustard to soak up the alcohol and rosé to get them going again. It never rained and we always managed to eat outside on the bottom terrace and then played boules in the square, sometimes with locals. The 'Junketeers' never won until we learned how to cheat.

The final evening was always spent at a restaurant near the visitors' hotel so only we had to drive. Now and again someone would get too tired and emotional after a tough three days of festivities and would have to be consoled... once for not having received a fair portion of fries.

This ritual continued for seven years and for some, this annual shindig was treated as their annual holiday.

Work started again on January 3rd. The girls held the shop, but there was very little going on during the Christmas break; so little, in fact that we eventually had calls diverted to someone's home.

Elton made a trip to Dublin and picked up some very useful and very loyal clients over there. Working with most of them was a delight and I made a few, most enjoyable trips over there also. The Irish are, generally, far more fun than the English. Mind, you, we had some pretty funny London clients also.

Some weeks were manic. One day I did four commercials; the next two and there were often re-vocals and new versions. We set up a tape machine in Elton's office so that he could run off cassettes rather than using precious time in the studio.

The next great innovation for us was the plain paper fax machine we acquired. This used regular A4 paper and more than one copy could be printed out and it would also copy music scores and parts. This, again, was life-changing.

We had recorded our usual season's version of the *Jim'll Fix It* themes. Roger had asked for a different end theme so I wrote to his lyrics and it became a bit of a family favourite. I used Louis and Lavinia Rogers along with Martin Sunley, our *Song For Europe* finalists that we'd named Good Looks and released a single of both extended themes under that name on our Radioactive label. We then added another singer, Mary Ellis, for *Eurovision*.

We needed another group for *Every Step Of The Way*. I was so busy I couldn't audition or sort routines so we hired Wendy Baldock our friend from *A Chorus Line* to audition and then dress and choreograph the groups... an expensive business. Another Chorus Line person, Roy Gayle, a real pro, agreed to participate and a guy Cherry had worked with agreed to participate also, but suffice to say that, Roy aside, this bunch was a complete nightmare... do different from Good Looks. Wendy did a great job. I produced the songs in RG Jones, again with Gerry Kitchingham; Don arranged and we then recorded flip sides at Mingles. The Good Looks 'B' side song was written by Elton, Chuck and John Danter; both were scheduled for release on Radioactive the day after the selection programme was to be broadcast.

I headed out to LA in February and recorded a dance track called *City Boys* with an American girl at the Music Grinder studio on Melrose. Old friends Roger Watson from Chrysalis and Frank Musker were living close to each other off Laurel Canyon. Roger had married a lovely Canadian girl called Deb and it was great hanging out with Martin Kitcat and those guys. Martin's American princess wife had decided that London with its awful weather and dirty vegetables was not for her so Martin moved back with her to LA and a job at April Music.

As usual I spent some time with Jane and David Flynn at their Hollywood Hills house. Jane had a new baby and one morning announced,

"I must introduce you to my new best friend; we met at the Jane Fonda pre-natal classes. Her name's Darcie."

Darcie was a very pretty Californian blonde with a lovely, friendly personality. We got talking and I saw she was wearing a really cute sweater featuring a teddy bear on the front.

"Oh, my wife would really love that."

"Really? I can easily get one for you"... and two weeks later one arrived in England by mail. I often saw Darcie with Jane in England or LA when we met up. The two of them travelled together to a lot of Jane's film shoots.

About a week before the *Song For Europe* contest, I received a letter from the BBC saying that the winning artists and writers would be invited to a reception later at TV Centre. I thought, "Just the winners? Mean bastards!"

I called the other publishers I knew and we all agreed to turn down the BBC's 'kind' invitation and, no matter who won, we'd hold our own party and so we booked a large room above a restaurant in Sloane Square.

On the big day, March 24th, I arrived early at TV Centre with Wendy to make sure the sound was OK and everyone did what they were supposed to be doing. At that time a live orchestra was used for all the acts. After the first run through of The Touring Company song the very unpleasant producer, Stuart Morris, stood and called out,

"Who's responsible for this song?"

"I am", I yelled back.

"Well it just ran two seconds over the three minute limit."

"That's because the tempo was too slow!"

"Well, if it runs over tonight, it will be disqualified, so what do you want to do about it,"

"Nothing whatsoever."

"And if it's disqualified?"

"Then I'll sue you."

That was the last I heard of it apart from quite a lot of sniggering. Arsehole! As usual the lovely Terry Wogan kept everyone sane. There was a very good song sung by a duo called Bardo. They were managed by Charles Armitage so it was nice to have another friend there.

The show was live, the orchestra was live, the vocals were live and there would be seven regional 'juries' voting during Terry's chat and a performance by Bucks Fizz.

I sat with our crew including Patrick Burston who was rather nervous, but I have to say, so was I. There was quite a lot at stake... the finals of Eurovision and a hit record. And our songs were well fancied.

The Touring Company were on third. It was obvious that the lead girl's vocal mic was causing trouble so the sound guy (usual check jacket and hush puppies) pushed up the other girl's level. To be honest, although she could sing, she was hired more for her looks and cheeky personality. It didn't sound great.

Good Looks, on fifth, were spot on, I was proud of them. Bardo, on 7th of the 8 were excellent, but I felt we were in with a chance.

The voting was really close and it appeared the winner would be one of ours or Bardo. It was Bardo by just seven points. Ours were joint second, the first and only time songs had tied for second, the one place you don't want to be. I'd been happier with our last place. I congratulated the winners and Charles gloated, which I let him know I didn't appreciate.

The two songs: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMKZ9hdUaJE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXlxG2En5OU>

Off we set for Sloane Square and really had a fabulous night though none of us had won. The event was mostly financed by Mingles and well-respected publisher Chas Pete with his partner Iris. Even the winners decided to leave the BBC party and come to ours.

We'd decided, whatever happened, to take off the following day and with Cherry, Nicki, Wendy and Don, have a long consolation lunch at San Lorenzo in Wimbledon.

I kept away from *Eurovision* for the next 35 years.

We often met with potential new clients, but I'll always remember a certain gentleman coming in. His name was Trevor Reeves and he owned a totally new agency called Reeves, Robertshaw, Needham... the Needham part being his US partners. We had been recommended to him and he was looking for a generic melody for McVities biscuits. He was ex-Saatchi's and obviously very successful. He explained that there were two other companies he'd briefed and he would hopefully find something he liked or would keep on looking. This was potentially a huge account for him. And us.

He made it clear that the melody had to be extremely adaptable as there might be dozens of commercials covering the McVities range over along period of time and they would all use the tune. No pressure there, then. There would be a generic chorus:

'Nobody bakes them quite like McVities do; nobody bakes them like you; bakes them like you.' For this section he referenced a line on a song from Buggy Malone 'You could be anything that you wanted to be'

"Is it OK if we do it by the end of the week?"

"Ideal."

So I gave it my best shot. Bob Saker sang it with two backing ladies. Trevor liked it and a couple of weeks later he called to say that he'd won over the client and we'd got the gig. This was probably the single most important moment in the life of Mingles. The agency grew and grew and Trevor never used anyone else but me for his music and insisted that his employees do so also, sometimes to their annoyance, but he was very much the boss. And extremely loyal. This is pretty much unheard of in our business. I looked forward to doing the first Mcvities job that turned out to be for Chocolate Homewheat biscuits and sung by Stephanie de Sykes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4wFMVAr9Lo>

American Soul singer, Stacy Lattisaw, released a cover of *Don't Throw It All Away* roughly based on the Delfonics' version, but beautifully produced by Nerada Michael Walden. It would go on to reach No 9 in the Billboard R&B charts and 55 in the pop charts. For some reason Atlantic Records didn't want her pop persona to stand above her R&B roots so held it back. Never mind, it had been a pop hit, a Country hit and now an R&B hit and went on to be a Reggae standard thanks to Barrington Levy. Best of all, a guy invited Gary to his wedding because he said he was breaking up with his girlfriend, heard the song, stayed together and were getting married. There's a similar comment on the Stacy Lattisaw Youtube link and I can't tell you how much this means to music creators.

Tony, Bramwell and Bernie and John and Jill Wetton came down to Montclus in June. When they arrived, Bernie walked to the window in the living room, looked out onto the river below and burst into tears. It really did have that effect on people.



John Wetton and me on the beach in Montclus.

Chris had decided that self-catering really wasn't for him and a friend of Elton's bought his share. Not long after, he sold and Elton and I became the sole owners. He and Nicki spent 3 weeks there in summer and Cherry might have a week with 'the girls'. We usually went back for a couple of weeks in September, and then New Year. Throw in a Junket weekend and the year was set, but with lots of work also.

In those good, old days, there were complimentary seats to the opening nights of shows. Cherry's Pan's People days usually meant she was invited so we'd been to see the opening night of 'Barnham' starring her old friend, Michael Crawford, who had learned tricks - tight rope walking and heaven knows what else - that added up to an amazing performance. We went to the first night of *Cats* in May. On the way in, singer, Paul Jones who was a Noel Gay artist introduced me to his girlfriend, Carolyn Allen. We'd meet again. I had earlier bumped into John Maskell one of the guitarists and asked him about the show.

"It the first Musical where you walk IN humming the tunes!"

That was funny then but now applies to 80% of all new Musicals.

The cast of *Cats* was terrific; we knew some of them, but I was not over-enamoured of the music, but that's only my view. Before the curtain calls, that wonderful, hammy actor, Brian Blessed, announced in the 'in an Oscar-worthy monologue' that there had been a bomb threat and we'd need to leave the theatre as quickly as possible in an orderly way. Everyone did. One newspaper ran a headline the following morning implying that singer, David Essex, had climbed over other patrons in his attempt to get out quickly. Utter bollocks. We were close behind him. Completely fake news!!!

The probate on my mother's will was granted and I received a small, but useful amount of money, but counting what my sister received also, it was clear that my mother had little spare cash to live on. I paid off a small part of the mortgage and for some reason bought some wine. Andrew Gordon, a friend of Martin Kitcat's, from whom I topped up my wine stock suggested that buying 'en primeur'

might prove to be a good investment. That means you don't even see the stuff for a couple of years or even then have it stored under the Sussex Downs until it's 'ready'. I bought the best he had. Cherry said she'd love a conservatory so she was looking into those. She'd been accepted into a small part in the next Bond film, *Octopussy* with a very decent fee.

Mingles' and Angell's founding partner, Chris Sandford, had now started a Radio Production company with a brilliant pair of writers and they were turning out some spectacular scripts with Chris producing. However, as radio ads so often use music, Hobo Radio upgraded their studio to be able to handle music tracks and composer, Dave Cook, was writing quite a few.

I arranged to pop in on Chris one Saturday to explain that he couldn't be selling Mingles AND another company he owned to agencies for music at the same time.

"You can't compete against yourself."

He totally understood and stepped down from Mingles, but we all continued as partners and directors of Angell sound. The new accountant for Angell was a great character. David Franks also knew all the rules and when we were arranging a date for the company's annual general meeting, he just dropped in, "You do know that all costs for an annual general meetings are completely tax allowable so you can hold this wherever you like and the cost will come off your tax bill."

The four Angell directors looked at each other and from that day we had some wonderful trips to La Colombe d'Or, the beautiful Cliveden, scene of the Profumo scandal, Bishopstrow House near Bath and several at the Marbella Club, scene of that terrible weekend with James Hunt.

Chris then hired Doobrie and Elton took on Sarah, an excellent lady from New Zealand.

I did visit the *Octopussy* set at Pinewood and was bored rigid as they only required 30" of footage to be delivered per day. Many shoots later, I still find film/video sets the most boring places on Earth.

A couple of weeks of filming was going to take place at the Taj Lake Palace at Udaipur. It looked a lovely island on which to stay. The necessary paperwork was sorted and a week before leaving, Cherry received, with her Business Class ticket, an analysis of the lake water. You wouldn't put a toe in it.

I dropped Cherry at Heathrow. On the way out, she and the other girls had been downgraded to economy, but arrived safely. Cherry really enjoyed her work and stay there and, being the only one to eat only local food, was the only one not to get sick.

I picked her up at Heathrow after Parkistan International had downgraded them all again. All the Bond girls were on the flight and all were extremely beautiful and impressed that I was the only husband or boyfriend to turn up to meet the flight.

On my last trip to LA I'd met a guy who supplied spas and hot tubs at cost price... well under half of the prices in the UK. Cherry and I both suffered from back problems so I ordered one to fit into the conservatory.

We met with Cherry's favoured conservatory builders; the quote was eye-watering, but I'm weak and caved in. Foundations had to be built to take the weight of the water in the jacuzzi and these were started in pretty nasty weather.

I took Chuck down to Cannes for MIDEM in 1983. I gave him the low down,

"Cannes in January can be delightful and I have to say MIDEM is a lot of fun, BUT just be aware, it's

basically work (well, I may have stretched that a bit) and whatever happens the previous evening, the golden rule is, be on time for the first meeting, got it?"

"Got it, boss."

Thanks to my favourite concierge at the Majestic hotel being relieved of his job and therefore our back-handers, we were no longer welcome at that hotel. MIDEM was at the height of its popularity and we were designated a rather less salubrious establishment. Late on the first evening, Chuck met a lady and wasn't seen for two days. That was his first and last MIDEM; he broke the rules.

I've mentioned commercials that can be recorded and accepted in hours. Some take a bit longer: weeks and weeks.

J. Walter Thomson had come to us with a script for a Persil Automatic commercial. The product had evolved and was to be called New System Persil Automatic. The accepted concept was a 60" spot that would be shot on a stage like a Musical with an appropriate Show Song. It was to be a big production, but grew and grew. We recorded a demo, made some requested changes and then were asked to record the full music track onto which we'd add vocals. Usually we'd record the rhythm tracks at Mingles and the strings and brass somewhere in town, never going further than Abbey Road, but I decided that the huge Studio1 at Olympic in Barnes would be ideal, especially as they'd recorded so many albums from Musicals there.

I loved working with Keith Grant who had re-designed the place adding floating floors and the marvellous console was built in-house and models were sold elsewhere under the Helios brand. Any pops or crackles could normally be solved with a good thump by Keith's fist. His motto was 'The technology of yesterday with the prices of tomorrow'.

Normally recording a big line-up, you aim for as much separation as possible for the instruments - putting guitars and bass in booths, screening off strings and brass - but this wasn't what I wanted. I called in advance of the session.

"Hi Keith, this is an odd one. I don't want separation; on the contrary, I want this to sound like a live recording from an orchestra pit in a theatre."

And so it was, John played acoustic guitar right in front of Graham's kit. There were some modifications, but we eventually achieved a take that wasn't a mess, yet sounded live. Don conducted, the clients were ecstatic and the musicians were confused.

The singers/actors who had been chosen came in to do their vocals with other people adding vocals that actors/dancers would mime to: Kay Garner, Carl Wayne, Michael Praed adding to the 'chorus' effect. Michael Howe and Sally-Ann Triplett, the latter who beat us in *Eurovision* as a half of Bardo, were in vision.

We were just about to wrap the thing when someone from Proctor and Gamble decided they'd like some of their lab people to join the cast and be seen walking downstage and singing and he wanted to have them recorded, but by this time, we had no more tracks, the 24 had all been used. So we found a studio that could synch two 24-track machines and we recorded several tracks of the P&G male choir. Then we had to mix the thing there.

My attempt as Musical Theatre: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EGwQ34OZOKA>

Several days after the ad was launched, the producer from JWT called,

"The sales have jumped 30% in a week, the client is over the moon!"

The following Sunday, one of the papers published an article about people getting eczema from the new product. Back dropped the sales.

As I've mentioned, Chris was infatuated with awards and had entered for the Independent Radio Awards a job he'd previously brought into Mingles. This was for Alfred Marks, an office employment agency. They'd wanted to use *With A Little Help From Your Friends*, but had nothing like the budget so I was instructed to write something new so I wrote *With Some Help From Your Friends* recorded it with Stephanie and some BV's and it went on air. Chris called,

"Alfred Marks has been nominated for an Independent Radio Award and I think you should be there"

"Rather not and anyway you said the competition was too strong."

"I was on the judging panel, but switched it to a weaker category. I've booked a table and told the agency you'd be there."

"Thanks for nothing."

I duly turned up, ate the usual meal they serve at these functions, tried to be convivial with the agency guys and our commercial won and I was pushed up on stage to pick up the tacky award. Considering I'd written all the copy and the music, recorded and produced it and there was only Martin Jarvis's voice over added, I was surprised to see five people join me on stage. When the winners' brochure was handed out, there was a producer, a writer, art director, an account director, none of whom I'd met or had been, as far as I could see, involved in making the ad. When we left, Chris took the award and I never saw it again except in his office.

Awards are a crock of shit. Over the years we received many awards and they mostly got put in a cupboard.

This was a typical job of the time: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djdF87trJsE>

One day I weighed myself and had a bit of a weep. I'd put on weight and it had so go, so Charles, Cherry and I joined the Hogarth Club in Chiswick. We knew some members: Ollie Smallman and Steve Elson amongst them and made some more life long friends there. I actually arrived there at 6:40am every work day, used the machines, then pool, then a steam and Jacuzzi, a little breakfast and into town. I lost 42 lbs and kept going to the Hogarth into the mid-nineties.

The guys Cherry had hired as builders of the conservatory were real craftsmen and at the end of the day, they'd sit and admire their work. The Jacuzzi arrived and was plumbed in with the plumber marveling at the quality and efficiency of the pump and boiler. We were looking forward to it all being finished.

In June Cherry was invited to the *Octopussy* premiere with a guest. Me. We dressed up at the office; enjoyed a glass of Champagne at Kettner's down the road and were picked up by the limo I'd hired that transported us to the Odeon, Leicester Square, under a mile away. Only two of the girls had speaking parts; Cherry had two lines, but if you ever see old Bond scripts, they're pretty thin. We were whisked to the Kensington Roof Gardens where a good meal and really good time was had by all.

We had already socialised with some of the girls and their other halves.

We had pretty much worked through the McVities biscuit range: Digestive, Homewheat, Hobnobs, Chocolate Homewheat and so on and were back doing new ads, always with the same tune and strap line with all manner of different arrangements. I came up with a tune for Bisto, *You Can't Kid A Bisto Kid*. Apparently ours was chosen because I was the only writer who put the stress on Can't rather than You or Kid.

Fine with me: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jil1k18n8R4>

When you buy a car or TV, you pay more for bigger or better models, but when you write for commercials, your budget depends on the product and the media spend. For every job that was accepted, there was a creative fee for writing and recording and then there was a 'Usage' fee for local radio, national radio, national TV, local TV, cinema etc. On top of this, if the commercial was going to be shown overseas, there was an additional fee per country, or group of countries. However, even though the budget for a local carpet shop in Scarborough for local radio would be a fraction of that of a McVities or OXO TV ad, as much care would go into that as anything else. Maybe the budget only covered one singer and the house band, I tried to make the agency and client very happy. I hope I succeeded.

In some cases, clients were confused about fees, not so much about the creative one, but the usages, especially overseas. So one evening I met with my main competitors in The Alibi wine bar below Sydney Smith on Chelsea's King's Road. There was David Dundas (Jeans On), Jonathan Hodge (A Mars a day...), Ronnie Bond (Tasty, tasty, very, very tasty), Alison Wallace from Jeff Wayne Music, Mike Connaris from Mcasso and Maggie Rodford from Air-Edel. Of the busy bunch, only Joe and Co declined. We were fierce competitors, but friends; these were great people and magnificent drinkers.

We didn't want to be a cartel, but produce a document that didn't set creative charges, only the percentage of that fee that would apply to using the music overseas: say 100% for France and Germany, 80% for Spain; 500% for Europe etc. I don't remember the details, but the guide would help agencies estimate their costs. There would also be a standard contract, but with fees and percentages to be added by the music company.

We called ourselves SPAM... Society for the Producers of Advertising Music. We met regularly and the society grew. Bob Saker sometimes came along to confuse things even more. One evening Ronnie arrived on his way to film a TV show in Paris. He was wearing green socks.

"You're not going to wear green socks on TV, are you?" asked Bob.

"Why not?"

"Wearing green on TV is the unluckiest thing you can do and they often don't show up green; it's a disaster! Think again, I beg of you."

With that, Ronnie headed off into the fading evening light to look for socks; anything but green.

Later, Elton took my place in SPAM and the thing became more sensible, changing its name to PCAM. Their good (better) work continues today.



A bunch of reprobates: L-R Jonathon Hodge, me Ronnie Bond, Elton and David Dundas.

Later that summer, Cherry was asked to partake in a BBC programme called the *Hot Shoe Show*. It was a pure dance show during the period where people carried dance shoes and Pineapple bags around and stood in the first position and went to classes. Dance was BIG following '*Fame*', '*Flashdance*' and '*Dirty Dancing*'. This show would star Wayne Sleep, Bonnie Langford, Finola Hughes, Cherry and some other wonderful dancers choreographed by the top names in jazz and ballet.

Each evening, Cherry would tell me about the day's shoot; how great it was to work with Wayne and Wayne Eagling from the Royal Ballet and these other amazing talents. I seemed like it was going to be great series.

One day she arrived back quite excited.

"The producer, Tom Gutteridge, would like to see you."

"Why?"

"I told him you write great music and he needs more for the show."

"Wonderful, thanks."

So I duly made an appointment to meet Tom; took the tube to Shepherds Bush and entered the BBC building there and was pointed the biggest office I'd ever seen in the corporation. There were about a dozen people beavering away and I was pointed to the far end where the great man, on the phone, ruled his empire.

Tom was younger than I thought, very bright, very keen and very open to musical suggestions. Many of the numbers had not yet been planned and so he suggested that I should come up with a couple of 'off the wall' pieces and he and the choreographers would see if they worked. I started work.

It seemed they did like them and I was asked for more material and then a percussive theme that I did with Graham Walker and three songs, including a rap about food. There was a ballad that became a rock track that comprised some unusual timings called *To Dance*, sung by Cherry with strings by Don and great couple of guitar solos from Steve Donnelly. I loved these commissions with this kind of artistic freedom.

One day we went down to the new state of the art BBC music studios in Lime Grove. They had acquired a huge Neve console that was rather impressive, but mostly because all the knobs and switches were blue!

Everyone who's worked in studios knows that all the switches have colours according to what they do: say, red, treble; yellow, hi mids; green, low mids; blue, bass; purple, foldback etc so the engineer can easily go to the switch or knob he needs. Not so easy when they're all blue and not helped by the typical BBC sound guy with his leather elbow patches and Hush Puppies, the session ran and ran.

Tom kindly let me record at Mingles and overdub orchestras at Odyssey.

In the middle of these recordings that were most rewarding and demanding, I received a call from a friend, Francis Megahy, who was the partner of Flick Colby, leader and choreographer of Pan's People. I met with him to discover that he was interested in me doing the score for his new movie, *Real Life*. The stars were to be Rupert Everett and Christina Raines and though the brilliant Stanley Myers had scored Francis's previous films he wanted to talk about it and, to my surprise and delight, I got the job. Before I did, I watched the rough cut with Francis and editor, Mike Dineen and 'spotted the cues'; in other words, pointed out where I thought music would work and exactly where to bring it in and what style.

Because the budget was modest, using big songs would not be a possibility, but I was happy to write and record those also. My first movie.

We had planned to go to Spain for a few days with Charles, Miki and Don and co to stay near my old friend, Ben Findon's house. I cancelled as these two projects would take up a lot of time. And they did.

Chapter Thirteen... HALCYON DAYS

Doing both projects was hugely satisfying; I'd reached the point where I felt I was doing good work and being taken seriously. I loved doing the TV show and the movie and everyone seemed happy with both until the US distributor got hold of the film, recut it and edited the music horribly badly. I shouldn't have been surprised.

We were in what was known as the 'jingle' business. I say 'we', there weren't that many of us back then and there was a ton of work and the work was very varied. Yes, we wrote jingles like *A Mars a Day*, *Opal Fruits*, *Made To Make Your Mouth Water* and *Tasty Tasty* (not me personally), but we also recorded more complicated stuff. Sometimes the films we were given had a story and we needed to score them as if they were cues from a movie, only they were very short!

Some of my favourite jobs were for the Times Newspapers group that included The Sun and The News of the World. As I opened our door at 7am on a Thursday morning, I knew I'd find one or two U-Matic video tapes on the front mat that required music by the end of the day. Many were shot by the maestro director, Roy Mayoh. These films often featured three items, say, Football Manager tells all about his dismissal from Spurs, followed by The heartbreak of Jane Seymour's divorce (I remember that one, I tried to give it to Don Gould, her brother in law, but he declined) and lastly, Holidays for £5 per person with The Sun sting at the end. One holiday feature showed a family on the beach and I asked producer, Bob Maddams, when they'd shot it as the weather had been awful all week. "Oh yesterday, but we used Harry to make the sky blue." Harry was a new postproduction tool that could do all manner of tricks, changing colour being just one of them. Miraculous then, but any kid with a phone can do that now.

For these jobs, with tea and tape in my hand, I'd go to the studio to synch up the video tape to the 24track machine, get a tempo in my head, click it out and start writing, segueing from one piece to the next. The rhythm section would come in and we'd lay basic tracks. I remember one complicated Times session where I was recording keyboard overdubs with Allan Rogers in the studio while arranger, Nick Ingman, was writing string parts in my office for the section that would follow. Fun days.

At some point, our talented clients Hugh Davies or Bob would come in, after editing late into the night, to give any further ideas and then taking our master tape(s) off to the post production house to dub the music and voice over onto the video.

With less experienced clients, we'd sometimes 'score' to their film and when they first saw and heard the it with our music, they'd so often say, "wow, that works really well" to which Don or I would invariably reply "That's a bit of luck!" They didn't always get the irony.

Most years I went to LA and sometimes New York to chase up business or record. LA was just an amazing place in the mid 70s to the mid 80s and listening to the car radio, a joy of Soft Rock LA tunes. Driving from my beloved Château Marmont, I'd pass the Hyatt House Hotel, known as the Riot House with good reason with all the tour buses with blacked out windows. I'd catch up with lots of friends there. I remember Lionel Conway's 40th birthday in the Hollywood Hills and having dinner with Frank and Dominic who were based there then in Patrick Terail's 'Ma Maison' and a guy coming in and standing next to me in the men's loo.

"You're English aren't you?"

I looked round to see Rod Stewart.

"Yes, how did you know?"

"You're having fun!!"

Back at the table a lady came up and asked me to tell our table to stop swearing,

It was Joni Mitchell.

That was a surprise on two counts.

We also spent some time with Susan George at her lovely house in the hills with its fabulous view and took to her boyfriend, Johnny Lee Schell, a Texan guitarist who later went on to play on a lot of sessions and write great songs, many with Bonnie Raitt.



Suzy (George), me and Johnny. Not sure who the guy on the left is.

I have to say that in the early and mid 80s, I was completely happy. I loved my marriage, my house, my work, my holidays and had even progressed to owning a Ferrari, a Mondial, the least expensive model, but it was a dream come true. We had lovely friends, some disposable income for the first time and now and again were able to eat in very good restaurants and stay in nice places on our drives through France to our cherished house. We tended to stay one night in somewhere very simple, a 'Logis de France' for example and the next in somewhere rather more fancy.

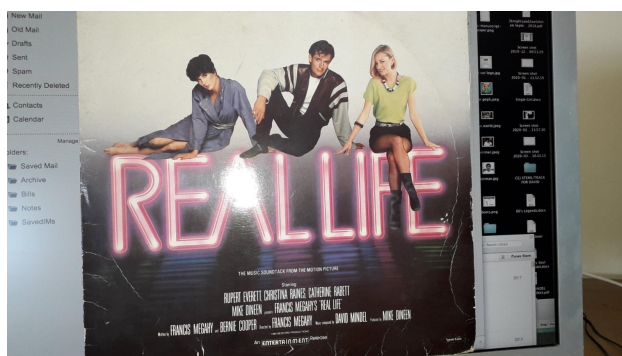
Yes, there were some tedious jobs, but they were vastly outnumbered by the enjoyable ones and there were times when I'd written something at the end of the week, I couldn't wait to get back into the studio on Monday morning to record it.

One Sunday, the tabloids printed photos of Prince Andrew's new girlfriend, Katie Rabett. Now, as it happened, Katie had the third lead part in the film, *Real Life* I'd worked on for Frances Megahy who saw an opportunity to use her new notoriety to an advantage. We met up; she was a delightful young lady and apparently a very proficient flute player. My friend, Paul Rodriguez, the arranger who'd salvaged for us a single launch at Quaglinos about twelve years previously was now involved in a record label called Savoir Faire and they wanted to release the *Real Life* soundtrack to fulfill a

commitment to their distributor. I'd written a decent opening and closing theme song for the film and was about to record it with session singer, Gordon Neville. I thought it would be advantageous to record Katie on flute for an instrumental 'B' side (records had two sides, so two tracks in those days). She did a fine job and I also mixed an instrumental 'hybrid' with vocal and flute.

Sure enough, the press and chat shows were falling over themselves to talk to Katie so we made it a provision that they mention our record or feature Gordon and Katie performing the song. Many did.

The film was first shown at the Odeon Kensington High Street. Katie and I went and sat in an audience numbering about thirty souls. We enjoyed seeing our names above the titles, but the film didn't do well. I must admit I never listened to the soundtrack album, but used my copy for fanning the Bar B Q for several years.



I have to admit there are dozens or scores of commercials I can't remember writing or even if they're mine, which is embarrassing if an old clients mentions one, but there were others I can't forget. Several spring to mind.

A pretty straightforward job was to rerecord Glen Miller's *In The Mood* for a Cadbury product. Nick Ingman had bought the original score and had the parts copied to the length of the film. All our preferred studios were fully booked but we eventually got into Roundhouse Studios in Chalk Farm located in an old railway turntable shed that had already successfully housed a large live venue. When I got there most of the musos had arrived: 4 saxophones, three trumpets, 2 trombones, clarinet, piano, guitar bass and drums. Each instrument had its own mic. While the band ran through the piece and the young engineer soloed each instrument I said nothing. Then they played it with all the mics open and it sounded awful, weak and, frankly, small.

"Are you using ambient mics?" I asked the youthful engineer.

"I have two overheads high and in front either end"

"Well, would you just solo those? OK run it again."

And there it was, the big sound of the original, on just two mics, written to be recorded that way so we recorded straight to stereo.

One unforgettable job was for Budweiser. Elton burst into the studio one day and announced he had to quote on a Budweiser documentary. It would be a 30-40 minute film that they hold to show during sports broadcasts delayed or interrupted by weather. My view was, like everyone else's, that we should quote low because, as long as there was a small profit, it would be a really worthwhile and prestigious project to do.

Elton quoted and the agency came back to say we'd been selected... probably because of our VERY low quote.

I called the agency creative whose name was Jamieson Braun if I remember rightly and, because there was no Facetime, Zoom or Skype then, he wondered, as it was a pretty complicated project, if we could meet. I said I'd arrange to go to see him.

Our Sarah's great friend, the travel agent, got me a great deal on British Caledonian Airways Business Class to St Louis on that Thursday. The flight left early and got me to St Louis around 10am and to the agency before eleven. I was met by Jamieson, a nice man whose trousers came some way above his waist.

We spent the day, spotting the film that traced the path of Budweiser's famous Clydesdale horses from their birth in Scotland to St Louis; their training until eventually they were selected to pull the brewery carriages at parades around the country. We discussed the styles of the music that would be all original save for an arrangement of their famous theme, This Bud's For You during a parade. I took copious notes. Having got the complete brief, early in the evening we went out for a beer at a local bar and I took a cab back to the airport.

Not one to waste an opportunity, I'd booked a flight to LAX (Los Angeles) where Martin Kitcat was waiting for me. We drove straight to our favourite bar, Cyrano's, on Sunset Plaza, had dinner and a few Margaritas and then headed back to his apartment on Doheny for a night cap. Before going to sleep on the couch, I called the office. It was already Friday afternoon there.

On Saturday we visited our usual haunts, lunch at Gladstone's in Malibu, had a nice dinner at Trumps (not that one) Café, Sunday lunch at the Polo Lounge and back to the airport. I mentioned the lovely Brenda's name at the TWA lounge. They were expecting me, asked for my boarding pass (Row 39) and gave me one back for seat 2A. At that time, they served a light dinner in First Class: a pot of caviar, half a lobster and some foie gras. Those were the days!!!

I got back to the office on Monday morning and went through the film with Don. There was a deadline and a lot of music to do so we decided to split the project in three. Don would write the pastoral stuff (ponies gamboling etc.), I would write the theme and Scottish stuff and we'd ask Nick Ingman to write one piece and do the arrangement for 'This Bud's For You'. We got to work.

We started recording before Jamieson came over... I spared him the bagpipes sessions for the Scottish sections. I got Judd Lander to do it as writing out parts for bagpipe players doesn't always go too well. I played him the melodies and he tracked up those horrible sounding pipes. Jamieson liked everything we'd done except the chorus effect on one guitar that Steve Donnelly had played.

We explained that a whole orchestra was going over it and he probably wouldn't notice later but he insisted on us replacing it.

We booked an orchestral session at Odyssey Studios on the following Saturday morning to overdub the strings, horns, woodwind and harp parts on the tracks. There was a lot to do and even Don, who doesn't know the word 'urgency', was aware we couldn't hang about. We started with the theme that he'd arranged for me and it sounded great... good job, Don. Everything went well until we got to a cue... Don had forgotten to do the arrangement. Say nothing, move on... add stuff later.

We were very close to the end of the session and couldn't run over or any profit and more would have been lost on overtime. There was one piece and just enough time for one take, not two, so we asked those not playing to remain seated. We got to the last three bars with no mistakes and then there was a bumping sound. We had to let the musicians go, we were out of time. The engineer went through all the tracks and found that the female harp player, who should remain nameless, had put down her harp before the end of the take. By muting her track and adding another instrument, you could no longer hear her inconsiderate action. Not totally professional, that!

We returned to Mingles to add the final overdubs (especially on Don's forgotten track) and in the evening, ace guitar player, Mitch Dalton came in to replace the guitar with the chorus effect that you could barely hear at all now. We knew Mitch well and he has a dry sense of humour so there was a lot of banter especially after a 'take'.

"How was that?"

"Pretty poor."

"Give me a clue."

"Play better" and so it went on.

Of course the one part took about 15 minutes and off he went at which point Jamieson looked a bit perplexed,

"That was a bit heavy!"

"Pardon?"

"I mean with the guitarist, it was getting nasty."

"No, he's a mate, we were taking the piss."

Nothing.

"Taking the Mickey... the rise..."

He still didn't get it; I guess this sort of humour isn't appreciated in the US.

Anyway, we mixed; the man in the high trousers was delighted, the agency people were delighted and the clients were delighted so we were delighted and the film with music was lovely. I wish I still had a copy, but we kept a letter framed in our loo from the American Budweiser agency chief saying how much everyone loved our music.

Because of the aforementioned films and the *Fame* TV show, dance was still really popular. Thus, the *Hot Shoe Show* was hugely successful and is still well remembered. Unfortunately, Tom had allowed us all to use so many musicians that their fees for re-usage prohibited any re-runs of the series. It was shown often on P.B.S. in the States, though.

This was a song I wrote for Cherry in the show. Steve Donnelly is on guitar:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vL-BPqsLcAo>

There were other TV programmes I worked on around this time. Tom asked me to write a theme for a new early evening chat show called *Harty* featuring well-known TV personality and super bloke, Russell Harty. Tom wanted a live band for each show so I checked out Allan Rogers and Paul Townsend (bass) who were both keen and Allan became the MD, booked other musicians and did the arrangements the show required. Top bloke as always. The show was live and I'd sometimes pop down to the studio to check out the band and watch the taping, I was always amazed that Russell would be happily chatting to members of the audience up to thirty seconds before the show went live. That's cool.

Another BBC programme was called *The District Nurse*, a gentle drama starring Welsh treasure, Nerys Hughes about a... er district nurse. The producer was a lovely lady called Julia Smith. The demo was done with a simulated harp, guitar and synth pad. She loved it and we booked Olympic to record the real harp with maestro Skaila Kanga. The great thing about Skaila was that she could read the chords as well as the melody notes. I'd delayed our departure to our French holiday to fit in this session and Cherry was waiting for me outside the studio in her new, white VW Golf so we could head down to Dover.

The last thing Julia said was,

"I've loved what you've done and working with you. I have a BIG show coming up and you'll be hearing from me."

I didn't as Julia was overruled for political reasons, but she did kindly call to apologise. The BIG show was called *Eastenders*, one of the longest running and most broadcast soaps. Oh well, you can't win them all, but this one would have provided a nice pension for me as it has done for Simon May.

My themes from these last two both finished up on a BBC Album.

This was a trailer for "The District Nurse": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gra4mGc6NQY&t=31s>

And this is the album and single version of 'Harty': <https://youtu.be/CPKkwWOU2Q8>

I also got a call from another TV producer who asked me to write the theme song and incidental music for a BBC1 drama series called *Strike It Rich*. I really enjoyed that and BBC Records released the theme song that was sung by session singers, Jebb Million and Mae McKenna under the name Mills and McKenna.

Each episode had scored incidental music and the producer required strings and brass to add gravitas to the last episode. It was recorded at Lime Grove and the music wasn't synched to the old 8-track machine they used, a man in a tweed jacket simply pressed the 'play' button to the visual timecode on the clip, getting it approximately in synch. Good, old BBC.

Another generic TV ad that ran for several years with different arrangements was for Bisto Gravy Granules with the clever theme, *Never In A Month Of Sundays*. I found a strong melody for that and hammered it home as much as possible.

You really did want your ads to be catchy and memorable:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHcUwNBhvVY>

This was the first of several versions of this tune over a couple of years. Chuck sang the first part then Tony Burrows and Kate Robbins with Don adding harmonies. You'll hear that diction is paramount in commercial music. These guys were good, but after several takes, the words were in our heads so we usually dragged Elton or one of the girls into the studio to make sure all the lyrics were not only audible, but clear on the first listen. We had several sets of speakers on the mixing desk including a little transistor radio and would sometimes even make a cassette that we'd play in Elton's office to make sure everything sounded good.

If you listen carefully, you'll hear that all the singers are smiling while singing... this is a trick we regularly used and gives a much brighter sound to the track even if the viewer wasn't aware.

One of the jobs that stands out, does so for several reasons. There were a couple of real characters we'd previously worked for. The copywriter was very experienced and this experience had led him to the mantra, I work really hard to present the client with a great, original idea. If he rejects it, my next script will start with, 'Open on idyllic, sandy beach on a desert island'. I don't know where the idea stood on this job, but the thing that made it different was the music brief. Cyril tried to explain,

"There's a piece of twelfth century French prose that the client would like you to put to music. You do speak French, don't you?"

"Yes, but more the 20th century kind"

I looked at the script, *Le matin ou, avec elle je me...* So far, so good; then it lost me completely.

"And he'd like a choirboy to sing it."

"Er... OK."

"And the end must leave you hanging."

I spent ages working on this thing I barely understood with no rhyme and no scan, which made it the most challenging job I'd done; or perhaps have ever done. Having the melody, I brought in Nick Ingman and, together, at the piano, we worked out the bizarre time signatures I'd needed to use throughout. I used a diminished chord on the end for the hanging bit. I think Nick played an organ on the demo with a great young lad singing. Everyone was happy with it.

"We're off to New York to shoot it, see you in ten days. But you can do a budget for this and find us a church... that's where the client wants it recorded."

It was getting weirder and weirder, but we found St Alban's Church in Holborn that had a seven second decay, giving you a wonderful, natural reverb. I thought I'd go even weirder so got Nick to do the arrangement for organ, four violas and a flugel horn. Very strange indeed.

When Cyril and co returned with their Chanel for Gentlemen film it could have been shot in Ealing. It was simply a guy at a window in a high rise with a long lens shooting a pretty woman in another building. Not only that, but they regaled us with stories of great meals and one boozy pizza lunch that cost a hundred dollars (three hundred dollars today). And yet,

“Can we cut the music budget down a bit, we went a bit over on the shoot.”

No, really!!?

“Well we don’t have to record in a church, we can get close to the reverb of the church here.”

But the client insisted so, one evening, we pitched up at St Albans with the hired Trident Mobile Recorder and recorded the thing. The kid was brilliant, but the first two takes had high-pitched noises on them. It transpired the client had been whispering throughout the recordings and the ceiling had bounced back the esses. Then we got a good one, mixed at Mingles and all were happy. It still makes little sense to me.

I had been working really long hours, mostly with some kind of pressure to deliver the goods and with responsibility for the staff we had. Angell was doing well and there were evening director’s meetings so by the time I took a break, it was really needed.

We varied our route through France to see different areas, sometimes taking the smallest roads and staying in some charming hotels in quaint villages. We got to know Burgundy pretty well, an area I love and still visit whenever possible.

The first day at the house was spent cleaning it up as was the last. Then we’d shop for food and relax. The three weeks every June were heaven with such long evenings, trips to guinguettes... summer riverside eateries where all the local families go... restaurants in Goudargues, our closest ‘living village’ or simply having dinners on the terrace overlooking the river and hills.

We usually also went for two weeks in September when there were no tourists and the weather was usually wonderful and kept up our New Year mayhem. One year, 30th December to be precise, we’d booked dinner as usual at the Hotel du Commerce and I’d forewarned the Café de France opposite that, as tradition dictated, we would drop in later for some digestifs and fustball.

“D’accord, a tout a l’heure” agreed the owner, but when we arrived the place was all locked up and Cherry’s dad’s BMW was nowhere to be found. I called at the village police station, rang the bell and at last a gendarme arrived in slippers with pajamas showing under his uniform. He gave a Gallic shrug and announced “C’est partie pour l’Afrique!”

However, the carcass of the vehicle was found the following summer in the hills opposite the village, but we’d been obliged to hire a car, drive it to Calais, take the boat and then a train home from Dover.

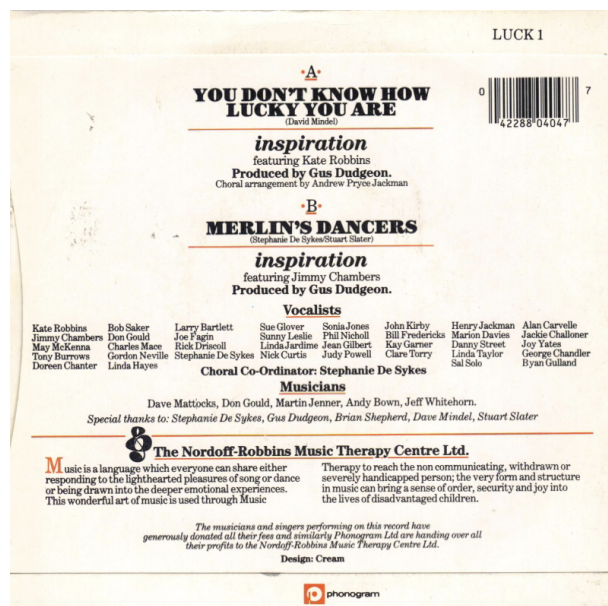
On one vocal session, Stephanie announced, “I’ve decided to record a single for Music Therapy (The Nordoff-Robbins charity for children who only really respond to music) and we’re going to get all the session singers together and try to get it released. I’ve asked a few writers to submit songs; do you fancy having a go?”

So, after the session, I went back to my office, sat at the piano and wrote *You Don’t Know How Lucky You Are*. We recorded a piano/voice demo at Odyssey with Kate Robbins singing and Don on piano. later heard that this song was chosen. My old producer and mentor, Gus Dudgeon, agreed to produce. He assembled top musicians and Steph gathered all the names you see below. Phonogram scheduled

the single for November 28th and two days later I was half watching the BBC evening news. Suddenly I heard, "A large group of singers got together in a London studio to record a specially written song for charity."

Getting quite excited, I called Cherry to come in. Then I watched a bunch of other singers performing a song I didn't recognise. It was Do They Know It's Christmas? by Band Aid.....released on the same date, on the same label as ours. No one ever thought to mention it to us. Our song was never played.

I hope one else needed a session singer the day they recorded that:
<https://soundcloud.com/soul-music-ltd/you-dont-know-how-lucky-you-are>



Don and Chuck were now both writing when I was overwhelmed with work so we advertised for someone to become the new assistant engineer. Qualifications have never meant anything to Elton or me when it came to hiring people. Someone comes in, you talk to them and you know. We hired a young man who had already worked at a studio and he was ideal, personable and a quick learner. Chuck used to call him Baldrick after the character in Black Adder. His name was Steve Charles.

Elton split his time between Mingles and Angell; Don was pretty much full time; Steve and Chuck were full time and we had Sarah and Dani in the office.

It really made my life easier just having to write and record. All the other stuff was taken care of for me. That, I miss.

February 14th 1985 was our 10th anniversary so I booked a long weekend in New York. I reserved seats upstairs on the TWA 747, but when we arrived at the door to the plane, the attendant explained that those seats didn't exist on that particular aircraft; before I could complain, he handed me two first class boarding passes. The Algonquin had always been my hotel of choice on these trips with its history and quaint atmosphere although Elton and I had stayed a couple of times at the Parker Meridien. When we reached our room at the Algonquin, I realised that, like the Sunset Marquis (and later the Château Marmont) the funkiness had gone too far. I found a lovely room at the Helmsley on the Park with a magnificent view down Central Park and we enjoyed a splendid weekend, the highlight being the Musical *Dreamgirls* on the Saturday night. The last song of the first act is *I'm Telling You Now, I'm Not Leaving* is the best moment of theatre I've ever experienced and drinking Martinis in the adjacent bar in the interval is a moment that will live with me forever.

I was chatting to Carl Wayne after a session and he reminded me that we both loved the Cliff Richard single, *Miss You Nights* and he thought that a new version was in order and that his old manager, Don Arden, who owned Jet Records was also keen so we recorded this at Abbey Road with Nick Ingman arranging and co-producing. We recorded *Someday* for the flip side

Miss You Nights: <https://youtu.be/UwHyUu-2eUk>

We'd recorded music for a lot of Mars products and also for their subsidiary, Pedigree Petfoods... Chum etc. One day we recorded a very straight forward tune for Twix to lyrics that, while they weren't not over-inspiring, worked. The commercial ended with the strap line, That's Twix and the agency asked for a distinctive voice to perform it. Now, I sometimes added low harmonies to vocal choruses, but almost never took a lead line. I had on an Andrex ad where the lyrics told us that Andrex is soft, Andrex is strong, it's so very, very long... so the girls sang the first part very softly and everyone sang the end but I inserted the 'strong' section as my very butch voice conveyed 'strong'... I think.

Anyway, back to Twix; I decided to do the That's Twix part as low as I could, which actually hit a bottom C on 'Twix' my lowest note. After Bob Saker, Tony Burows and Stephanie de Sykes had done all the other vocals, I went into the studio for my two words. I thought I'd done OK, but was told I was sharp, then the words weren't clear, then I was flat (impossible it was too low); then the first word wasn't right and it took between twenty and thirty minutes until Chuck and the singers confirmed, "That's the one!" I went into the control room and apologised for taking so long to which they replied, "The first take was perfect, we were just getting our own back!"

Bastards!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2s1yoU7fA58>

The shortest voice over session of all time was for the Barbican non-alcoholic beer... yes another one. There was a music track and, at the end, American voice over artist and great character, Bill Mitchell, was required to say "Barbican" in his Orson Wells-like deep voice. In fact Bill had taken over some of Wells' jobs when he died; Carlsberg, for example. Bill took no shit from anyone and once when a client asked him to sound "A little more mid-Atlantic," Bill replied,

"I've flown over it. There's nothing fucking there!"

Bill, a heaver drinker and smoker, wasn't the fittest of men and getting to our fourth floor studio was an effort for him. Out of breath he enquired, as ever,

"What's Happening?"

"Well Bill, there's music throughout and after there's a crescendo, you'll hear a chord and you say..."

"Just point!"

And with that he walked into the studio, the track played, I pointed and he said "Barbican" in that speaker rattling rasp.

"Perfect!" yelled the client.

"I don't suppose you recorded that, did you?" I asked Chuck as, normally, it takes a few passes to get the right level (volume).

"I did, but I can't say if the level is right."

It was fine and that was it.

"Cool, bye fellas."

The shortest session of all time.

My favourite jobs involved BIG vocals, lots of harmonies; intricate vocals and I loved working with great singers. Such was the income from commercials that all singers wanted to do them so we got the best and also, if I didn't take to anyone, I simply didn't use them again so many of my best friends were, and are, singers and I think we did some good work and had a lot of fun at the same time.

Mars had been running *A Mars A Day Helps You Work Rest And Play* for years, a great jingle written (sadly for a one-off fee) by Jonathon Hodge. Everyone knew the jingle, but the commercials were generally bland.

One day, the copywriters from Masius, the Mars agency came in and said they wanted something specifically for the London Marathon that happened to be sponsored by Mars... strange as they also make a bar called Marathon. They had footage of the previous year's Marathon and wanted something building and really uplifting. There would be a 60", which was unheard of for Mars and a 40" version also.

The copy as ever with these guys was good and right up my street. The budget allowed me to book Bob Saker, Alan Coates, Kay Garner, Gary Tibbs (ex Roxy Music and *Strike It Rich* actor) and Tessa Niles plus Don and Chuck joined in to fill out the sound with Don taking the first solo line. There was a big chorus with counterpoint so I needed all those singers on the demo as we were limited to 24 tracks. What we did do in those days was to record one set of vocals on a track and then 'bounce' to another track while adding the same part again. We'd listen to the track going from tape and the live sound from the microphone(s) to make sure they were almost the same. This way we got more vocals down. Oh, and you couldn't 'bounce' to adjacent tracks or you'd get feedback and a loud squealing sound. At the end of the day I was happy with it, so were the creatives and even Mars required no changes.

The copywriter phoned to tell me that, for the first time ever, the sales team applauded the ad when presented. I'm still proud of it.

This is the shorter version: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHkpNdQB8_s

I was getting more TV work from Tom Gutteridge, which I loved doing.

The music business has pretty colourful characters, none more so that Willy Robertson who was a partner in Robertson Taylor, THE company for insuring everything to do with the music business, especially tours. One day a call came through.

"Hello, dear boy, Willy here. Do you fancy joining us for some beakers and num, nums? My chum, Freddie Chandon, feels his Champagne has the wrong image so has asked me to invite a load of pals over to Moet for the day where he'll give a tasting and provide some grub. All you'd have to pay is £45 pounds a skull for the hire of the plane."

"Absolutely; count Cherry and me in, cheque's on its way."

On the appointed day, our friends Roger and Deb Watson picked us up and drove us to Heathrow where a special gate had been reserved for the group. There was a long table with glasses and bottles of Moët and Chandon Imperial Champagne. Thank heavens Deb was driving; this was going to be a long day.

We boarded the Orion Air (dodgy airline) plane and as soon as we'd taken off, the cabin crew came round with more Champagne, but Dave Dee didn't think they were getting round fast enough so lent a hand. There were lots of friends on board: John and Jill Wetton, Bruno Kretchmar who'd handled our publishing at Intersong and his wife and members of various bands and record company execs. It really was quite jolly.



Dave Dee... cabin steward.

We landed at Reims, normally just serving as a military airport where 2 buses were waiting. We were driven to the magnificent château where we were given a tour of the cellars that proved Freddie's point that as much care went into the generic Moët Champagne as any other brand. Aperitifs followed with more Imperial and we were then led into another cellar room, piped in by strange French horn sounding instruments that played every time a new wine was served. At the buffet table there were long corks like Doner kebabs into which lobsters had somehow been inserted headfirst; there was one for each of us with salad and mayonnaise to accompany. The wine served with this was delicious still Chardonnay that they appear to have discontinued.

Roast beef followed with Champagne and each course had a different vintage finishing up with Dom Perignon. We were also served a Bailey's-like liqueur that they were developing. It didn't really take off and I'm not too surprised.

Before we departed, there was a group photo and we were each presented with a bag containing a book on the Château, a bottle of Hennessy Cognac (same parent company) and a bottle of vintage Moët as our 'duty-free gift'. Off we set with the overriding memory being singer of Paul Young mooning at us from the back of the bus in front.

There was more jollity and more Champagne on the flight home and then an early night. What a great day!



Roger Watson and me in the Moët cellars.

Apart from the commercials that we wrote, we often had to do 'sound-alikes', basically copying the original recording of a well-known song. Sometimes record companies wouldn't release the original track or our £3-5,000 fee was more attractive than their £30,000 quote. A few spring to mind. We'd done a medley of Beach Boys songs for a mouthwash, various 60s hits for Jelly babies and many more but one day a big agency producer came by to say that they'd come to an arrangement with Jobete Music (Motown's publisher) to pay \$1,000,000 for the rights to the Supremes' *Ain't No Mountain High Enough* written by Ashford and Simpson for DHL couriers. However, they wanted to change ONE word 'To keep US from you' rather than 'To keep ME from you' and the client wanted to know how it would sound. We did a pretty full demo with Shezwae Powell as Diana and Kay Garner and Kate Robbins as the other girls.

Once accepted, we had to record it as a master so Don and I dissected every sound on there and he wrote the arrangement. Larry Bartlett engineered it at Marquee Studios, another local facility and I spent ages placing each instrument exactly as in the original. It sounded pretty authentic. It was so successful, in fact, that it (well, the song) is still running all over the world. Our girls earned a great deal of money, but later the track was re-done in the US and the singers there bought out. Many people don't even know that it started out as a song.

This is a later version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21myTRDjrMY>

The copywriter was very clever and apart from many TV spots he wrote some hilarious scripts for radio that were huge fun to do.

Slightly less successful was a re-record of *Nights In White Satin* for a Yardley perfume called, spookily enough, *White Satin*. We were told we should do the track and Justin Haywood the composer and original singer would come in to sing. He arrived with his manager, Martin Wyatt, an old friend of mine, said our track was spot on and was just about to add his vocal when the Yardley client asked him if he wanted to see the film they'd shot.

As soon as he'd seen it, Justin had a word with Martin and announced that the song meant a lot to him and as the film was so bad he didn't feel he could put his voice on it, "Get Charlie (Carl) Wayne" he suggested... so we did. Had the idiot client not insisted on showing the film, all would have been fine.

Then, we recorded the Bee Gees' *Tragedy* for a Bass beer... it's a tragedy if they don't have this beer was the message. Des Dyer (from Jigsaw) did a great Barry Gibb and it sounded spot on, but the client insisted showing the ad to the big Bass boss and he hated the song and voice and pulled the whole thing.

The last I'll mention was Nat King Cole's *When I Fall in Love* for another Yardley perfume, Forever. Allan Rogers copied the strings perfectly and Bob Saker's Nat Cole was brilliant. However, when it aired, it seemed they'd used the original, not ours, which was very disappointing. It was only after a couple of weeks when it was being broadcast that I thought of Bob when hearing it and realised it WAS Bob. It was such a perfect copy that even I'd been fooled.

Now I'd left Noel Gay and was friendly with Charles, I, at last, got invited to Richard Armitage's Stebbing events. This involved a cricket match between the local Stebbing (Essex) team and a showbiz 11. Lots of wine was involved and in the evening a dinner was held in the town hall after which Richards new 'finds' would perform. These included Rowan Atkinson, Fry and Laurie, Emma Thompson and many other great talents.



This is a young Stephen Fry with Jilly Gutteridge and the unknown me behind.

One Friday, we received a call from J.W.T., a very prestigious agency. The creative guy said he didn't really need to come in that day, but he'd fax over the script and storyboard for a new ad. This was going to be the first £1,000,000 commercial: a five day shoot and three months post-production and would use a new system, like the Harry one, that could change colours of small areas on the film, but was painstakingly slow... probably a day's work with technology now. It was for Crown Paint and they had thought of using a known Classical piece, but now wanted me to write something in a Classical style that would be quickly recognisable and would build to a big crescendo for the final shot where an orchestra would be shown playing the piece. It didn't have to be scored to picture, they just wanted a track they could film and cut to; a 30" and a 60". Then he and the producer from Rose Hackney came in to take me through all the shots on a large storyboard.

Bearing in mind that I had never had a music lesson (still haven't) this was a big ask of me but, being a 'musical prostitute', I never turned down anything. If they paid, I'd do it.

I drove into the office on the Saturday morning, made a flask of coffee (where's the help when you need it?) and sat at the piano in the studio with a blank sheet of paper and blank mind. As often happens, as the panic sets in, the creative juices start flowing and suddenly this simple tune came into my head, but was it Classical? Well, it could go that way. It was a four bar melody that repeated and then I wrote two bridge sections. Then I found the right tempo and adjusted the bars round that for the 59" of sound... sod the 30" version; that will take care of itself. I lay down a click, then the melody

played on a synth (not very Classical) and some stringy synths. I went home almost satisfied, looking forward to Monday morning when Don could play all the parts needed to finish the demo. No other players would be needed.

On Monday we finished the demo of the two versions and sent a cassette over to the agency. You never know what the reaction will be, especially on a job this big, but when they got back to us, we learned that all the agency people: copywriter, art director, producer, creative director; junior and senior client plus the director at Rose Hackney, gave it a complete thumbs up. They were happy. They LOVED it. So I was very happy.

Don and I worked out the number of musicians that would create the best and biggest sound and Elton quoted rather a lot of money to the agency guys who didn't flinch. We booked about 60 players at Angell Studios and had it recorded in two hours one morning. Don had written the piccolo trumpet part at the end that was out of the instrument's range so we added the notes with a sample back at Mingles and I mixed it. It sounded BIG!

The director had anticipated using 'extras' to play the string parts on the film but soon realised they needed real string players. They asked if we could find enough who would appear. The fee offered was £100. That wouldn't really entice A listers, but we'd still find willing participants. Then the producer called again and said that the fee would remain but the musicians would also get to keep their made to measure tuxedos. Suddenly all the top players were on board and got measured up.

The day of the shoot was quite chilly and my back was playing up and I hate shoots anyway because, as I said, if you're not the DOP or director, they're as boring as shit. When Don Gould and I arrived at Chrystal Palace there was a huge row going on. What the string players hadn't been told was that all the suits were of different colours: red, blue, green or yellow. So there were 35 very unhappy musicians with suits they'd never be able to wear again...except as a joke. I assured them that no one had told us.

The 'orchestra' set up in the bowl and the cameras were shooting from across the 'lake'. I must say it was a bit of a moment hearing the tune in such a lovely environment, but the director then decided he didn't like the look of the music stands. Their ensuing removal meant the players had to actually learn the (very simple) tune, which resulted in a renegotiation of the fee. By this time I was starving, in pain and miserable and, as I suspected, as so much time had passed, the shoot would go into overtime. NOW the string players really got their revenge over the hideous suits and I was enlisted to negotiate a fee for them to carry on, which, as I remember, doubled the original amount. Happy musicians, unhappy client.

Unable to stand up any longer, cold and miserable, I retired with Don to the catering truck where I was putting away a massive amount of rather good curry until they called a wrap.

I arrived home pretty late and totally stuffed with curry to discover that, knowing I'd had a long day, Cherry had cooked a massive roast. I said nothing and ate as much as I possibly could.

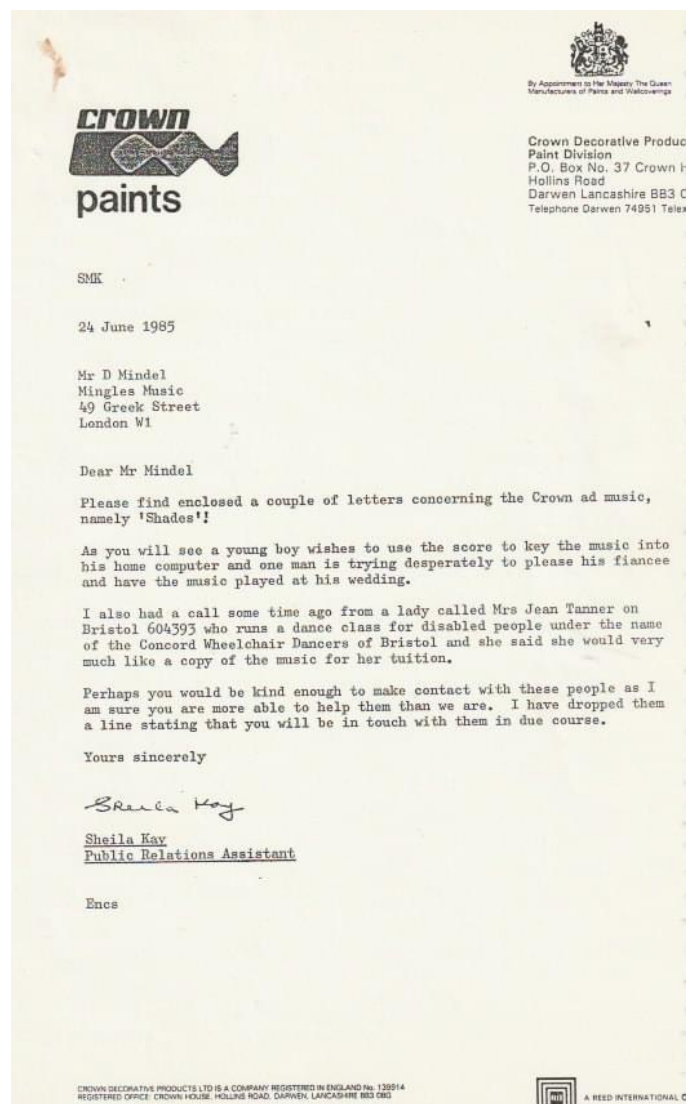
The film probably wouldn't impress now, but it was revolutionary then. It was really well received and after about a week, I received a call from a lady at J.W.T to say that she'd been passed letters and that TV stations had received calls from people asking which Classical piece had been used and where could they buy it. The Classical attempt to answer the brief seemed to have worked.

Sadly, again this is the shorter version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INrTsJ9zsfU>

Around the same time a guy called Martin Hooker from Food For Thought Records, a division of Pinnacle, called to let us know that my friend Trevor Eyles had played the Crown advert to his boss, Steve Mason, who loved the music and Martin asked if I'd be interested in extending the piece for release as a single. I certainly was, but explained the number of musicians was large and we then budgeted for returning to Angel with a similar line up... no profit on top this time. I met Steve to discuss this and he approved the budget so I set about extending the piece to just under three minutes, booked Angel and all the guys and we recorded the long version with Don arranging and conducting.

Releases are still 'mastered' although some people try to do it themselves. Back then we had to go somewhere to cut the single on a lathe producing a male from which the females would be cast to produce singles. My 'go to' places were Abbey Road Studios or to George (Porky) Peckam's place. I'd also worked with George when he was at Apple, but then he set up his own shop and was known for scratching Porky or something similar into the fade out grooves. The pressing plant always sent a test pressing in case there was a problem, but there rarely was.

Steve Mason and his team did a great job promoting the single. The BBC didn't want to play anything derived from an advert, but we got local radio and charted and improved our chart position over a few weeks. BRMB, the Birmingham area commercial station championed the single, which rose to No2 on the local chart.



I much appreciated letter from people who liked it. One lady asked for a copy to be played at her father's funeral, as it was his favourite piece of music. That really touched me and the 'Durham Wheelchair Dancers' even wrote to say they featured it often. It was later recorded by The South African National Symphony Orchestra and that most talented of quartets, 'Stringfever', but with awful lyrics for the soccer World Cup. The renowned lyricist, Norman Newell ('More', 'Sailor' etc etc) had a go at some words, but they didn't really work and about 15 other people have had a go, but I never found the right one. I came close, but not close enough, so, if you fancy having a go, let me know.

Someone made this video and I really go along with the sentiment:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEo0LumezPA>

As it happens, Steve Mason has reverted to his real name, Stephen Prebble and retired to Barbados. We met up a couple of years ago and it was great to see him and his lovely wife, Petal... Petal Prebble.

Around this time, Elton acquired an Amstrad computer, previously, every session, musician, singer cost, fee and charge to clients had been entered in his little blue books. Now he could create a programme on the Amstrad called... 'Blue book', keep records and send out letters and invoices from it.

"This computer is all we'll ever need" he announced triumphantly.

47 computers later...

I loved my home and my job, but leaving France after a great holiday was always tough. After cleaning up and loading up the car, I might sigh or say something about London and Cherry would give me a look,

"Don't Start!"

So I kept schtumm.

Having been home a couple of days, I was getting the grey sky, traffic blues and was just thinking, very greedily and selfishly, that a little trip somewhere might be nice. I'd just returned from holiday for heaven's sake! I was doing a session that was actually a favour for a very good client. It was simply editing a 1/4" tape of a well-known hit down to thirty seconds and we wouldn't charge for something like that. Not for a good client and Paddy was a really good client. The product was Poly Highlights and the song was *Ain't No Sunshine* by Bill Withers. The problem was that Bill held a long note over the exact spot where the edit should be. It sounded awful. I got Chuck to have a go, but it didn't work and rolling the tape backwards and forwards over the head at the edit point can sometime make the edit smoother as the tape leaves a little oxide on the head that transfers back onto the head made no difference. Our client looked shock white.

"We paid \$30,000 for the use of the song and the same for the track that we can't use. Who can sound the same as Bill Withers?"

"No one" was the simultaneous reply.

"Paddy, can you give me twenty four hours?"

As soon as I got home, I called my friend, Martin Kitcat, in LA and explained the situation. Within five minutes the phone rang.

"Hi, David... it's Bill Withers."

Holy crap!

I explained what the call was about, Bill said he'd be happy to do it; we agreed a fee and when I asked him if he had a preference when it came to studios, he suggested the legendary Cherokee Studios.

In the morning, I phoned Paddy and told him I could record Bill in LA and he'd save a third of his budget for the recorded track. He was over the moon. Of course, now, it can be done at a distance, but not then so I booked a couple of hours in Cherokee; six days in cottage 85 at the Château Marmont and a business Class return with TWA (upgraded to 1st as usual). Of course I didn't need six days there, but hey, might as well have some fun.

We re-recorded the *Ain't No Sunshine* track in the original key and slightly lower in case it was now a little high for Mr. Withers. I took the 2" tape with me to LA.

I spent a day recovering from the flight by the pool and having dinner with Martin. Having worked at Abbey Road, Air, Trident, CBS, Pye, Advision and so many great studios I didn't give that much thought about recording at the studio that George Martin had described as 'The best in the US'. I would now!!

Arriving at Cherokee, I was rather surprised that the owner, Bruce Robb, was there to engineer the session.

"Are you nuts?" he asked, "Do you think I'd pass up a chance to work with Bill Withers?"

Bill arrived, was totally unassuming and recorded a perfect vocal in about ten minutes in the original key. We chatted for the next two hours. Bruce wanted to know,

"Why aren't you doing concerts any more Bill?"

"No one wants to hear a old man sing his old songs!"

We all jumped on that including the teenage tape operator and I explained that Steve and Chuck, our young engineers had become huge fans and Bill seemed to be genuinely surprised and pleased. When it was time to wrap up he turned to me and said,

"Why don't you come and hang out at the house for a while this week; I can show you exactly how I'm going to spend this fee.'

So I sent the 24 track tape back via DHL and headed up Benedict Canyon to spend an unforgettable day, just Bill and me talking music, the world's problems and I saw where he was going to build the changing room for the tennis court paid for by Poly Highlights.

A year later, I received a call when I was on holiday in France,

"Hey buddy, Bill Withers; I'm in London playing the Apollo tomorrow night. Can you come along? It's a lot to do with you that I'm doing this again."

Of course I was too far away and it's an eternal regret that I couldn't go and see him, but my week in LA recording him was the best job of my life. Did I say 'job'? And the clients were pretty happy also.

Did I tell you I had the best job in the world?



With George Sloan, Martin Kitcat and Martin's son, hanging out at Marina del Ray.



The living room of Cottage 85 at the Chateau Marmont.

Before the internet, people recorded TV shows on video cassettes or bought or hired films from a local shop on the same type of cassette. VHS became the standard although Sony's Betamax was of better quality. Some say VHS won out because most porn was only available on that format. I don't know about that, but Beta had digital sound tracks. Thus we bought a machine and mastered on that. When we played the first mixes back, there being no tape hiss, we'd turn up the volume only to be blasted when the track started. A couple of years later DAT's became the standard for mastering. In our store cupboard there were hundreds of 1" 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ " tapes, Beta cassettes and DAT's, all logged with every title thereon.

One afternoon I was surprised when Sarah announced that Richard Armitage, my old boss, was on the phone for me. My first thought was, "What have I done; have I badmouthed the company?"

As it happened, Richard was very friendly even though I had been the lowest of the low at Noel Gay and had, remember, been fired.

"I believe you own a house in France; I'm thinking of buying one so Lorraine (his lady) can spend some time there on her passion... gardening; may I pick your brains?"

So we arranged to meet for dinner, had a lovely evening and hit it off completely. Life is strange. At our next dinner, Richard announced that he and Lo were going to do a house recce around Aix as he fancied that part of the country. As it was the weekend of the my 40th birthday weekend in Montclus, I wondered if we could meet up as Aix is just 70 minutes from us. He came up on the Sunday night when my others guests had left, booked in at the local hotel and joined us, with Charles,

for dinner, helping us finish the wine that (miraculously) hadn't been consumed at the birthday bash. They'd been very taken with our area as they drove in and decided to spend the Monday exploring further. We arranged to meet for lunch with Charles at Paco's, the venue for our first New Years' lunches.

I remember the chef, Ali, produced an entrée of the most unforgettable feuilleté of sweetbreads, which is why I've never forgotten it. Richard said they'd dropped in to the estate agents in Goudargues, and immediately been shown an old mill house that needed a lot of work, but were very tempted to make and offer. And they did. And they bought it!

Charles was the most regular of our visitors, but now he would have his family's home to visit. However, the work needed would take a considerable amount of time. French builders are notoriously slow due to lunch breaks, national holidays and just not turning up. My favourite word here is 'Normalement'. You might translate it as 'normally', but that wouldn't cover it.

"Normalement I'll be here on Monday morning" means "I'll be here on Monday morning if there isn't some other more important job or my wife wants me to do the shopping or it might rain, in which case, I'll be picking mushrooms."

Normalement guarantees nothing. On top of that, Richard and Lo's house was an old stone house so would be rebuilt and added to in the traditional way, an aesthetic delight but painstakingly slow building process. Anyway, they weren't bothered how long it took and would come down and check on the progress. Builders tend to turn out on site more when you're there than when you're in London. Mind you, builders in London do that.

After returning to London, I was given two new briefs one Friday by Patrick Burston and Vernon Churcher, so I went into the office on the Saturday to write them. One, I can no longer recall, but the other was perfectly written and was for Maxwell House. This was obviously a very prestigious account so I tried a lot of things out, but, as usual, the first idea was the best. The campaign was based round the title Get The Max.

We did a demo with Jeb Million with Kate Robbins and Sonia Jones on backing vocals. The demo was approved and we went on to do about 6 other arrangements round the 'Get The Max' theme, all well written by Patrick.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCMkWgubNYw>

Another product for which we did numerous versions was a chocolate bar called United. The agency was Saatchi and they wanted something memorable, but without a melody. Hmmm, strange request. "Sing-Speak" was how they described it so I recorded a track and Bob Saker spoke in rhythm in a cockney voice-over it. His animated character was a football fan.

My name is Stan and I'm a fan
And I'm delighted to eat United
'Cause it takes the biscuit when it comes to candy crisp
Crowd (Carl Wayne, Don, Chuck and me) joins in,
We're all delighted... to eat United.

Campaign magazine reviewed new ads and of this one the reviewer wrote,

'Nice to have a real sing along track.'

'Sing-along'? It had no tune!!!: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEMro0prkvM>

Various other versions followed with Carl as the bus driver and an elderly fan's voice was sought and they auditioned about 10 people simply to say the word "Ooray!" including famous actors Dennis Waterman and Wilfrid Brambell who had to pause on the second floor for a gin in order to reach the studio.

Cherry and I did another trip, again going to LA, but also Kauai, Tokyo and Hong Kong as we wanted to holiday in other places rather than just Montclus. Having tried to check out of the ever more scruffy Château Marmont; mainly because someone had patently been using the closet as a loo, the manager insisted on giving us a huge suite at the same rate.

"I'd have given you the one above only Mr. De Niro is in there."

Oh well!



Martin with wives on the terrace of our suite.

As usual, we had a lot of fun with friends in Los Angeles and while sitting at Jane's house, she suggested that we join her, David and two friends, one who was a photographer for the weekend at Mammoth, a ski resort in northern California. David's partner had lent them a chalet. We didn't really have the gear, but Jane is given so much free stuff that she had more than enough to kit out Cherry with everything down to skis and boots. I like to ski in jeans so I would just need to hire skis and boots.

A couple of days later, Jane phoned to say that David had left the flight bookings too late so he'd hire a private plane!!! We were told to be at Santa Monica airport at 9am and to travel lightly as it was a small plane. We duly arrived on time with small bags; Jane arrived shortly after with eleven bags, which she explained were for the photo shoots. Her friend, Steve, was the photographer and he and his wife were great company and David brought his daughter, Jeni, who was then around seven years old and Katie his daughter with Jane.

With bags arranged down the aisle, we just fitted everything in and headed north to the little airport at Mammoth. The pilot decided to fly round the two Mammoth mountains so we got a spectacular view before landing. We piled into a rented minivan and headed to the very pretty chalet where we would be accommodated.

The weather was lovely and warm, in fact I neglected to put sun block on my ear lobes and they got burned. The highest slopes are just over 11,000 feet and the snow was wonderful and the pistes regularly groomed, rather putting Europe to shame. David decided we needed an instructor although

he was an extremely elegant skier. Our chap's unfortunate name was Willy Harder and, with his surname first on the board, it looked hilarious, but only to a Brit. The second day I asked Willy if there were some more challenging runs and he took us to a double black; I really enjoyed the challenge, but poor David turned out to be more of a 'Motorway Skier' and was terrified. Cherry skied for the first time and was a complete natural. She was nearly as good a Jane after a couple of days.

Outside of town was a wonderful restaurant in a kind of wooden lodge; very cosy and great food so we went twice, but the absolute highlight of the trip was hiring skidoos with guide for an hour. We went through the forest to a ranch where people stay and fish in summer and, on the way back, Jane asked if there was anywhere without tracks so the guide, knowing who she was took us to a large, open area at the end of which was a hill, maybe three miles away.

"OK, you can go as fast as you like and when you start to go up that hill, just ease off the throttle and the 'doo' will turn itself back. Just be careful of those small bulges in the snow, they're the top of telegraph poles!"

So off we went, 60-70 mph; Jane with Jeni sitting in front on her skidoo. Up the hill we went, throttled back and, sure enough, the bikes slowly turned back. What a blast, but the people waiting their turn back at base weren't to happy about the half hour delay.

We had a great trip and arriving back in March we were expecting spring-like weather, but there was a covering of snow and it was bitterly cold. Good old England!

We'd picked up a new client because a producer we knew well had moved to Griffin Bacal and wanted to keep working with us. The agencies two big clients were MB games and Hasbro and over the years we recorded hundreds of tracks for them 107 of them for Action Man alone. Action Man The Greatest Hero Of Them All was our biggest earning eleven notes of all time. I wrote that in about five minutes and a theme for Sindy Dolls that ran for years.

Here are several of the 'Action Man' commercials: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEbFVZChAbQ>

Don and Chuck were both writing also and they handled the Barbie Dolls work for O&M. I joined them on one session with the copywriter who was not an easy client. Keyboard wizard, Pete Wingfield, was trying to understand what this lady wanted and when she'd agreed on a synth sound he asked her, "Would you like it played in the higher octave or in the lower octave?"

"Somewhere in the middle."

Poor Pete had to actually play the melody all the way up the scale to prove that it sounded absolutely awful before a reasonable decision was made.

We were still doing every music job that came out of Reeves Robertshaw Needham thanks to Trevor Reeves. We helped them pitch for the account Bass, the brewers, which they got and we did quite a few ads for them before they launched Tennents Pilsner.

The copywriter and art director came in with a storyboard that depicted a futuristic landscape with a warrior riding a saber-toothed tiger through a storm... just what you'd expect. The strapline was *Seek Out The Lager Of Lamot*. A first animated shot was of an exploding volcano before the voice-over starts with, Tradition tells of a Pils lager and a silent messenger's timeless search etc etc... all weird shit! Some filmatic, orchestrated music was called for. The creative asked if I'd go with them to Bass headquarters to explain the music to the clients so I met them there early one morning.

It was certainly a strange meeting and when we thought it was all done and dusted a senior client piped up with, "The thing that concerns me is that not many of our lager drinkers wear bandanas like the chap in the film".

Without a pause the agency's account director retorted,

"I doubt many of them ride saber-toothed tigers either."

End of meeting.

Another big orchestral session and everyone was happy. About three films were made, using our music track each time.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFy8DB2xMtg>

After those three, some years later, Trevor Reeves decided he wanted something even more different but with the same music at the end and was using live acting this time. I decided to firstly seek out a musical motif that would be recognizable like the *E.T.* theme. Then I elected to use sampled sounds as musical parts and integrate sound effects into the track that might have been added in a dubbing suite later. The pulsating bass sound was my voice sampled; the kick drum is the piano lid being slammed shut; the snare is a huge crash sound effect; the tiger's breath was Don. No one had mentioned sound design at this point, but I really believe we achieved one of the first examples.

Trevor changed not one sound or note: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FF8QpqSoyT4>

Another job required the biggest string section we'd yet needed. Heaven knows what the product was, but the piece was Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries*. This comprised about eighty strings assembled in Abbey Road Studio 1 with Nick Ingman conducting. Elton complained about the awful state of the control room with its torn sofas to the studio manager who replied, "We're booked solid until next March; tell me about it!"

Elton decided that John Kurlander, the renowned Abbey Road engineer should come back to Mingles to mix it. So he did. I'd marked up the mixing desk and John walked in, twisted the pan pots and placed the faders in a straight line.

"There you go!"

And left.

Chuck wrote one commercial that may have been the most memorable piece that ever came out of Mingles. It was for Toys 'R' Us. Lynda Hayes sang the lead and it ran for many, many years.

More jingle companies were springing up, but we were still right up there. Elton took over as Treasurer of S.P.A.M., our little trade organisation and the name was (sensibly) changed to P.C.A.M. It's still going and doing great work.

Over the years there have always been boom times and slumps. Some companies try to advertise their way out of a recession while others cut back on those costs and we went through several lean times also. I remember several Friday afternoons where there wasn't one job in the diary in the future. We'd open a bottle of wine and before long the phones would start ringing again. On the rare

occasions that work was slow and money wasn't coming in as usual, Elton and I and even Don at one time would stop taking salaries. The staff would never know.

Elton had visited Dublin several times courting agencies there and the work they provided proved a very rewarding part of our business. He also found an American agent, Ralphie Finn, who pulled in some work, mainly Betty Crocker spots and I visited New York and Chicago to talk with agencies with her. I went for dinner in Hoboken, New Jersey where Ralphie lived, just across the river and the view of Manhattan from there must be one of the most breathtaking sights on Earth.

We won a pitch for a new razor called Gillette Blue Two. It was a pretty rocky piece with Bob Saker singing the first version and Stevie Lange, the second. It was used all over the place and the French agency asked if I would go over to Paris to record a singer they had chosen for the male version. As this was before Eurostar, I flew to Charles de Gaulle airport, left the 24 track tape on the plane, retrieved it and took a taxi to the agency.

Four gentlemen were there to greet me and soon announced that, as it was now noon we should head out for a spot of lunch. But what about the session?

"Oh, Jacques here eez our agency producer so 'e will go to ze studio at two and maybe run through, as you say."

Off we went to one of those lovely Parisian restaurants with all the superb seafood out front and a massive platter was ordered, but not just that, we had to select main courses also.

By the time all this had been eaten, it was well past two o'clock, but two of the agency guys ordered desserts. Not only that, but they insisted we have "a leetle digestif" so coffees and Cognacs were consumed. We did eventually arrive at the studio where the singers had done their vocals, and I was asked for my approval, which, as the performances were spot on, I gave. I thanked everyone, bade them, "Au revoir" and headed back, a little the worse for wear, to the airport.

A bit of a hard day, that: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VE_CfteOyiw

The Irish agency asked to do the same with local singers so off I went to Dublin, not forgetting the Multi-track this time. There was an agency producer and a singer when I arrived at Windmill Lane studios, owned by U2, a very nice facility indeed.

The one singer had booked the other three who didn't arrive on time... or half an hour late... or 45 minutes and I was getting a little concerned when the one guy announced, "Oi know... the clocks went forward on Sunday and oi bet they didn't change their clocks!"

Spot on, they arrived 55 minutes late, completely oblivious of the clocks having gone forward the previous Sunday morning. It was Tuesday. Still, they did a great job and I always really get on with Irish people; I enjoyed every visit there. I also enjoyed the Murphy's and Guinness, which tastes different in Ireland from anywhere else.

For the next Gillette film, the French agency producer, not one I'd met on my previous gastronomic trip there, decided to bring three female singers over to record in London. We'd chosen the lead girl from audition tapes. Stevie Lange is one hell of a singer and hard to match, but one girl was great and we booked her for the lead; the agency booked the other two.

It was obvious that, on the trip over, the producer had taken a shine to one of the backing singers who was very pretty and had decided that it should be she who did the lead vocal. Unfortunately, she was not a great singer. If I remember rightly, she finished up as the lead, but maybe I snuck in a take with the other girl.

Irish agencies seemed to like us and profited from the chance to spend a day or two in London town. We took good care of them and Elton would probably take them next door to the Escargot for lunch. The Escargot was THE West End restaurant of the time, partly thanks to the lovely Elena who welcomed everyone and knew most patrons personally and the chef was great. On the ground floor was their bistro with the restaurant on the upper floors. There was actually a fire door from our second floor to theirs as an extra escape route. We could also enter their top room over the roof from our studio exit.

One afternoon, we'd just finished a job for an Irish client. They hadn't come over but, as was our worst-case scenario, they asked to hear the track over the phone.

"Oim not sure about that organ, wouldya play it again for Polly?"

She didn't like it either although there was no organ on it.

"Tell you what, we can be there in under three hours, can ya wait for us?"

So we did and around 7pm they arrived, took one listen and approved the track straight away. It was pretty obvious that the 'organ' remark was an excuse for the two of them to escape Dublin for a night of passion in London. Talk about obvious, but that was fine.

Richard Armitage was now 59 years old. He was looking forward to celebrating his 60th and was trying to source a bottle of Bordeaux from 1928, the year of his birth and a particularly good one in that area. He didn't make it. I got a call at the Hogarth one morning to say that Lorraine had found him dead on the bathroom floor. Such sad news and, apart from the terrible personal tragedy, Charles, Alex and Lorraine had some big shoes to fill: the man who had guided the careers of David Frost, Stephen Fry, Emma Thompson, Hugh Laurie, Rowan Atkinson and many others. He'd revived his own father's Musical, *Me And My Girl* and by inserting some better songs and getting Stephen Fry to write a brilliant script and with David Okrent as director, had produced a massive hit in London as well as Broadway. The boys took over the running of this and, with Lorraine, oversaw the final stages of the renovation of the French house.

Keeping the Noel Gay Organisation in tact was going to be some ask especially as Charles and Alex had a difficult relationship.

One day I got a call asking me to appear on a kids' TV show called *What's That Noise* so on an agreed day I set off for BBCTV in Bristol and did the interview and wrote a little tune from lyrics given to me. Sonia Jones sang it; her husband, Brett was on drums Paul Townsend, our regular bass player, and Allan Rogers were in the band so we had a lot of fun in the crappy hotel where the BBC put us up.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjismBUgggog&t=2s>

Chapter Fourteen... **MIDLIFE CRISIS**

Things continued to go well. Cherry was getting some voice over work, but it wasn't her strongest talent; she choreographed a show for the Guildhall school of music and drama and was brilliant at getting the best possible performance out of people who weren't actually dancers, but she wanted to perform and was frustrated by the lack of work.

We held our usual bash in Montclus to welcome in 1989, but it was different. Chuck had a new girlfriend who proved hugely unpopular and even his best friend, Del (boy) told him, "You've had a lot of strange girlfriends, Charlie, but this one has absolutely nothing going for her!"

Over the four days, they were all over each other and some other guests seemed a little disappointed if a meal hadn't been as good as previous years... it just didn't seem the same and we decided that this would almost certainly be the last year we would hold such an event.

After a good MIDEM, Medwyn and I went by car to Cervinia where, although the snow wasn't great, we could reach the ski area of Zermatt and descend from the Klein Matterhorn to Cervinia (Passport required) a 20 kilometre descent and, I believe, the second longest in Europe. The food in the hotel was atrocious, which is so unusual for Italy that we ate out every night despite dinner being included in the price.

My welcome at home was not as warm as usual and it was obvious that something was wrong and within three days I discovered that my perfect marriage was, in fact, no longer perfect. We actually agreed we should both go on a pre-arranged trip to New York where we had meetings arranged by a New York publicist. We stayed at the Parker Meridien and the trip was fruitful with various articles about the company appearing in US publications, but it wasn't an easy stay for either of us. Cherry returned to the UK and I headed to seek solace in Cottage 85 at the Château Marmont and with my buddies there. I wrote a commercial for the Bank of Scotland that I recorded in my friend Frank Musker's studio off Laurel Canyon. Keyboards were played by Jeff Hull who co-wrote *Piano In The Dark* for Brenda Russell. They had a machine called a quantizer that would put anything played on a midi keyboard perfectly in time. I thought this to be absolutely magical and made a mental note to acquire one for Mingles on my return.

Don't ask me to sing the jingle; I remember nothing about it.

I also hung out with Martin Kitcat and George Sloan, bought a vintage Shure mic on Melrose Avenue to impress clients on old songs and headed for home.

Cherry had decided to move out and stay in a house owned by our friends John and Jill Wetton to ('think things over') and I never saw her again.

This was the worst time of my life. Medwyn was a great help as was a lot of exercise and I made it my mission to make sure that my situation would not affect my work or those with whom I worked. I believe I succeeded. I was later informed that I had.

One late Morning, Cherry phoned to say that she had been seeing Rob Dickens, head of Warner Records in England and wanted me to hear from her rather than anyone else. This was no surprise to me. I headed for the loo to get myself together before leaving to give a talk on advertising music to two hundred people.

I've never been a jealous person. I think jealousy can be painful and often destructive trait and, although I knew Cherry had many admirers, I believed in her and the way she felt about me. A few months previously we were at a birthday party with John and Jill Wetton, Kevin Godley and Lol Creme of 10cc who had become successful video makers. As we were talking, Cherry wanted to dance so I said, "You know how crap I am, why don't you dance with Rob, he's a really good dancer?" And she did. And then she married him. In hindsight, you could call that an error, but if something hadn't happened then, it would have at some time.

Knowing Cherry was with Rob Dickens, I immediately filed for divorce. Peter Levy, our company solicitor recommended a lawyer and Cherry hired some woman hotshot. One morning I was running by the Thames with Medwyn who asked me how it was going.

"My lawyer told me I should not be talking to Cherry directly as it confuses matters."

"Then fire him, as long as you can talk, talk."

For any of you currently getting divorced, this is great advice.

So I fired him, much to his surprise, called Cherry's lawyer and she agreed to come to the office one afternoon and we agreed everything, subject to the valuation of Mingles and Angell and her asking that 'adultery with an unnamed person be instated instead of naming Rob Dickens.

"Ask the lawyer if she's advising you to commit perjury" suggested Medwyn.

She said she wasn't. Dickens stayed in.

In brief, I kept my shares in the businesses and Cherry the rest, which was fair as, without her, there would have been no businesses.

One day it occurred to me that I'd lost my wife, had to bear the thought of her being with someone else; I'd lose my house and the social life we had together and it was becoming clear that half our friends had no desire to see me again. Had she died, not only would I have kept the house, but the mortgage would have been paid off and a life insurance policy would have been activated. Needless to say, that would have been the last thing I'd have wanted, but I'd never considered an alternative kind of loss. I most certainly would have been better off.

So many of my singer friends were so kind to me: Kay Garner and her husband David Hamilton Smith, Tessa Niles, Sonia Jones and husband, Brett Morgan, Stephanie de Sykes, Maggie Ryder and Kate Robbins and her husband Keith Attack and Carl Wayne and his lovely wife, Sue Hansen. I shall always be grateful.

It was time to put our lovely house on the market and called the agent who had sold us the house. I told him what I was asking.

"I very much doubt it would fetch that; it's really above the limit."

"I'm in no hurry" I replied.

"Well, at that price, we'll need a brochure, I'll get a photographer to come round"

Tom Gutteridge told me he was making a new series with Anneka Rice, a known presenter so I went to Mentorn Films in Wardour Street to see them. The visuals for the titles had been done, but after I'd recorded the theme, opening and closing, they could fine cut.

"I really don't think it should have a melody" Tom insisted.

"OK."

Tom left the room for a moment,

"Put a melody on", whispered Annie, "I make the final decision."

I did a demo that they both liked and also some incidental music for the first episode of *Challenge Anneka*. Each week the programme would feature a challenge to build a kids' playground, repair a village hall or a similar challenge within a certain time limit. When the series came out, it was very popular and it ran for several years. It was great to have two prime time shows on each Saturday evening on BBC1. *Jim'll Fix It* was still running.

Sorry, the visuals are a bit blurry: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2TxIEFTq1Sc>

Often Tom would ask for music to highlight specific situations. My toughest was when he called to say, "I'm sending over a video, we need music to tell us that the cement isn't drying." No precedent there, then.

One programme featured a challenge to clean up an orphanage in Romania. The whole episode was heartbreaking with Annie bursting into tears when she entered the place. It was so moving that Tom and his wife, Jilly, adopted a baby from there. Many of the workers who volunteered to go to replace the electrics, heating, rebuild and decorate this awful place, to this day give up their holidays to return to keep it in order. Wonderful people.

And this gives me great pleasure: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1892282934117011>

Meanwhile, Michael, the estate agent, called to say he'd bring the brochure round for me to approve and also bring a couple who were mildly interested in the house. They arrived and I showed them round and while I left them to wander around on their own, Michael showed me the very decent brochure.

The viewers came downstairs and the husband said, "We want to buy it as long as we can exchange (contracts) next week."

"I'll try to make it happen".

I called Peter Levy who thought it possible and he called a week later to say that the contract was ready for signing, but Cherry would also need to sign.

As there were no mobile phones then, I called Cherry's home number and left a message knowing that actors are always checking messages for possible jobs. I managed to get hold of one of the ladies in her agent's office, who called her agent.

"She's in Casualty, actually she's at this moment on a slab on the morgue so can't talk."

"Oh no, surely not??" (Thinking the news was given a bit lightly, but wondering if I would get to keep the house after all).

Of course, she, like every other actor before her, was appearing in the long running TV series, *Casualty*. The contract was sent to her home and was returned to Peter Levy. We had a month to vacate.

I decided to take a nine-day break. I couldn't face going to Montclus so our genius travel agent got me a cheap business class ticket with Air France via Paris to Miami. I decided to explore the Florida Keys. I wasn't over impressed. It might have been my frame of mind or the season or the amount of rain and Miami didn't do it for me either; not like the first time. I finished up at The Breakers Hotel in Palm Beach, which I found to be lovely and in a very attractive area. During the whole trip I don't think I spoke to anyone except for hotel or waiting staff and barmen.

Back at Mingles, one evening Elton arrived grim faced in the studio. He handed me a note. Chuck had resigned and wouldn't be coming back. We'd been really close so I was upset that he hadn't told us face to face. But we knew that the power behind the throne was his awful fiancée who'd undoubtedly persuaded him he'd do better on his own.

"This is it, he'll take a lot of clients and we don't need that!" groaned Elton.

I can't remember if he did, but his solo music career didn't last long. As it happens, neither did his marriage. The 'wife' left him to bring up their physically handicapped daughter, which he's done brilliantly and I still maintain that the best piece of advertising music ever to come out of Mingles was the piece he wrote for Toys 'R' Us. It ran for years at Christmas time. He's a very clever and capable bloke indeed.

With the proceeds from the house due, Cherry was ready to complete her purchase of a flat in Dawson Road, perhaps the best street in Notting Hill. What was I to do? I had Angell, Mingles and my share of the French house, but little else. I did call and Cherry agreed that, as I had my own house when we met, I should be able to buy something now so allowed me enough for a deposit and, in return, I got custody of the cat, all credit card bills and future tax demands from our time together.

As the weather was unusually glorious I decided to have a small, but select lunch party in the garden as a 'last hurrah' before I left my house. I did a lot of preparation and cooking beforehand and invited Sarah from Mingles, Alex and Carrie Armitage and Tessa.

There were several courses, the third of which was Gaspacho and by the time I collected that from the kitchen, we'd enjoyed a few glasses and I tripped up the steps from the kitchen, spilling half the contents of the tourine onto the paving. I left it and served the rest. Later in the day, I kept asking Alex to go into the dining room to take another bottle of his choice. It got untidy. And late. However, from what I remember, it was memorable.

I was extremely hungover when Michael, the buyer arrived on the Monday. Going into the garden, I spotted the now dried gazpacho. It now looked like something else entirely... rather unpleasant!

Cherry came into our house one day to earmark all the items she wanted, they were collected and later that day the Army and Navy removers took my stuff into storage and I shed a few tears on the way out. I had rented a house, very similar and close to my first. The cats (I'd been given a second kitten) and I moved in.

I kept going to the gym and was still working hard, but not seeing a lot of people. The highlight of each week was Friday night at Leonardo's Wine Bar in Sheen where an assortment of mostly female singers would go to hear that wonderful songwriter, John Carter and Peter Barnfather play, often getting up to perform with them while we ate mediocre food and drank a lot of wine. I'd either walk home or Stephanie de Sykes would drop off my sorry ass at closing time.

I watched the Berlin Wall come down on TV and spent Christmas alone through choice. We entered the 90s.

I was often invited to Alex and Carrie Armitage's house for dinner. They were very kind. One evening I was paired with comedic actress, Su Pollard. After being introduced, she started asking me some very strange questions... mostly anatomical. After a few minutes of seeing my rather blank and confused face she suddenly yelled out,

"Alex, you complete bastard!!!"

It turned out that when Su asked Alex what I did for a living, he'd replied that I was a gynecologist! Su and I are godparents to Alex and Carrie's second daughter, Daisy. Another dinner date, was another actress and ex-model, Lorraine Chase, also lovely, but infinitely more sane.

We were entering the era of samplers, pieces of equipment that you could use to sample a pre-recorded sound that were provided on small discs. You could also create your own. The Emulator 1 and Akai samplers were a revelation, but the Emulator 2 had longer samplers and could, if not at the forefront of the current technology, replace real orchestral instruments. They were great for demos, but we resisted using them on final recordings because real instruments sounded better and we didn't want to put musicians out of work. Of course, as everyone knows, samples pretty much took over. The Musicians' Union stood by and let it happen.

Previously, on visits to Dave and Brenda Mackay's house for dinner (Dave being a top producer), I saw and heard the new Linn drum and it blew me away. You could programme drum parts with great sounds and it kept perfect time; not that drummers don't, but many don't. I also saw this little box called the Apple Line. Dave had been given it to try out. He was writing *Paris, a Musical* with Australian star, Jon English, and they could send midi files of melodies and arrangements of songs back and forth through this machine. It was science fiction to me, something I couldn't imagine.

Don and Annie Gould had their annual Christmas party and invited both Cherry and me and left it to us to decide if we wanted to go. Cherry went so I didn't. I thought they did exactly the right thing. My choice.

I still had my old mates and enjoyed working with all the lovely singers and musicians who are still my friends. While renting, I put aside royalties and as much as I could so I could buy a decent house later in the year.

One day the lovely Carl Wayne came in to do a vocal.

"How are you doing? Are you OK, bearing up?"

"Thanks, Carl; not too bad except someone put a rumour about that I'd left Cherry for Tessa and Tessa had left Richard for me. I can't imagine who would have done that!"

"Oh yes, that was me. Seems to have done the rounds."

Typical Carl. You had to love him.

When I decided to start house hunting, I didn't. Tessa was in Chiswick and Carrie Armitage, Alex's wife, was in Barnes the two areas that interested me and they kindly looked for houses for me. Women seem to like looking at houses. Some weeks in and Carrie made an appointment for me to see a house in Elm Grove Road, Barnes, that she'd liked. So, on the Saturday morning, Alex came with me to view it and when we left he said, "I think you'll be very happy here."

And I bought it with an extremely big mortgage at 15% interest!!! It had three bedrooms, a box room, small, slightly grim bathroom, living room, separate dining room, compact, but adequate kitchen and cellar. There was a small garden at the back, facing west. I really liked it. The thing is, it is in a road where every house looks the same and only burglar alarms distinguish each house from all the others at night. It's nothing special, but Barnes is a sought after area and even these houses now sell at obscene prices.

I took over on a Friday morning. The place hadn't been properly cleaned. I collected some mops, sponges and cleaning fluids and scrubbed the place including the kitchen cupboards until my furniture arrived. Two removal men turned up and carried in the first item.

"Where d'ya want this, guv?"

I looked behind me seeking instruction, but then the realisation hit me that I could decide where it would go.

"Just there, please."

A good feeling and by the time I went to bed it felt like a home, there were even some pictures up. The next day, I picked up the cats and the rest of my belongings from the rental house, handed in the keys and paid for a thorough clean.

Around noon, there was a knock on the door. It was Tessa clutching a bottle of Champagne, bless her. The cupboard was bare, but we had a can of Campbell's tomato soup and a bottle of very nice Moët and Chandon.

I never did ask Tessa on a date and I can honestly say I have no idea why not. But we did hang out sometimes and at another meal at Sonny's one Sunday lunchtime, we were joined by Stephanie de Sykes. It became a sort of girls' lunch so I discovered they are far more disgusting and graphic than men ever are together. A fun and instructive day, though.

On Christmas Day, I went to Carrie and Alex's for a ham and Claret breakfast before picking up food from St Paul's School to deliver to people at home alone who can't get out. Some people who'd told the care worker they'd be alone (for sympathy) had actually been invited by a family member so, at the end, I had two meals left over. I can tell you, thanks to 'Crisis at Christmas' it's not easy finding anyone who's hungry in London on Christmas day and that's as it should be. It took quite some time to locate two guys in Queensway.

Against my wishes, Medwyn's wife, Rita, and Jane, my ex sister in-law, decided I'd host a New Year's Eve dinner party. After lots of cooking, I let a wine decanter slip and, on attempting a save, it broke, cutting my wrist quite badly. I got into the shower until the bleeding slowed down, called Di Palmer, one of the guests, who took me to the emergency room in Roehampton. I called Rita who isn't the world's best cook, giving her instructions for the meal. By the time I got home after 10:30pm, everyone was pissed; Rita had totally bugged up the meal and Jane's husband, Frank and George Sloan, my friend from L.A. had taken an instant dislike to each other.

By 12:15am, only Rita, Jane and I remained conscious, the only saving grace being that we discovered a bottle of Dom Perignon in the Fridge.

Happy New Year!

I'd always intended to extend the house's bathroom into the box room. Seamus, known as 'Murphy the builder' a friend at the gym offered to do the work for the price of paying his workmen and the materials. So I now had a very nice bathroom with walk-in shower.

Cherry hadn't wanted a piano in our living room, but I'd had a cheap upright in my office at home. The first time I had it tuned, the chap wailed, "You brought me out for this???"

Now I could have one and, when I could afford it, I did, a nice Kawai baby grand from Markham Pianos that sat at the entry end of the living room, away from the seating area. I loved it for its sound and look. I gave away the upright to a friend's daughter.

One Sunday, Murphy, a fellow Motor Racing fan and I were sitting watching a Grand Prix when Onion, the cat, let out a strange noise, jumped off the piano stool and bolted into the garden. This was followed by a cracking sound and two halves of the old lathe and plaster ceiling swung down and out and back, mostly into the open, new piano. I would have loved to see our faces. We swept up what was on the floor and added that to the rubble in the piano.

We discovered that there was a leak from the NEW shower, but let it dry before calling the insurance company. They called with a date to say when their assessor would be coming. Said assessor was very smooth, rather too smooth for my liking. After taking notes and inspecting whatever he thought he would need to inspect, he has a suggestion, "Look, David. If you could claim the VAT back on the piano, that could really speed up matters."

A rat was smelled.

"Sorry, this is my own personal piano, nothing to do with my business, I didn't claim it and can't claim back VAT"

"Oh, OK, I'll be in touch."

He was; I was in the studio...

"Oh hello David, there's a small problem here in that the insurance company, not me, you understand, thinks that, as you're a musician, the piano should have been insured under your business insurance."

I held up the phone.

"Guys, there's a bloke on the line says I'm a musician."

Raucous laughter!!!

"I'm doing my best for you and will get back to you."

When he called the following week, I was well ready for him.

"Hello David, I'm sorry, but the Insurance Company insists that the piano should have been insured through your business policy."

"That's wonderful news, can you absolutely guarantee that?"

"Er... that's what I was told, but why?"

"Well you know we write music for adverts; well, every week we work with The Times, the Sunday Times, The Sun and The News of the World and our client loves this story, so either The Sun or The News Of the World are going to run a spread on this with a photo of me and the piano, but also of Marco Pierre White in his kitchen at home that is presumably uninsured and their reporters with their word processors (that's what they used then) who would be likewise uninsured and the publicity this will get us is worth far more than the piano so thanks so much... oh, and how did you spell your surname again? It's for the article... Bye."

I asked the girls in the office to start a count down. Less than five minutes later, the phone rang.

"You'll never believe this, David, but the cheque for a new piano just arrived on my desk."

"Quelle surprise!"

My follow up was that I was smarter than this asshole and could handle him any day of the week, but he'd call some old lady to tell her she wasn't covered and she'd take the loss, be heartbroken and that just sucked so shame on him. Not that this changed a thing.

Ironically, Mr asswipe called me about a week later, smarm oozing out of every syllable to ask if I knew someone who would take the old piano as he had no idea how to dispose of it. I said I'd make enquiries, called him back and said I had someone who'd pay £600 if it were delivered. I swept out and hoovered the old piano and, after a good polish there was only one serious scratch on it. Markham Pianos delivered the new one (worth £4,500) and delivered Don Gould the old one, but not before I'd photographed both in my living room. All pianos vary and I have to say that Don's had been better, but he was lucky and I think he still owns the piano even if it's on loan.

Another fun project was for my Norwegian friend and publisher, Philip Kruse. He asked me to write and record almost an album's worth of material for a popular artist who had a kids' programme on TV. This meant writing the whole song and then the lyrics were completely re-written in Norwegian, appropriate to the artiste's character. One I wrote with Chuck had a very African feel and he was most hurt how the song was altered for Reidar... the star. Never mind, the album did very well; the single reached No1 and I recently found this clip from an 80s revival show:

Hard to take his too seriously: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmklhCz84fo>

At a summer lunch, I met a friend of Murphy's called Jo who was pretty and nice enough to agree to go out with me.

I planned on getting a week in Montclaus in September; the first on my own. A few days before my departure I'd done a new track based on my popular Mars tune. It was rejected. I was disappointed, but you never know with Mars. I got some more direction and did another track... and a third and was now getting Sarah to rebook my flight to Montpellier so I could record another version. I wasn't going to go until the track was accepted and the client happy.

I received a call from the agency,

"Look David, Mars' new marketing chief is American and insane; do you think you could go to Slough (The Mars headquarters) and talk to her? You might understand what she's talking about!"

I went, but I didn't. I walked out of the reception area, though the massive open office where every desk was identical with the same number of pens, pencils and sheets of paper and into a larger, outer office where Mrs Client sat. Our initial conversation wasn't clearing up the problem so I had to ask,

"Can you describe the sort of music you want?"

"Typically British, from a particular region probably."

A pause...

"Well, the problem is, unless you have bagpipes or a jug or brass band, nothing really says it's from a region of Britain and those three won't work. In the US, you have Country from Nashville, Soul from Memphis or Detroit; Jazz from New York and Chicago, Trad Jazz and Cajun from New Orleans, Soft Rock and Surf Music from California... we just don't have that here.

I was getting nowhere...

"Well can you give me a specific piece of music or artiste that would sum up what you're looking for?"

She thought about that one.

"Aretha Franklin singing *The Star Spangled Banner*."

So, so British.

I got back to the office and called the agency.

"Do you know what she wants you to do now?"

"Not a fucking clue!"

Eventually a track was accepted and I faxed Jo to tell her I was leaving the next day. The problem with a job with a problem attached is that the agency remembers the problem, not who caused it.

It was odd arriving in Montclus on my own, but I loved being there and I'd need to get used to it. One morning, Sarah called to say that an official looking letter had arrived for me at my home where she was cat-sitting. I asked her to open it.

"Holy cow, it's a cheque for £43,000 from the Norwich Union. You're rich!"

It seemed the endowment policy on my little Mortlake house had matured; it was three times the original cost of the house and as welcome as anything; the most money I'd ever seen.

I returned with hope, lighter of heart and continued to see Jo, work and meet friends.

I mentioned Onion, the cat. Tom Gutteridge had asked me if I'd help his wife, Jilly, on a new project, a half live-action, half animated pilot called... Onion the Cat. It was delightful and I wrote a theme I still remember and some background music. To keep Jilly's costs down, we also added the sound effects at Mingles and voice-over that was done by the lovely Stephen Fry. He did all the voices, was terrific as ever and a delight. Sadly, the series didn't get picked up, but when Roger and Deb Watson's daughters gave me a black kitten, I had to name him Onion. My other cat was called Daisy.

With part of my new, unexpected windfall from the insurance policy, I went to the Caribbean for the first time for Christmas spending the most hilarious ten days of my life at the previously luxurious, but now money-saving Le Sport in St Lucia. I went with Murphy and Chris (Polly) Pollard from the gym and was recognised on arriving there by producer, Esta Charkham so with them, Esta's partner Michael, an English lady called Carole Caplan and four Americans as a little group, we never stopped laughing.



Murphy and me on the beach in St Lucia.

For New Year, the three of us headed to New York and the Royalton Hotel (very cool) where another Hogarth member, Nick Henry, joined us for more hilarity.

A smart lady called Lindsay had taken over from New Zealand-bound Sarah at Mingles and had agreed to stay to cat-sit at my house while I was away. A note was waiting for me on my return.

'Get rid of the answering machine, no one calls you and get rid of the cleaner, she's useless!'

Unfortunately, the cleaner had been there earlier that day and left me a note also; she wouldn't be returning.

Thanks, Lindsey.

We were doing so much work that I have to admit I just don't remember it all. I do remember that, after Charles had started Noel Gay TV with ex BBC head of light entertainment, Bill Cotton, and producer, Paul Jackson, I got a call from Di Palmer who'd come up with a programme idea called, *Car Boot Roadshow* to be presented by TV actor, Carl Howman. Charles persuaded Anglia T.V. to pay for a pilot. Di could produce as long as Charles supplied an experienced line producer.

"Mindel, do you have anything suitable we could use as a theme?"

"Let me write you one, no charge until it goes to series."

Some weeks later, I took a call from a lady I didn't know.

"Hello, My name's Lesley Davies; I'm the line producer on *Car Boot Roadshow*. We've ended up with a surplus £500 in the budget so we'd like you to have it."

"Oh, how nice, thank you."

And it was and no, unfortunately, the series didn't get picked up, which seems crazy when you think of all the programmes with a similar format that have succeeded since. Through Di, I met Lesley Davies who became an important part of my life.

Later that Spring, Jo and I stopped dating. She thought I was too set in my ways and I thought so too. We stayed friends and when she left her job and started up as a florist and gardener, I hired her to take care of my garden, tiny though it was and to cut and leave me fresh flowers each Friday so, as my (new) cleaning lady came that day also, it was a joy to arrive home for the weekend. She was right, though.

Shortly after this, I took out Carole from our St Lucian group, but there was no big romance. She later went on to be prime minister Tony Blair's 'lifestyle guru'.

Toys were now very important to our turnover, especially Action Man. It was used on over one hundred films and all over the world to boot. Today I would have audio files of each vocal track or a stereo mix of them that could be dropped into every new version, but back then they had to be recorded each time for every new film. What was enjoyable was that each of these films required music to go with the action like a mini movie although the tracks were mostly pretty well drowned out by the butch voice-over and crashing sound effects. The gravelly sung line was performed by any two or three from Bob Saker, Carl Wayne, Joe Fagin and Willy Finlayson.

Willy also sang on one of my favourite tracks for Tennents Lager with Tessa Niles and Sonia Jones singing back up live with him. The track was also recorded with us all playing together. Again, there was a generic theme upon which we based various arrangements... and again from Trevor Reeves. Lovely man, lovely client.

This perhaps isn't the best: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSAMAE2xH0s>

One afternoon Don came into my office,

"Andrea's opening a new restaurant."

Andrea Riva was Don's Best Man and had managed various restaurants including a brilliant Italian/Japanese fusion place on the Thames Embankment; but this was to be his own venture with a chef from near his home on Lake Como.

"Where is it?"

"At the end of your road, do you want to come to a try out on Thursday?"

Riva was located in a place where various restaurants had failed including a Bistro Vino and one owned by a chum from the business, Lem Lubin with his brother.

Riva didn't fail and served me some of the best food of my life through the rest of my stay in Barnes. The problem was, it was 100 yards or so from my house. One weekend, I ate there on Friday Evening, Saturday evening and Sunday lunchtime. I had some great times there.

Before my September French visit, I was horrified to find that our lovely neighbour, Monique, had been made an offer she could not refuse and had sold her superb house to an English banker and his wife. I duly received an invitation to the couple's son's twenty first birthday party on their terrace... right next to our terrace. 'Dress... Black Tie'.

The thought of a black tie do in Montclaus was ridiculous so I bought a very old tuxedo from an Oxfam shop, had one of the ladies in the office chop off part of the trouser legs and make them into shorts and arrived at the event with a black tie over a T-Shirt and blue Jellies. Fergus, the owner was horrified and still mentions it, but the thirty Oxford students there wore completely crumpled suits and suffered in the sweltering heat. I was living next to a disco for three days and bemoaned the fact that I now had Brits as neighbours although Fergus and his lovely wife, Pip, have now become dear friends.

One day, I dropped in on Sonia Jones' house in Chiswick. The place looked like she had hired a team of cleaners.

“Son, what on Earth happened here?”

“I’ve got a new room mate, come and meet her.”

She wasn’t at all what I expected. She was very glamorous, very tall and a real ‘Rock Chick’ and it was she who had converted the sometimes chaotic place into a show house.

Leigh Matty was in a band called Romeo’s Daughter and is a great singer. Because the band wasn’t always working, she sometimes filled in when one of our girls was away. I had done various talks on advertising music in Scotland, Ireland and even Norway as well as London and, for the next one, I wanted to demonstrate how wrong a piece of music was on a Wrigley’s chewing gum advert and to demonstrate how much more fitting it could be. I had Graham, Don, Steve Donnelly and bassist, Trevor Barry, play all together on a track and had booked the incomparable Tommy Blaize to come in during the afternoon to add his vocal. I suddenly had a thought as Leigh was in the office,

“Sarah, would you ask Leigh if she’d mind coming up to do a guide vocal for me?”

We set up a dynamic mic right in the middle of the control room and recorded everything together. I immediately cancelled Tommy. Leigh was THAT good.

Singer Kate Robbins and her husband, Keith Attack, who is a singer and terrific guitarist had been very good to me, often inviting me to events at their home. On several occasions I’d talked to a very attractive Chinese girl called Julie Man. At Kate’s sister, Emma’s, wedding I suggested to Julie that she come to Sonia Jones’s annual summer party the following week. She did and we started going out.

I was 44 and Julie was 24 and that was fine with me. She was gorgeous, fun and cooked in three languages. Her father had owned Chinese restaurants; she loved French recipes and had been an au pair for a delightful Indian family so had learned to cook what they liked to eat.

We spent our first holiday in Montclus. In September, Miki Antony and his wife, Gaye, came to stay. On the 22nd, we took them to Vaison-la-Romaine, one of our favourite towns that lies an hour away to the east. After lunch, the sunny day began to deteriorate and the weather started to look menacing. I suggested we head home. Halfway there, the sky was lit up by constant lightening strikes followed by torrential rain. The windscreen wipers on my little 2CV really couldn’t cope. Arriving in Monclus, I decided to drive down the tiny village lane to the back of the house where there were French windows. And there we sat. Suddenly Gaye had an idea,

“I have a swimming costume under this outfit.”

So she stripped off and ran to the front door, opened it and let us in, but just getting the three metres from the car to the living room soaked us.

Tragically, the three hours of rain in Vaison caused the tiny Ouvèze river to back up, causing a tidal wave up the valley. People who were standing on their camper vans to witness this rising water were suddenly washed away, their caravans and camper vans ending up somewhere in the Mediterranean. The supermarket by the stream and the new bridge were washed away; the Roman bridge was undamaged. 37 souls perished and there now stands a park dedicated to those lost with a rock representing each person. It’s very moving.



We also went skiing in Wengen with Miki, Gaye; singers Sonia Jones and Maggie Ryder and always had a ball there. One Christmas we went to Los Angeles as John and Jill Wetton were living there. We stayed at the Château Marmont, had a splendid Christmas lunch with the Wettons and then, for New Year, went skiing in Big Bear where they had borrowed a chalet. On the way up there it started snowing heavily. John pulled the car over and a young guy by the road fitted chains to the wheels for \$10 while we sat in the car. That's American service for you. One evening we watched the pilot of Jane's new series, *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman*, which is still shown in re-runs all over the world although the studio insists that it has never broken even. No profit-my ass!!!



Big Bear L-R Jilly Wetton, me, Julie, John Wetton.

The previous year, singer, Stephanie de Sykes, started a tradition that carried on for quite a few years. A bunch of us took over all the rooms in a crazy hotel run by a mad Danish guy and his nearly sane English wife. Huntsham Court had a roof that leaked in a dozen places and a keyboard instrument in every room: a piano or harpsichord or harmonium with a biggest bedroom boasting a grand piano and two old bath tubs. Each room was named after a composer.

Now with Julie, I naturally took her with me for the weekend, stopping off for lunch with Jane at her magnificent mansion, St Catherine's Court, near Bath. Jane's sisters were also there and her lovely friends, Darcie, now divorced, and Steve Bickel. I always loved seeing Darcie. Apparently she was disappointed that I had someone with me.

The Friday at Huntsham Court always kicked off with a wine tasting conducted by the Mad Dane in the cellar; his advice being that the more alcoholic the wine, the better it would be. Then, suitably refreshed, we joined the non-winners for a buffet dinner in the library and more wine. Other suspects involved in these weekends included singers Sonia Jones, Miriam Stockley, Carolyn Allen, Maggie Rider, Tessa Niles, Andy Caine, Lance Ellington, composer/jinglers: David Dundas, Garry Bell and Mike Connaris, Anne Dudley, Mike Moran and David Palmer and a bunch of musicians and assorted friends including my chums, Di Evans and Andy Spence.

After breakfast on Saturday, people chose their own entertainment: riding, visiting antiques shops, shooting or just lolling about on the lawn. Lunch wasn't provided, but dinner was a black tie event with everyone sitting at one extremely long table. The food was great and the vino flowed. After dinner there was music. Stephanie and I would thrash out some rock and roll in the bar and better players would entertain in the huge hall/living room. Mike Moran and Anne Dudley once pushed two grand pianos together for an impressive duet and once Mike managed to get the old Hammond organ to work. Mike co-wrote, arranged and produced Barcelona for Freddie Mercury and Monserrat Caballe and represented the UK in *The Eurovision Song Contest* with Lyndsey de Paul (beat one of my songs) and Anne won an Oscar for her *The Full Monty* score. Quite some talent in one hotel, I'd say.

These weekends were too much fun.



*Huntsham Court, 1. Wine Tasting L-R: Lance Ellington, Sonia Jones, Andy Caine and me.
2. With Miriam Stockley and Maggie Ryder (The Munchkins) and 3. dressed for dinner with Tessa Niles.*

When my new friend, Lesley Davies, was with Vera Productions, she once called and asked me if I'd like to write and record a theme tune for a new series, *Rory Bremner, Who Else?* Of course, I'd like... a lot. I wrote a bluesy piece featuring Geoff (Goo) Daly and Steve Donnelly trading sax and slide guitar licks. I got away with it and we were then asked to record myriad other pieces for the show over several series.

For those who don't know, Rory is a brilliant impressionist and writer and he and his writing partner, the late John Langdon, wrote magnificent lyrics for his impersonations of political characters to sing to well known songs: Robin Cook sang *Rockin' Robin*, Gerry Adams sang, *Right Said Fred* and he got the Stranglers to perform *Gordon Brown* in stead of *Golden Brown*. It was quite daunting to re-record the Stranglers' track for them to sing, but again, we got away with it. Sometimes Rory couldn't get permission to change the lyrics of well-known works so I'd get the call, "David, I've got a little opportunity for you."

This 'opportunity' would require (rewriting) OVERNIGHT the melodies to three or four songs from, say, *West Side Story* (starring Gerry Adams again) or *Calamity Jane* to the new lyrics that they'd written to the old tune if you catch my drift. I did my utmost to stay away from the original tune, of course, often by 'inverting' the melodies. The following morning, we'd record these 'parodies'.

No one usually sued because the show was only broadcast twice and was a lot of fun. However, that was until I re-wrote *All You Need Is Love!* The new version was called *All You Need Is Me* to be sung by (pre-election) Tony Blair, brilliantly written and staged to the point where the video was shot exactly as the Beatles' original (minus Tony Bramwell), even with a live string quartet and the exact same microphones as they used on the Beatles' original. This song is hard to re-write as the 4/4, 3/4 verses immediately give the game away and even though the melody was kind of upside down again, the humourless Kay O'Dwyer at EMI sued, but I, as usual, had signed an indemnity clause so I just had to give back the pound publishing advance that I never received in the first place. Unfortunately I don't have a copy although it was once shown at a Beatles' Convention.

Rory and co were always a huge pleasure to work with and I always thought his pieces were funnier in the studio than when edited and broadcast. We laughed a LOT! Good days... and nights.

On Wednesday evenings, Julie and I would have an early dinner in the same area and head down to the Subterranea Club where singer, Laura Pallas, hosted her Songwriters' Network evenings where writers, both successful and emerging, would perform their material. The writer would send a cassette of the songs he or she would perform and the amazing band and singers would learn and rehearse them. This great group comprised Brett Morgan, Trevor Barry and Allen Rogers who later featured in the *Strictly Come Dancing* band, plus Mal Maddock on keyboards, Alan Darby on guitar and backing singers Emma Robbins and Pam Shayne who later went on to write *Genie in a Bottle* for Christina Aguilera.

These nights boasted a lot of talent - Andrew Roachford playing his hits, Kenny Young singing his *Under The Boardwalk* and guests like Chakka Kahn and Seal, who performed a rendition of *Hey Joe*, would drop in. I persuaded my friend, John Wetton, to come along and perform his Asia hit, *Heat Of The Moment*.

One evening a young guy came on and played electric piano and sang like Al Jarreau and then turned to guitar and played and sang like B.B.King. I was hooked. I had to use him on sessions. I did. His name is Tommy Blaize, we became friends and he became well known as the lead singer on *Strictly*... a great talent.

Out of the blue, Laura invited me to do a couple of songs. I can't compete as a singer so got Lynda Hayes to sing *Don't Throw It All Away* and got a bunch of singers to help me with a song I wrote with Kay Garner especially for the event called, *It'll End In Tears*. It was a third person's view of Julie and me going out together. One answer line was performed by Miriam Stockley and Maggie Ryder (the Munchkins) singing, *He's Full Of Shit* while sporting huge, false tits and rubber, inflatable guitars. For some reason, this went down so well that we were asked back to a 'Best Of' evening. Rod, Miri's most patient husband videoed it. That would be worth watching. For me, anyway.



Two photos of that night with Keith Murrell, me Maggie Ryder, Miriam Stockley, Sonia Jones and Tessa Niles (best group of backing singers... ever).

It got worse!



At last I received Cherry's final tax bill. Remember that I was liable for any future demands under the terms of the divorce. Pan's People's accountant had been, at the very least, inefficient so my accountant, Keith Swallow, had been hired to negotiate with the Inland Revenue. I remember going with him to the first meeting.

"Absolutely not; we couldn't accept that!"

I didn't know you could say that to a tax inspector.

So, here it was... the final bill... the agreed amount that, if you added to the credit cards I'd been obliged to pay off came to... you guess... yes, almost exactly the £43,000 I'd received from the Norwich Union. Thank goodness I hadn't spent much of it. They do say, 'The good Lord giveth and the good Lord taketh away'. I don't, but people do. Dammit!!!!

For my 45th birthday, Andrea permitted me to hire Riva for a Sunday lunch and I elected to invite all the people who had been so good to me after my divorce. Some people were surprised not to be invited, but some were a disappointment, my sister included. What a meal we had. There seemed to be a proliferation of blondes: Miriam Stockley, Sue Hanson (and husband, Carl Wayne, of course), Kay Garner, Sonia Jones, Heather James, Stephanie de Sykes, Tessa Niles plus Kate Robbins with blond husband Keith Attack; Alex and Carrie Armitage, Roger and Deb Watson, Richard Derbyshire, fellow gym rat and Chelsea supporter, Nick Henry and Gaynor, wife of my Swiss school friend Richard. Richard and Gaynor were again living apart. Richard who'd inherited a lot of money, but had previously lived sensibly with Gaynor and their three children in a lovely house in Woldingham, repairing locals' cars started gambling and had lost heavily. I think he felt he hadn't earned his money and so, if he won at gambling, he would have earned that, but, of course, lost. Crockford's treated him like the favoured customer (loser) he was and he fell for a croupier. Gaynor was heartbroken, but he later came to his senses, returned and did everything to make it up to Gaynor and his kids.

50 people attended the lunch. It was a delight and I think everyone enjoyed it. People say you can only have a couple of close friends, but I do believe that I have many and that has turned out to be the greatest wealth and joy in my life.



From that day, me, Miri and Rod and Carl and Sue.

I was continuing to write themes for Tom: 'Passport' that became 'Holiday of a Lifetime' presented again by Anneka.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FowFbEDUdts>

Tom also gave me Hollywood Tonight and others the names of which escape me at the moment. I also did some music for Paul Smith's Celador Productions and Endemol, including a series of the popular, *Food and Drink*.

A few years beforehand, Elton had persuaded me that we should invest in the restaurant in Montclus so that Tim and Fiona, the owners, could move from the tiny place they ran outside the village to the site they now occupied. Now Tim announced that they were giving up the restaurant as the work was too intense and they wanted a child. Tim's friend Dudley found him a job at Dan Air cargo at Montpellier airport. I hoped that the loans might be paid back eventually, but Tim took up flying lessons instead. They had baby girl.

I'd also lent Tim a sum for a wine deal that was happening the 'next week'. It never did happen and when Dan Air got into trouble he called to say that British Airways were buying them out and to buy shares as they'd fly (sic) up in value and to please get £500 worth for him also. I did but Dan Air was bought for £1 and the money was lost and not a penny of any of the debts has been repaid. Being out of a job, Tim then booked a family holiday in Mauritius and bought a new car. As you do. I must have 'Idiot' stamped on my forehead.

As a footnote, Tim must have been squirreling away some gig money as one day he moved into a flat with a phone and answer machine with his new girlfriend leaving Fiona a note and a sum equivalent to £4.50 for her and their daughter. Only good friends kept her well fed and able to live in the house. A man with no shame!

Although Julie was a fabulous lady, she decided it was time to think about having children and I, at my age, really didn't think I wanted to be a responsible parent for the next twenty years or so and sadly our relationship wound down.

Jane Seymour's marriage had fallen apart, David leaving her with a huge amount of debt. *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman* was a hit show and with that and outside ventures, Jane worked her ass off and paid off everyone, never considering bankruptcy. She's a real worker. She had fallen for and become engaged to James Keach, brother of Stacey Keach and a director on *Quinn*. Late one Thursday afternoon I was told Jane was on the line.

"Why aren't you coming to my wedding?"

"Don's there, I'm looking after the shop."

'But you always come to my weddings! Are you working tomorrow?'

"Well, I don't have a session booked at the moment."

So, thanks to our great travel agent, the following morning I was on a Virgin flight to L.A. with four economy seats to myself. I picked up a hire car and drove to the Malibu Beach Inn that was owned by friends of Charles Armitage who let me have room with a lovely Ocean view for \$50. It's now owned by Geffin and costs upwards of \$350 a night.

I'd called John and Jill Wetton and met them in Tra da Noi, just down the road in the Colony for a lovely dinner. The following day I was on my way up to Santa Barbara where I ate some seafood on the pier before checking into my motel and changing into my tux.



With Jilly Wetton at Tra da Noi.

The wedding was held in a sumptuous house belonging to friends of Jane. I couldn't hear much of the service because of the helicopters buzzing overhead, but, after drinks, there was a sumptuous dinner and a scratch band that, amongst others, comprised David Foster and Bruce Roberts of the Beach Boys. Wine flowed and I must have enjoyed some as I actually asked the lovely Darcie, who was on a first date, to dance with me.

"How can you do this to me?" I asked.

"You're not interested in me, I have two children and you live five thousand miles away!"

Of course she was right, but she looked gorgeous.



David and Darcie.

After not much sleep and nursing a hangover I joined a small group on the motel terrace for breakfast. I talked to Judy Tarlow who was Jane's wonderful press agent and David Emmanuel who had designed Jane's (and Princess Diana's) wedding dress. I drove back to LA airport and was in the office on Monday morning. Jane gives great weddings.

Nick Angell had thought that the studios would soon suffer from being in a basement in Covent Garden although bookings and profits were still great providing me with a nice dividend each year. It must have been hard working for years with no daylight so we all agreed that a property should be found. He eventually located a whole floor in Film House, Wardour Street in Soho that he loved and felt it could hold five studios. Elton did his predictions and it seemed to make sense with him and the conversion went ahead. It was a great space and we had great staff, but Nick had a propensity to want to try out new recording software that no one else used and these systems rarely worked as efficiently as the other tried and tested systems. The place did OK, but never as well as the shabby basement in Floral Street.

Apart from MIDEM, which I attended every year in January, we started also going to the advertising Festival in Cannes also and later MIP, the TV version. If I thought late night trips to the Martinez or Gutter Bar were crazy during MIDEM, it was nothing compared to the Advertising shindig. Elton had asked Heather James whom we'd both known for years to come to work with us part time, selling the company. She came to the TV and Advertising festivals also.

Mingles was now administering its own publishing with Elton acquiring a designated computer programme. Noel Gay Music now comprised only Charles and part time at that, so he asked us to administer the Noel Gay catalogue on which I'd worked all those years ago. For MIDEM I registered Charles and me under Mingles Music, but was told that we would need to register separately as Charles wasn't a paid employee, thus we'd have to pay double. I had a huge row with Peter Barnes of the MIDEM Organisation and told him to get stuffed and so have never registered since. Early on, this did mean not getting a room in town, but we didn't care as we stayed at Loews in La Napoule where we enjoyed a sea view and played tennis on the hotel's courts every morning following which, we'd take their shuttle bus into Cannes. A tough life.

When Charles and I arrived in Nice, the lovely Kim of 'Allo Taxi Kim would be waiting for us, resplendent in her mink coat and would drive us, tiny dog on her shoulder, to the Neptune Beach restaurant in Le Cannet. After a huge platter of seafood, fries and a couple of bottles of rosé, we were again collected by Kim and taken to the La Napoule hotel.

For the advertising and TV festivals we stayed at nice, but modest hotels in Cannes. Heather, rather than Charles would come, as it was her job to charm and acquire new clients. At one AdFest, one of our best clients, Kent Shively of Griffin Bacal agency for whom we wrote a lot of toy commercials booked a frighteningly expensive suite at the Carlton, but was kept awake by bands playing on the terrace just below his room until 3am and the noisy crowd. That would be us.

That trip, we were invited to editing company Rushes' party on the roof an elegant villa just outside Cannes. There was a huge buffet that included whelks and tripe... someone with a sense of humour came up with that one. I, however, love both these dishes. We sat out on this gorgeous evening with some friends that included director Richard Simpson still a great friend and met a guy from a post production company with offices below Angell in Wardour Street, Ray Adams, who, it turned out, had a house an hour away from ours in France and the next time we were both at our holiday homes, we met up and became firm friends.

Our usual lunch venue for all Festivals was the Ondine Beach that was, obviously, on the beach and had REALLY good food. The headwaiter, Laurent, took great care of us and we're now also friends. I can't even count how many times I've visited Cannes and still enjoy trips there.

Steve started pushing us to acquire one of the new digital recording systems. Pro-Tools, he insisted, would really change our lives and fortunes and was the way to go. We at first resisted, but he nagged us so much that we eventually acquiesced. Before that, he'd received a voucher that allowed him to mention 'Pro-Tools just once each day. Pro-Tools had some real bonuses in that editing was simple; you could copy and paste vocals or sections of the music, but it was only 8-track and to gain more, you had to bounce down audio and that took quite a time. Still we could lock it up to the 24-track and gain more tracks and capabilities.

I suppose it was inevitable that Heather and I would start a relationship. It wasn't long after the break up with Julie, but we'd been friends for years and though I knew that things hadn't ended well with her exes, she appeared to be a good match for me.

I'd been pushing for some time to change the company name from Mingles as it seemed very gimmicky now. It had worked, but we needed to grow up. What made it eventually happen was Elton's idea of getting big names on board; artistes who would, for an appropriate fee, be prepared to write and record advertising music. I didn't think anyone of stature would be interested, but I was wrong and we immediately had Dave Stewart, Tony Hadley and Malcolm McLaren on board. We eventually settled on the name 'Music by Design' and it was decided that we should seek out agents and artistes around the world. We asked advertising genius Trevor Beatty for whom we'd worked a lot and who had come up with FCUK and Toys 'R'n'T Us (to deter people from buying pets as Christmas presents) and his partner to come up with a design and logo for our brochure and stationery. Mingles would become Music by Design.

Heather made various appointments with managers and hired a publicity guru in New York and I made appointments with other people I knew aided by Roger Watson, now working as a consultant. Roger seemed to know everybody.

Heather joined me for the New York portion of the trip. I used my Virgin Miles to upgrade us to Premium Economy, but we didn't get boarding passes on checking in. At the gate we were abruptly told that we would be put back in Economy. I protested to no avail and this was the only time I'd ever been downgraded so I had our bags taken off the plane and got a great deal with Continental.

I wrote to Richard Branson and received an answer saying he was absolutely horrified by what had happened, was seeking out those responsible and offered me a big pile of extra air miles that I have never used.

The meetings in New York were split between interviews that resulted in a great article in the Wall Street Journal among others and meeting with managers, all of whom were enthusiastic about the project and we were building up rather a good portfolio of well known artists who would write commercials at the right price.

Heather returned to London and I moved on to LA and my beloved Château Marmont, enjoying nights out with my chums, Martin Kitcat and George Sloan.

I signed more impressive artists there also including Ray Charles, which was a real surprise. I drove to a part of LA to meet Charles' almost legendary manager, Joe Adams, who was an absolute delight. After a good meeting and some music talk, I was heading back when Joe asked me which route I'd taken; I told him.

"Oh my God, don't go back that way; even I wouldn't drive through there!"

So I didn't.

I also met the manager of a very popular Rock band, a very friendly English guy.

"I'm sorry, they absolutely won't do ads. Of course they all drive gas-guzzling cars, but they turned down two million bucks from Pepsi."

I swear he had tears in his eyes when he told me that.

From LA, I took a sixteen hour flight to Sydney where a friend of Sarah's (she knew good people) had fixed me up with a really lovely little apartment for four days. At 2am, I watched a Formula1 Grand Prix (I never miss them) and still woke up quite early. On the top floor of the building was a swimming pool with a huge window with an incredible view over Sydney Harbour and the Opera house.

My old friend and publisher, Pete Hebbes, agreed to represent Music by Design in Australia and I enjoyed visiting his home and the famous Doyle's restaurant on the beach. The October weather was gorgeous and I took to Sydney very much, only it did feel an awfully long way from everywhere I knew; which it is.

Next stop was Singapore. There had been a huge forest fire in Kuala Lumpur and the sky was a dirty brown colour. I found a company to represent us, but apart from a lovely evening at Raffles hotel drinking G&T's and eating a rather fine curry with Steve May, my friend who lived locally in France, I didn't care for the place and headed home a day early. I've never done that before or since. The big problem was it's humid enough in normal times, but with the smoke cloud, I couldn't sit out at all and was obliged to change my shirt twice before lunchtime. The street and court food were wonderful, though.

It had been a good trip and our design gurus set about a brochure and the rest of the stationery. They did the wonderful job we expected with a box containing an impressive book of artists available and a pin badge in the lid all their beautifully designed logo. Great job, guys.

Work carried on as usual, but the samplers meant we were seeing fewer musicians and the trend away from singers had begun, I guess because of the price. Until now we had only used samplers on demos, insisting on using the real thing on final recordings and urged the Musicians' Union to ban them from broadcast material, but, as usual, they did nothing. Very quickly we saw A list session guys playing in West End theatres to augment their income. They never would have done that before. The guys who had previously been playing in 'the pits' took to out of town shows or tours and replaced musicians who now mostly sought out cruise work. I saw that as the beginning of the end and commenced planning my exit strategy.

The first job we got for one of our 'celebrity writer/artistes was a request for Malcolm McLaren to write and record a track for an anti-smoking campaign, rather ironic as he was a very heavy smoker. Heather went with him to the agency to take the brief and Malcolm turned out a really nice track that went down a storm. This new project was looking good.

A month or so after the recording, the ad was aired and a few days after that we received a call from the manager of a very good, (but not household name) band Offspring who claimed that Malcolm's composition was far too close to one of his band's to be a coincidence. Our receptionist, Lisa, was dispatched to buy the album with the mentioned track and we listened and it was almost bloody identical. I called Malcolm's assistant to see if she had ever heard of this band and she replied that Malcolm had listened to their album a lot quite recently. No shit, Sherlock!

I called back the manager who was remarkably decent and said that if we took the ad off air, he would take the matter no further although it was certainly within his right to do so.

The call to the agency was extremely embarrassing and we agreed to fund a new composition and pay for all the prints of the film that had been sent to the TV stations: several thousand pounds of costs. Malcolm was most apologetic and readily agreed to reimburse us for any out of pocket costs.

Of course, he never did.

The second big name job through the new MbD venture didn't go so well either. A big agency requested Dave Stewart for a new Electricity campaign so I went with his manager, James Wyllie, whom I knew pretty well and Roger Watson to see Dave at his offices in Covent Garden. I'd always been impressed by Dave's work and he was very easy to deal with and I was extremely surprised that he was recording a lady singer from 'Miss Saigon' in his studio's control room without headphones, just using the speakers. I'd never witnessed this before as we always isolated singers, trying to get them to wear headphones tightly to avoid spill. I now realise it makes little difference to the final recording. You learn every day in this business.

I don't remember the exact details of what went wrong, but somehow the ad was made with no participation from or payment to us. James took full responsibility for the error and, as some kind of recompense, invited Roger (I don't know why him) and me to a lunch at a restaurant called l'Aubergine that was gaining a big reputation. The food and wine were bloody wonderful and the company also. The chef was a young guy called Gordon Ramsay. I wonder what happened to him!

When Heather picked me up from Hammersmith for our drive down to a Huntsham Court weekend, she claimed I was drunk. Surely not! If I wasn't, I probably would be after the Evening's wine-tasting.

It seemed that some people in the office were having a problem with Heather. Maybe our relationship partly caused that. She owned part of a house in Wandsworth and the majority owner was returning and wanted to buy her out so we decided that she should leave Music by Design and concentrate on her acting career and move into my Barnes house. A bold move.

The following year I would be turning fifty so I started to do a lot of soul searching and adding up figures to see if we could possibly afford to move to France. It was looking promising if I sold everything but kept up with my pensions and retained an interest in Angell. So tempting.

One day, Charles Armitage phoned to say that one of his producers would call me about some music for a new TV series. I liked getting these kinds of calls. When I finally spoke to the producer he explained that he was making a comedy series called *My Dead Dad* starring Forbes Masson. He didn't want theme music or links as in programmes like *Seinfeld* (very popular at the time), but had elected to use six or seven soul classics and could we re-record 30"-40" of each piece.

"No problem at all, give me a little time to think of the best way of doing this"

I called him back the next day.

"I think the only way this can really work well is to record the whole thing live, the way most of the original tracks were originally done."

"Great!"

I decided to use Olympic Studios, three minutes away from my house. Richard Branson had just been appointed an advisor to the government on employment; then he bought Olympic and laid everyone off... not a great start to his new position.

I reserved a day in the studio and Martyn Webster, ace engineer and boffin, to record the thing and then booked Allan Rogers (keyboards), Paul Townsend (bass), Brett Morgan (drums), Clem Clemson (guitar) and a top-notch brass section. Then my dream team of singers: Tommy Blaize, Jocelyn Brown, Maggie Ryder and Miriam Stockley with Tommy and Jocelyn taking the leads. Don did the arrangements and played second keyboard and I added percussion when required and produced. We rehearsed 10-1 with Martyn getting the right sound and recorded to 24 track in the afternoon, but also straight to stereo and in all but one piece we used the direct stereo recording.

After the session, everyone appeared really lifted by doing it and one of the trumpet payers said,

"Well, when are we going on the road, then?"

This sowed the seeds of an idea. Tommy still says this was one of his favourite sessions ever. Mine too.

During a visit to Montclus, I started looking in estate agents' windows. Yes, I had a house in France, but it wasn't really suitable for full-time living and, anyway, Elton still owned half. I knew exactly what I wanted, but realised this kind of property would be beyond my budget. I think Heather's keenness to move to France made up my mind. I was approaching fifty and had been in the studio every day for twenty-five years; younger creative teams were appearing and they would want to start working with younger music writers. I didn't kid myself I'd be around and working into my sixties. And then the decision was made easy. Elton came into my office.

"That's it... there's a guy who works from home with a digital system who's doing free demos!"

I gave Elton an outline of my plan and, not having found a suitable property, every two months, either Heather who had now left the company or I would visit the area and look at houses. Often, Nick Henry and Murphy would accompany me for a week in France and we'd bring Murph's van so we could return with massive quantities of wine. We'd usually stop in at the Vendengerot hotel Rully in Burgundy overnight on the way down. It was a very simple place, but boasted wonderful food.

On one trip we were joined by Alastair Gibson who'd discovered the hotel. At dinner, Nick received a call on the hotel phone.

"My friend, Franck, called to say be at M Ramonet's in Chassage Montrachet for a tasting at 10am and be early!! You can't miss this."

So, at 9:45, there we were, waiting with eight or nine other people when Franck turned up with another chap who was an airline pilot and, Like Franck, a wine collector.

Eventually, a tiny man in typical blue, French working trousers and matching jacket opened the doors and we filed in. This gentleman whom we took to be one of M. Ramonet's workers then opened some bottles of red that we tasted. They were all stunning, but THEN we got onto the whites that were even better; every one better than the last. The penultimate one, a Bâtard Montrachet was absolutely sublime, but the last, the Montrachet was the best thing I've ever tasted. Really!

The four of us huddled and decided that we really ought to buy something after tasting these amazing wines. We caught Franck's eye.

"Do you think it's OK if we just buy 6 bottles of the Bâtard between us?"

"BUY it??? You can't buy it; it's sold out years in advance."

He then told us that, at mates' rates, the wine was £100 a bottle (even then) and the 'paysan' who served us was indeed Andre Ramonet, the man described by wine arbiter, Robert Parker, as 'The best white wine maker in the world.'

We retired with Franck and the pilot to the nearby Auberge des Vignes for lunch and Franck told us that, the previous summer, a limousine had pulled up outside M. Ramonet's cellars and the chauffeur knocked on the door.

"Bonjour, I'm here with the US Ambassador who'd like a case of Montrachet, please."

"Sorry, I have none to sell."

"But you don't understand; this is for a reception for your president."

"Sorry, can't do it."

On this rejection, the ambassador himself came to make the request.

"Good day sir, I'm the US Ambassador and I need a case of wine for a dinner I'm holding for your president, I must have some."

"As I said before, I have none to sell you; now piss off!"

How wonderful!

I had been thinking about the great TV session we did live in Olympic. Back in 1968, when I started a mobile disco with my friend, Malcolm McDonell, he turned me onto Soul Music, especially Stax. I knew a bit about the history behind this music and the horrible segregation in the U.S.A. back then and it eventually came to me that there was room for a Musical about this time in American music and I decided on a rough storyline of a group that came from four musical backgrounds: Gospel, Do-Wap, Country and Pop to create Soul. I started to write some outlines for songs for this 'Musical' and one called *It Hurts* seemed particularly strong about the band's eventual break-up. I bought all the books I could find about the musical history of the 50s and 60s in America. In down time and at home, I started to arrange and create midi files for each song. Back then I'd load them onto floppy discs and take them to the studio to record the relevant samples. Then, I'd add guitars, drums or whatever the songs needed that I could play. The tracks were starting to come together.

When one of our best clients, Jevon O'Neil, came for a meeting, we anticipated a new ad campaign, but Jevon announced he'd written a movie script and was going to make the film, directing it himself. He'd got a lot of actors and film people on deferred payments and wondered if we could help with the music. We said of course we would. Sometimes people with whom we had never worked would call for a favour, a free demo usually, but we didn't do that. For good clients, of course, whatever they wanted. When the movie was edited, Jevon bought it over and, with him, Don and I went through the cut, working out what scenes required music, what style and where; it's called 'spotting' and Don and I agreed to share the work. We were pretty busy so most writing was done on the weekends, but Don doesn't work weekends because of family and social events so he ended up doing two cues and I wrote about twenty plus a few songs. At least I gave him the two I didn't want to do. We recorded it with our usual musicians and singers doing favours. I think the final cost to Jevon for tape and a sax player (makes everything sound more expensive) was just £1,300. I remember one cue was seven minutes long, the longest I'd ever had to do. The film was no masterpiece, but Jevon said if he got to direct another film, we'd get the music and be paid. He did and we didn't.

I wouldn't recommend you watch the whole film: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_9xHYZFi3Q

During the Spring, Jane was in England and so was the lovely Darcie who had now married the guy who was her date... the first date, at Jane's Santa Barbara wedding. Darcie and Joe came over to the house and over dinner at River, I told them of our plans to spend my 50th birthday in California: LA and then driving up the coast to Napa and back to San Francisco. Joe said he knew of some great places and not long afterwards kindly sent some recommendations. He must have thought that I was extremely wealthy as they were all hundreds of dollars, but one was affordable for the actual birthday... just.

Murphy, Nick and I did the first serious house-hunting French trip. I'd arranged viewings for this week with various agencies. I was pretty concise with my wish list: old stone house, not totally converted, with garden (this was Heather's wish as gardening was her main hobby), not too far from Montclus, big rooms. Now it doesn't matter what you tell estate agents here, they'll try to sell you everything they have. One agent in a lovely town called Uzes asked if I was interested in the area near that town. I said, I would if it were to the north towards Montclus. We set off, following him, to see 'The ideal property'. We went the wrong way... south... about ten miles and he insisted I see this wonderful house that was not stone, but modern and overlooked the A9 motorway. And he'd forgotten the keys.

We were taken to another where an alcoholic woman tried to show us round her squalor and an old house right under electricity pylons.

"It's a bit musty as an old lady died here and it has been closed up for a while."

"I think she's still here!" chirped in Murphy.

Then at dinner with Jacques and Tanya, they announced that they'd found a great house with a wonderful view. We visited the next day. They were there with the 'agent' who turned out to be a local builder.

The house did have a good view and land that had potential, but the house was covered in 'crépy, a cheap stucco that usually covers a multitude of sins and the master bedroom had beams so low that I'd have killed myself within a month from head injuries.

The 'agent' was the first to speak. "I strongly suggest that you come back and make an offer!"

"No, thanks, it's not for me."

"But houses like this never come on the market."

"I don't like it!"

"But you can do so much with it and it's an incredible price."

"Look, I said 'no', I mean 'no' so stop wasting your time!!"

Jacques and Tanya were backing him up and it was obvious that they would all make money from the sale. There would be no sale to me.

My birthday trip was terrific. LA was warm and sunny and I, as usual, got suckered into taking a convertible at the car hire office. We stayed in Hollywood, then Malibu where there were serious fires and then in lovely Carmel and up to the Napa Valley where we tasted terrific wines and on my birthday stayed in the lovely Auberge du Soleil, ate surf and turf and drank a superb Opus One wine from down the road.

In London we were still doing a lot of work, the majority of which was for toys for the Griffin Bacal agency and Ogilvy and Mather agencies.

Action Man films that kept coming in were huge fun. Each, as I said, was scored like a mini movie, but all used my *Action Man*, *The Greatest Hero Of Them All* tune and would do so for many years; used in dozens of countries in many languages.

Unusually, Bert Adams, the Head of TV, brought a client into a meeting for a new job. This gentleman had invented a new toy that was going into production with an ad campaign and I was to write a melody for it. Then minutes later, I'd written the tune to, *Puppy in my Pocket* as cute as can be, I can take you home with me. The toy was unbelievably successful and spawned, *Kitty in my Pocket*, *Pony in my Pocket* and other toys all using my tune around the world. Nice work if you can get it. Unusually the music also crossed the Atlantic westwards.

These are two early examples: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUi0LD1qD-M>

I do take a certain pride in the fact that kids all around the world grew up listening to *Action Man*, *Sindy*, *Puppy In My Pocket* and, in the UK, *Jim'll Fix It*.

I was now ready to add vocals to the songs I'd written for the Musical. I booked Tommy Blaize, Lance Ellington and having read about Bonnie Bramlett having worn black make up so she could perform

with the Ike Turner Review, I decided that an extra element to the musical would be having the group include a white girl. I decided on Lynda Hayes. All three were very enthusiastic about the songs and the project and agreed to keep recording the songs for a small share each in perpetuity. This meant I could keep doing demos of the material without great cost to me. I named the characters after Lance, Tommy and Lynda and the fourth, Evelyn, as I usually used the wonderful Jocelyn Brown on her parts, but she wasn't always available. Other great singers stood in when this was the case. A plot was forming and the songs were sounding good, If we were doing a vocal session and Lance or Tommy said they weren't feeling a song, it was immediately dropped. They all had to be right... perfect!

This was the first I wrote and we all recorded. Tommy starts the vocal followed by Lynda, then Jocelyn and Lance. I played all the instruments and they added their superb vocals.

It Hurts: <https://www.youtu.be/0iN02bdUHR>

We kept a special, cheap mic to make things sound bad (old). It sure works on the drums here.

Sarah, now back in the fold from her New Zealand sojourn, joined us in Montclus for New Year and we were due to go to Harvey and Sally's for New Year's Eve. After a siesta we all awoke to deep snow. I looked out at the village road and realised that we weren't going anywhere, but spent a very quiet evening in the house. All the motorways were closed and I phoned Elton to let him know that we might be late back as we couldn't get anywhere, even by train. He was not impressed and insisted.

"I know you could get back if you really wanted!"

Of course we couldn't, but I decided that we would move to France in May come what may (sic).

I thought it wise to have my Barnes house spruced up a bit in order to put it on the market, but, before I could start, a note came through the door from someone looking for a house in our street. I replied; he and his wife visited and made an offer on the spot. I turned it down, but got pretty much the asking price without the necessity for any work to be done. The moving date would be May 6th.



My old house.

My last session for Music By Design was an adaption of the French jingle for Calgon. At this time of writing it's still being aired and sounds nothing like the French original, but I've never claimed any royalties. I wish I had.

Calgon: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NifayRbEPDI>

After that I went to my usual hairdresser and asked her to give me a No1. I came out with the shortest hair possible. Elton offered to book any restaurant I wanted for a staff farewell lunch, which was very kind. Instead of a fancy place, I picked a Mexican restaurant and drank a few Margaritas before taking a taxi home with a Neumann microphone that I'd been offered as a keepsake. I was officially retired and we started sorting out the house and booked a company to remove and store our furniture and other belongings. Nick Henry's mother was changing her car and, as, her old one was worth nothing, she kindly gave us her aged Honda Civic to drive down to France and, being a hatchback, it had enough room for clothes and necessities.

May 1st was election day, but we didn't vote as we felt it unfair to do so and then leave the country. I had high hopes for Blair. But like many people was fooled and disappointed.

Andrea had invited us for a meal on him at Riva and as it was an amazingly warm night for May, he had laid a table for two outside on the pavement. At one point my friends, Maurice Gallagher and Nick Maingay arrived with their wives for dinner.

"Oooh, they have caviar." Said Nick enthusiastically.

"I'm afraid not, only we have caviar." And what a wonderful meal it was; thank you, Andrea.

Chapter Fifteen... **MY NEW LIFE**

We finished packing our things and on the 5th and 6th the removers were coming so we were to spend the night with Medwyn and Rita. However the guys finished on the 5th so, having left the cats at a special cattery near Heathrow, we left a day early, waved goodbye to the white cliffs of Dover and I was in France AT LAST. We were able to spend two nights in Burgundy instead of one. We hadn't realised that the 7th was a public holiday and that all the villages had a ceremony for 'Victory in Europe Day'. It was certainly cold for May, the opposite of the unseasonably clement weather in London.

We arrived at our rental house on the 8th and unpacked the little Honda. Jacques parents had died and their little house was empty so, because Elton would continue to visit Montclus, we rented it while we searched for our new property. Our friends, Andy Spence and Di Evans, were due to come out to stay in Charles' house and most kindly agreed to accompany the cats on their flight to Montpellier.

They picked up the cats, checked in with them and we met them at arrivals.

"Lovely to see you... er, where are the cats?"

"I thought you'd pick them up at some office in the airport"

We managed to get back inside the arrivals hall and there, going round and round on the baggage carousel, were two wooden crates containing three very confused looking cats.

Going to the market in Uzes was a feeling I'll never forget. This is what we did on holiday. Now, we weren't on holiday, we actually lived here. Friends came to visit. The house wasn't particularly nice, but we could cycle into Goudargues and to the beach on the river on hot days for a cooling swim. I was at last living the dream I'd had for decades.

One day I decided to write to the very funny writer and Evening Standard journalist, Victor Lewis-Smith, to see if he'd be interested in writing a script for my Musical and enclosed a cassette of the songs that we liked and an outline of the story. He'd rented an office from us in Greek Street so I knew him. I was surprised to hear back so quickly.

'To date, I've always turned down doing scripts for Musicals, but I love the idea and the songs and so please allow me some time to come up with some outlines.'

I was 'stoked' as they say these days.

One Wednesday morning, the TV was on and I heard one of my Action Man tracks. I was pretty chuffed about that and then heard another... and then another. I realised that many kids in France have Wednesday's off school, hence kids' ads; so I watched the main channel, TF1, again on the Saturday and there was at least one Action Man film with my music featured in every break throughout the morning. I called Elton so he could check on royalties. There hadn't been much in the way of PRS so I then phoned Tom Arena, our French publisher who called me back and said there had been royalties paid and his copyright department thought all was in order.

By chance, Don met a French publisher, Xavier Nicod, who specialised in TV so, with Tom's blessing, he set out to investigate.

When he got back to Don, he announced that the agency in Paris (DDB, 2nd biggest in the world) had registered all the titles in French under their own publishing company with their creative director as composer. After much consideration, I wrote a very polite letter, suggesting that there must have been some kind of mistake and, if they paid us any royalties received and re-assign the copyrights, no more would be said.

I received a ferocious reply accusing us of slander and defamation of character with the threat to sue if we didn't desist forthwith. No chance, sunshine!

Tom Arena suggested a Paris based lawyer and I made an appointment to go to his offices on the Boulevard Haussmann. I showed Maître Schmidt the letters.

"Ooh, you didn't write THAT, did you?"

The French are VERY polite and my letter wasn't deemed deferential enough. Bugger that! We agreed to sue, and elected to take the civil rather than criminal route because, "It's usually quicker".

Now I'm not convinced.

To precis what followed, Elton and I made many trips to Paris for meetings and hearings. Sometimes I would stay with Tom and Romaine, his wife. The first victory was that the composer threw in the towel and repaid us on the understanding that we would take no further action. DDB went through three lawyers and I shall give you the outcome much later.

We had some nice meals, though.

In the early summer, Heather's friend, Adrian Mills, came to stay for a week, we had fun. We went to see the house of an old couple who had gone into a home. There was no bathroom, just a very shallow sink with cold water and a potty under the bed.

The original stenciling adorned the walls.

When we left Adrian gave his opinion,

“Promise me you won’t buy that place!”

I couldn’t promise.

“I think it has potential; we’ve seen places in far worse condition and it could be lovely.”

“Nooooo!”

Before we took Adrian to Montpellier Airport for his flight home, we aimed for Beziers where there was a place that claimed to be able to fix my fax machine, but before we got there, the little Honda stopped and wouldn’t start. It was the cam-belt and terminal. We still had the old 2CV and soon acquired a second hand Citroën Xantia.

Less than three weeks into our residency, I got a call from Maurice Coste, the owner of the hotel in Goudargues where we had eaten often, stayed twice and had spent the evenings of December 30th many times in the days when friends came down to spend New Years with us.

“I have a house for you that you have to see quickly.”

“But I’m working!” (true).

“Come Now!”

I didn’t dare disobey... he’s a huge, ex-Rugby player and within 15 minutes was at the hotel where we were presented with some pictures of a farmhouse. It didn’t look promising.

“If they’ve done that to the big window, I dread to think what else they’ve done” I offered in my improving, but far from fluent French.

“Go see it, it’s a great deal, they have to sell quickly.”

So we did.

The house was unoccupied and big, but also had another building where wine had originally been made that had been converted into a guest house. Being a ‘Mas’, pronounced ‘mass’ in the south and ‘mar’ in the north, the living area was upstairs and the main bedroom, downstairs. The property was neglected and sad. But I liked it.

There was a staircase outside to the dining room, which, like the bedrooms on the other side had been an addition, changing the configuration from an oblong and to an L and ultimately to a U. From the dining room you entered through a doorway without door to living room. The stairs would have originally taken you up to an outside area from which you entered the upstairs interior. The date above the door read 1684. There was a fireplace that was ugly and electric radiators that couldn’t hope to heat a place that size

I was sold, but Heather had doubts so we agreed with the agent that we’d re-visit. I dropped in on Maurice Coste at the hotel.

“I told you you’d like it and you can get it far cheaper than the asking price.”

“But the price is low already.”

"Offer 1,600,000 francs, it's owned by a nuclear company and was bought for the director who left; it has to sell by the end of August or most of the money will be lost in tax."

We re-visited with Jacques and I explained what I'd want to do with it and Heather was now starting to love the place, but Jacques just said,

"You can do better"; which I took to mean, "I'll do better if I sell you a house."

Heather now understood the potential in the place.

I told the agent of my offer.

"No, no... I don't think they'll take that."

She phoned back later.

"If you come in and give us a cheque for 40,000 francs by 4pm, they'll agree."

I did and they did.

You can't get a survey on a stone house of that age with no foundations, but I had a mason I knew come round and he declared it "une bonne affaire."

I was happy to hear that Elton wanted to keep the house in Montclus so he bought me out. He still has it. We agreed a price and that helped with the re-building costs. I had budgeted for the same amount as the sale price to be spent on refurbishments and approached a mason, Franck Alax, whose work I had seen and liked to do the job and arranged dates.



These give a bit of an idea of the state of the place.

Like Peter Mayle, I could write a book on the process. I won't, but a lot of work was involved

Part of my buyout deal with Music by Design was that I cover for Don when he went on holiday. In July, I dutifully headed for London and the bad feeling I got was overwhelming. It was like I'd woken from a wonderful dream and was back in reality. I just wanted to be back in my French home. I stayed in a friend's apartment in Sheen and every morning and evening at Waterloo station I would see Eurostar trains and had a consuming desire to get on one to escape. I am being disingenuous as I was lucky to have been able to live where I lived and three weeks after leaving would arrive back to start on the new project.

I have to say that August had always been a very quiet time so I had some lunches with friends and recorded some more material for my Musical. The work on the French house hadn't yet started, but while I was away, Heather attended the final meeting with the notary where she signed to complete the sale with my notarised agreement to sign on my behalf.

The day after my return, we met Franck at the house and a colleague of the man who'd lived in the house, but he knew little about it and we had to locate the septic tank and work out which keys fitted which doors and so on. It was great fun sourcing tiles, doors and stones from archeological salvage yards. Obviously some were too expensive, but we were happy with the old tiles we bought and the new terra cotta and cement tiles we acquired from the local factories that still made them. Stephanie de Sykes found a place in Surrey that could supply old pine boards for the kitchen cupboards and they made a magnificent twelve-foot long dining table top for us. Two of Murphy's lads brought it all down and made the kitchen cupboard doors and laid a floor on the mezzanine in the guest house in two days.

Frank had some very lovely ideas and implemented them, but there were 'gros problèmes'. Every day there was a 'gros problème' that was unforeseen and usually increased our costs exponentially. While house-hunting we'd seen lots of half-converted old farms and had come to the conclusion that, while people were given conversion estimates, every unforeseen problem upped the cost to the point where the owner had to sell having run out of money. This is why we were happy to find a place that had already been converted, be it badly.



Some of the on-going work.

One day I turned up to do some painting and there was only a "bonjour, ca va?" from Franck.

Eventually I couldn't resist,

"Hey Franck, no 'gros problème'?"

"Si, TRES gros problème "

I didn't like the sound of this.

"My Eric Clapton cassette tape is broken, I can't play it."

It turned out that Franck was a huge Clapton fan and, on a shopping trip, I'd seen that Eric was doing a concert the next week in Marseille. I called Tessa Niles.

"Are you doing Marseille with Eric?"

"No, but Katie is."

I phoned Katie Kissoon and explained that it wasn't for me, but could she get two tickets. She was happy to do so for Franck and leave them at the box office in my name, lovely lady that she is.

The next day...

"Franck, would you like to go and see Eric Clapton in Marseille next week?"

"Ce n'est pas vrai!!! When are we going?"

I explained I couldn't go (I could have, but had seen the show so many times) so he could take his lady friend, but he decided to take his best friend, José, whose birthday fell on that very date.

I didn't see Franck for a few days after the concert and was surprised to hear from him, but he arrived one day.

"That was the best day of my life; we had wonderful seats and something that allowed us to go backstage and meet your friend, Katie and the band and I even talked to Bonnie Raitt and, as her car was late, offered her a lift."

Bonnie Raitt??!! One of my favourite artistes whom I've never seen. I nearly wept. Still, I made Franck happy; good old Katie! Luckily, Bonnie's car turned up so she escaped a drive with Franck who's an awful driver and his car was a dustbin.

Franck's total bill (excluding materials) was covered by the sale of most of the wine I'd bought after my mother died. It made a 2,000% profit!

In December, we drove to England for my niece's wedding and arrived back on the day before our furniture and belongings arrived. We were quickly installed in our new home and set about the garden. Heather's parents came for an extended Christmas stay.

We got internet and I opened an email account with AOL... very cutting edge.

My sole musical output was Soul for the Musical, now entitled Soul Searchers. My time was spent on writing songs for that, working on royalties for Music by Design, which was agreed as part of my exit deal and looking after the house and making small improvements.

I loved living in France; there was not one iota of disappointment. The Spring arrives earlier here than in the UK and it's my favourite season. Almond blossom starts in January, mimosa in February, cherry and apricot blossom in March along with the first asparagus, a much grown local crop. The hillsides are covered in the blue flowers of the wild thyme and the grape vines start sprouting their leaves in early April. Summer is on its way.

We entertained many guests the first year. We loved showing them around our beautiful area. When alone, I tended to work mornings and spent summers afternoons by the pool. I enjoyed cooking for guests. Two lovely visitors were actors, Jeffrey Holland and Judy Buxton. Jeffrey was very interested in the Musical and wanted to hear the songs we'd done. He loved them and

suggested his friend, Paul Elliott, might want to do something with it. I appreciated the suggestion, but didn't really take this too seriously as Paul was the producer of the hit Musical, Buddy and many, many successful pantomimes.

This was an early song with a great vocal from Lance".
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGwNZDsQLFk>



Sitting with the French in our local café and supporting France in the 1998 World Cup Final.

A few weeks later and true to his word, Jeffrey called to say Paul was really showing interest and would I call to make an appointment. I did and, as I had an upcoming trip, I arranged for Victor and me to go to see him in his offices at The Aldwych on November 3rd 1998. Paul was very charming and seemed VERY interested and talked about what he wanted to do with the show. Victor and I were actually quite excited and had a celebratory lunch at the Ivy. Later that trip I went to York to meet a couple of Victor's cowriters who would help with the script. We discussed the storyline and direction. The main characters were pretty well defined, but we talked of supporting characters and how they would best serve the story as family members, record company executives, boyfriends and so on. I spent a lovely evening and the night with my niece and husband who lived near the city. I was feeling very good about our chances.

We had another meeting with Paul before I returned to France. He introduced us to Alan Cohen, a successful director who had agreed to direct the show. Paul then informed us he was producing letters of intent. That sounded good.

We went to have a drink with Alan to get better acquainted. We liked him, but something he said brought us back to Earth,

"Paul might say he's going to put on the show; he might fully intend to put on the show, but that doesn't mean that he WILL put on the show."

Cut to two deflated writers.

Still, we planned to forge ahead, Victor would provide a first scene and, if I liked it, I would send £3,000 to cover the writing of the first script.

I returned home to write some more material. Again Heather's parents came for a longer stay than I would have wanted at Christmas. I may have mentioned it.

“Well, they won’t be here forever.”

It felt like it.

I soon received the prologue to *Soul Searchers* and absolutely loved it and so gave the go-ahead for the rest of the script. This one scene set up the characters really well and ended on a moment of high drama. It was everything I could have hoped for and more. I continued adding songs and recorded a few in London. I continued to read books on the Soul Music of the US in the sixties and seventies and the oppression those black artistes endured.

A few weeks later, the first draft arrived. The first act was strong, but the second act was totally different, almost like a pantomime and I suspected that different people had written them. I was massively deflated. Victor agreed to re-visit, but it would take a while.

Another draft of the *Soul Searchers*’ script eventually arrived, only marginally better than the first. I wasn’t enamoured of it and Paul Elliott had obviously also received the script and wrote on September 17th to say that he wasn’t at all happy with the second act that was still in a totally different style from the first. Victor decided that was as far as he could go. I paid extra for the use of the prologue in the final script and set about the daunting task of finding another writer.

After contacting a lot of people, a friend recommended an actor/writer called John Harding. I contacted him and we agreed to meet on my first visit to London. I told Paul Elliott what was going on.

I decided to head to London. I met John Harding and we got on like a house on fire. Our meeting with Paul Elliott went well and we were looking forward to progressing with the project. I had, in desperation, written my own script and sent it to Paul. He’d read it. Or part of it.

“I like material written in anger, but I’m glad we have a professional on board.”

John and I had lunch and talked about the general direction of the story and let him have Victor’s version, letting him know that I wanted to retain the prologue. I detected no ego whatsoever. I agreed to pay John a fee for his time. I have to say I didn’t expect this project to have been such a big investment on my part; still, if it worked out...

Heather and I had made a few more friends in the area, but mostly avoided the ‘ex-pats’. We did make friends with David and Irena, a couple who lived less than two miles away in another farmhouse. David was away a lot on business and Irena was a very talented potter. Heather started going to aerobic classes and it was good that she was building a life in France. I think she would have liked me to go out to work.

Again, Heather’s parents arrived for an extended Christmas stay.

John’s first draft of the script was great, but he wanted to get together to sort out more possibilities with the story and characters. So many of the events had been based on real life situations that we wanted to tie them in seamlessly and come up with a workable cast number whereby one actor could play two or three parts. It seemed like a good idea that John should visit so we could spend a good amount of time working on the story, if not necessarily individual lines. The new budget airline, Ryanair made short visits affordable at last.

John flew into Nîmes and spent a really nice long weekend and I found working with John an absolute pleasure. It was great to really get to know him and realise what a delightful chap he was. It was early in the year, but the weather was sunny and we mostly worked in the dining room to take advantage of the wonderful light. On the Friday evening we were working on a scene where the two male members of the group, Lance and Tommy, were walking back to their motel late at night and get stopped by the police who, at first, appear to be friendly.

The story was based on an actual event where Sam Cooke and Salomon Burke were stopped by the police, were taken to their motel, made to strip and told to sing for the cops. Hard to fathom, but true.

“What should they sing, one of the existing songs?”

John pondered this.

“I think it would be good to have them sing about one of them being a great lover. This would give us the opportunity to get the cops to embarrass them even further.”

“OK. I’ll have a think.”

I was up early on the Saturday and wrote ‘*All Night Man*’.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9H9Q1NPC4qY>

I knew this would be a shocking moment for the audience and would require light relief straight after the scene.

I came up with a ridiculous parody of ‘*Up, Up and Away*’ called, ‘*Take Off And Fly*’.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qn0gv1CZjWY>

Again I played everything on this one with Bob Saker and Lynda’s husband, Steve Stapley, helping on the vocals.

We had an extended meeting with Paul Elliott, Alan Cohen and some of Paul’s colleagues booked for late May. We would be discussing the new script, possible out of town theatres where we could open the show, cast numbers, line managers and so on. It was all moving in the right direction.

Then, on May 8th, three years to the day after we’d arrived here, out of the blue came a fax from Paul Elliott.

‘It is with great regret and huge embarrassment that I have to inform you that I cannot continue with your project. There has been a crisis that prevents me taking this (and other ventures) further.’

Paul continued in a kind and encouraging way... but!!!

That was a blow, a bad blow after all that. I felt awful for him as it turned out that he had personal problems and he was good enough to reimburse the costs I’d incurred since he was on board, but what now? I called John who, being a pro, was pretty circumspect.

“I’m on board for the long haul and if we’re going to present this, the script has to be to our complete satisfaction and we’ll need a CD of the songs to run with the script.”

Summers were completely different from winters; our friends with second homes would be here and Steve May spent the whole summer here as did Harvey Harrison our friend who was a director of photography and had the best stories on on-set drama and romances and we were very fond of his girlfriend, Sally. Charles would always come down with his wife, Lesley, daughter, Gracie and other friends so there were always dinners and lunches. We met up with Ray Adams often also.

In the summer, faced with a three-week stay in London, I wrote string and brass parts for the songs we liked that required them. With no musical training, this didn't come easily and I hoped I'd done a decent job without too many errors. I was starting to see a side to Heather I'd seen when she had been with other boyfriends. One day she announced,

"I've noticed that, since we've been here, you're not really using your brain any more!"

I am not one to reject criticism so gave this statement some thought before I responded,

"I thought carefully about what you said and, in the last week as it happens, I've sent out statements for Music by Design's royalties; this involves converting five currencies and allotting percentages for the MCPS and 12ths for PRS. I've written a song for Soul Searchers that, in the story, starts in 1963 and finishes in 1965 and has to change musically to reflect the years plus lyrically as the first half is part of Lynda's audition for the band and ends as a song in a successful concert. Then I've done brass arrangements for *Can't Let You Go*. Not being trained, this takes some effort especially as the song is in E, meaning that the tenor sax has to be written in F sharp, a nightmare key. So how much brainwork went into your aerobics class?"

I received a reluctant,

"Oh, OK."

We had our moments, but life was still generally good.



The house growing into itself.

During the time I was to stand in for Don at Music by Design I needed to complete the Soul Searchers' songs for presentation to potential producers. I had booked the Regents Palace Hotel, just off Piccadilly for 5 days so I could be close to the office and work evenings, returning late to the hotel. I hired Martyn Webster to engineer the sessions. Martyn had been a regular at our New Years' celebrations in France. Producing and having done the arrangements this was enough for me as, I'd also played on several of the tracks. On some of them, I'd played everything, mostly sampled and I'd played live guitar and drums on about six.

One evening we added the brass with the wonderful Steve Sidwell leading the section and another, the violins. I'd used samples for the lower strings, but violins added a great, real feel to the recordings. Gavin Wright, as usual, 'fixed' the session and led the six violins.

Two things had changed since I'd left: The brass section didn't drink the beers I'd got in for them (big shock) and the fiddle players were quite happy to do multiple tracks of each part to make the section sound better. There were errors on the parts, but, with Gavin and Steve's help, we got everything done and I was very happy with the results.

Luckily for me there was very little work during that August at Music By Design so I was able to finish and mix all the tracks needed for the CD that would accompany the script. Many were presentable, but had sampled drums and bass so I booked Graham Walker (Drums) Paul Townsend (bass) to add their parts to replace the samples and Keith Airey to add a good guitar part where necessary. I'd written out most of the bass parts so playing along with a pretty full track and vocals was far quicker than starting with the rhythm section and you could 'drop in'.

On a couple of tracks we simply hung our valve C12 mic over the kit with a second mic on the kick; this worked well enough for the Beatles' early recordings! It sounded great. I later found that George Harrison had recorded a vocal on that very mic at Gus Dudgeon's studio from where I'd bought it.

The Regent Palace was pretty disgusting, but served my purpose and has been, deservedly, torn down since.

This is our 'Motown track with my arrangement... with help:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sd2CPofgKrY>

I returned home and started recording CD's of the songs in order. Yes, I had a CD recorder and still do. I sent CD's to John so he could get his agent to approach producers with a complete package.

Various friends sent out Soul Searchers kits. Carrie Armitage sent it to Nick Allott at Cameron McIntosh's office and got a lovely, complimentary reply but no deal and even Paul Elliott, bless him, sent it to a couple of other producers.

Every Sunday I walked to the local café/tabac for a coffee and a copy of The Sunday Times they kept for me.

One Sunday, Heather handed me the magazine.

"Look!"

"What"

"Read it!"

NEWS

Musical first for Clear Channel

BY CAMERON ROBERTSON

EXCLUSIVE

Clear Channel Entertainment, the world's largest producer and promoter of live events, is in the early stages of developing its first new musical in the UK.

Producer David Ian, who has been creating a new production wing at the US company since being appointed UK managing director a year ago, supervised a workshop of Soul Searchers at Alford House studios in London recently.

Set during the racial tension of the early sixties in America, the show chronicles a funk band called Soul Searchers.

Ian said: "This is a genuinely new show and it's very exciting. What I found appealing was that the songs – which are all original – sounded as if they could have been hits in that period."

"The show is about the band's journey and the relationships within the band. On the face of it there are fantastic songs. But underneath it deals with race issues and problems of that period."

British writers David Mindel and John Harding had sent the script to Ian, who then set up the workshop which Alan Cohen directed.

Ian said Soul Searchers will be a "fairly small" show with a 16-strong cast and live band of about nine. He also agreed with Andrew Lloyd Webber's recent claim that the industry badly needed new musicals.

He added: "It's very difficult to do something new, especially in this market at the moment. But we felt Soul Searchers was strong enough to take it to the stage of a reading with the music being played on CDs."

"We found we still liked it. So after some script revisions we might do further workshops or take it to a small provincial venue to try it out."

Ian stressed that a full production – should the project progress that far – would not take place until next autumn at the earliest.

Clear Channel has an interest in 26 theatres, including 21 regional venues.



New project – Clear Channel Entertainment UK managing director David Ian

It seemed that Clearchannel, the biggest entertainment on Earth had hired David Ian, a producer, to find 'The Next Big Musical.'

"You have to send Soul Searchers."

"They'll have a million Musicals submitted."

"No matter, you have to do it."

I called John to see if his agent could send the script and CD to David Ian. She called me on the Monday.

"Do you have an address for Clearchannel?"

"You're the agent; I only wrote it!"

I presumed it was eventually sent.

We were planning a big millennium dinner: seven courses with appropriate fine wines and Port to finish. We worked out the menus and even had to order extra crockery to accommodate the meal. Charles and Lesley, his lady; my sister and Allen, George from LA with Shelli, a lovely lady he was dating, Claire, Di Evans and Andy Spence, Ricky our friend from Baltimore and, of course Heather's parents all came. Charles brought fireworks and his party left quite early to finish their celebrations at his house, but when I got up at 8am, part of the lawn was still burning. Eight of us lunched on left-overs... lots of them.

On New Years Eve all 1999, all the smokers were in the cafes and the non-smokers, outside. On New Year's Day, all the smokers were outside and the non-smokers, inside. Also the Euro became France's currency and as all the prices were shown in Euros and Francs, they all seemed to have gone up.

Heather's parents stayed on... again!

It had been months since the Soul Searchers project had been sent to Clearchannel and I'd pretty much forgotten about it when John's agent got a call. A guy called Max Finbow asked if a meeting with John and me would be possible. I made it possible for the following week.

Max was a charming man and we couldn't wait to hear what he had to say.

"We received over 400 scripts and tapes or CD's of Musicals and Soul Searchers is the one we want to work on."

Wow, that was a bit of a moment.

"We'd like to develop it and probably hold a workshop performance. How do you feel about that?"

"Great. Perfectly fine with us."

John and I had lunch in my old haunt on the Chelsea Kitchen in the Kings Road that hadn't really changed save they now had a wine list rather than just red or white.

Again John and I spent time improving the Soul Searchers' script.



*Summers involved a lot of poolside lunches.
Here Harvey and Sally with Ian and Suzy Sharp and Medwyn, Rita and the kids.*

One morning, back home, I opened an email from Ricki Baker. She asked if I'd be interested in organising a tour of Provence for a group of her alumni the following autumn. I gave it some thought and realised that it was a great opportunity to completely explore this wonderful area; so many days were spent looking at hotels, restaurants, museums, scenic routes and selecting three hotels and many restaurants. We didn't eat at all of them, but quite a few. The leader of the group was a lady called Courtney McKeldin and we liaised with her.

Once we'd completed Max's suggested amendments to the script and settled on the number of people needed, Max booked a week in August in a strange venue in the Wandsworth area for the Workshop. We'd rehearse the show for 4 days and do a 'dress rehearsal' and performance on the Friday afternoon. Rather than have the actor/singers sing live with a piano, we'd use our fully recorded tracks because they needed to sound authentic and the actors would mime to them. Not having time to learn the whole script, they'd read from it... not unusual in workshops.

Max had hired five professional actors and five unpaid volunteers from stage schools or novices. Alan Cohen would direct and on the Monday morning, everyone was introduced and parts allotted and the first 'read-through' held. At lunchtime, a very young actor told John how excited he was to be doing this and how grateful he was. At lunch, he discovered that the pros were being paid and left in high dudgeon. I can't say I've heard of him since.

The week was something completely different for me. I didn't really DO a lot as most interaction was between Alan and John on interpretation of the lines etc. Sometimes John would coach a certain actor while Alan would go through a scene with another group. Each evening, John and I would retire to the pub to make minor improvements. This was getting quite exciting.

The Friday came around. The actors read so there was no chance of anyone forgetting the lines and they'd got pretty adept at miming to the songs. I invited a few people like Tommy, Lance and Lynda, Medwyn and Jonathon Channon from EMI and John's wife and agent were there while Clearchannel invited the majority of the audience: theatre managers, colleagues, potential investors and possible co-producers.

The whole performance was a bit of a blur, but I know I was happy with it, but even happier when David Ian stood up announcing,

"I don't remember when I have had such an enjoyable Friday afternoon. I just can't wait to put on this show!"

A cheer and warm applause followed.

I had dinner with John and his wife, Betsan, and we were pretty excited. I stayed with them and returned home on the Saturday.

The contract that followed from Clearchannel sealed my deal with EMI Publishing for the songs and the advance more than covered my costs to date. Everything seemed to be progressing well and I made plans to go to London early in the New Year to visit potential regional theatres and talk to musical directors. Also, John and I thought we could improve the script yet again as the first act was currently stronger than the second. Improvements can always be made and I decided to visit Nashville, Memphis and the southern states to get a real feel of the area and the people. I'd been to Nashville before, but it was for different reasons. This would happen early in 2002.

Meanwhile I took the train to Paris for yet another meeting with lawyers and we finalised plans for the arrival of 15 ladies from Baltimore.

I was in my office at home in the second week of September when my sister called and told me to turn on the TV news. There was the horrific sight of one of New York's Twin Towers engulfed in flames in what looked like a disastrous accident. We were watching for updates when my old friend and competitor, David Dundas, arrived from London to stay a few days.

"Sit down, you won't believe this!" Then the second plane hit. You know the rest.

David was here to find a house because, like me, he'd had enough of the advertising business and London and wanted to live in France.

Later that day my sister called.

"Aren't your Baltimore ladies supposed to leave today?"

Indeed they were, but didn't. Later still, Courtney called.

"Obviously, we won't be able to come, but four of our party are already in Europe and expecting the tour. Can you sort them out?"

The rest of the day was spent phoning hotels, restaurants, museums and the coach company to explain the situation. I was really surprised by how kind and understanding everyone was. We lost no deposits and the bus company hired us a minivan that was ideal for us and the four ladies. There were two sets of friends: one couple wanted to embrace everything cultural and artistic while the other pair were more interested in expensive shops and cafés. We got through it and they enjoyed themselves, but I doubt the couples have been exchanging Christmas cards since then.

The following January we drove to Cannes for MIDEM. One night, after dinner, we wandered into the Carlton Hotel bar around 2am... as you do... and found my old mate Freddy Cannon in the small bar. An ex-record company boss, he was back in the US as a director of BMI. He beckoned us over. We had a chat and he asked what I was up to. I told him about Soul Searchers and my upcoming trip.

Freddy asked who would be the most important and useful person to give me information for my research.

"No doubt about it, Steve Cropper." (legendary Sax guitarist, producer and co-writer of *Knock On Wood* and *Dock Of The Bay*).

Freddy took out his phone and tapped a number.

"Oh hi, Angel, it's Freddy; how are you?... is Steve there?"

"Oh hi, Steve, I have a friend here who'd like to talk to you."

Holy crap, just like that I'm talking to one of the musicians I admire the most.

We chatted and Steve suggested I call him when I was in town and to send a few tracks.

I got home and looked for flights and a hotel in New York. I found a really nice looking hotel off 5th avenue for \$100. Apparently there were areas of the refurbished building that were not yet open... no problem.

Before flying to New York, I stopped in London. The first night I stayed at the gorgeous Travel Inn on the Euston Road!!! The weather was freezing. As I arrived at the hotel, a group of girls from the northeast was coming out and crossing the street to get in a coach for their evening out. It's all true... they were wearing nothing and I was wrapped up and frozen.

Max Finbow took John and me to look at the Queen's Theatre in Hornchurch to meet Bob Carlton who was very keen to have our show open there. I'd loved Bob's *Return To The Forbidden Planet* and had seen it three times. The theatre was terrific and Bob was hugely enthusiastic, but on the way back John said he wasn't keen.

"Hornchurch is far too white for our show; there are more National Front members here than black people."

He was right, of course, but what a shame. If we'd have opened there, I think it might have happened quite quickly.

The next day we went to see the Hackney Empire that was still being refurbished, but was gorgeous.

"Imagine 'Soul Searchers' being the show that re-opens this gem" enthused John.

Max couldn't disagree. Neither could I.

A few days later I flew to the States and took a taxi from Newark to the hotel. The reception desk was constructed from plywood and the rest of the ground floor was a building site. At best. Oh dear!

I took the lift to the 4th floor that seemed rather more plush. The room was huge and GORGEOUS with a luxurious bathroom and finest bedding I've ever encountered. I'd done well and as I left for dinner, my favourite building, the Chrysler, towered with its magnificent lighting above me. I found a very good, very busy Thai restaurant and all was good in the world. I heart New York.

Apart from my southern fact-finding trip, I'd decided to see a Musical each day in New York. I been taken to my first Musical when pretty young. It was *Bye Bye Birdie* and then saw the original cast of *Oliver* and I continued to see everything I could including *Hair* five times, falling in love with Annabel Leventon with whom I actually got to dance when the audience was allowed on stage at the end. From there, I missed very few and, as Cherry was often given opening night tickets, we saw everything. Still, I was now observing; getting ideas, working out how they used cast members to their best advantage; counting the size of the cast, pit orchestra and so on.

I saw a matinee of *Urinetown*, that I enjoyed immensely; *The Sweet Smell Of Success*, a Marvin Hamlisch show that I didn't at all, save for a great performance (as ever) by John Lithgow and, by a miracle, Max Finbow got me tickets for *The Producers*. These were like gold dust and, although I had to pay, they were the best seats in the house. I was surprised how good Mel Brooks' songs were. I took my old friend (Munchkin) Maggie Ryder, great singer and co-writer of John Farnham's *You're the Voice*. Maggie was now a New York resident, abandoning music to be a computer (and later iPad App) programmer. We were lucky to see the original cast, but I thought Mathew Broderick was a bit weak in his role, but Nathan Lane and the rest of the cast were terrific only slightly ruined by a couple who deemed it necessary to laugh at every single line. So annoying. The following day we had dinner on the 'shelf' at Grand Central Station, a very impressive venue indeed.

My last day in New York marked the 6th month anniversary of what had become known as 9/11.

As well as the 'find' in New York, by searching on 'Lastminute' and other sites, suddenly an offer showed up for an hotel in Nashville that looked lovely. It was... and is. It's the old railway station that has been converted into an hotel and although my room was small, it was beautifully appointed and the lobby was the old station concourse and gorgeous. The bar was pretty nice too and it was an easy walk to the honkytonk bars on Broadway. These places catered a lot for tourists and are now filled with stag and hen parties (bachelor and bachelorettes), but not then. They did, and still do, boast some incredible musicians and I found that the worse the bar, the better the music. Although Soul Searchers was nearly entirely about the birth of Soul Music, part of it came from Country and Lynda, our white girl, had been a Country singer and one of her Country songs is featured.

One evening I had dinner with my old friend from London, Peter Collins, who was a very successful producer and had got divorced from his wife from Alabama and had moved to Nashville. After the meal, he took me to The Station Inn, a really shitty venue, where a band was playing. All the tables and seats were occupied so we stood at the bar. This was the first time I'd seen The Time Jumpers who, that night, became my favourite band. I've seen them many times since and they now play on Mondays at the rather more salubrious 3rd and Lindsley, are still wonderful and the Station is still a dump, but, luckily, it's still there and features brilliant musicians.

I called Steve Cropper.

"Hi buddy, why don't you come to my office on Saturday around eleven; we won't be disturbed."

And so I met the great man at his office in Music Circle.

"Well, you certainly got the songs right, they sound very authentic to me."

I learned a lot.

Apparently, despite his legendary status, and having been in Nashville for over 15 years, Steve still wasn't considered amongst the Nashville A Listers.

He told me a fascinating story of how they were recording a track by bouncing the tape forward and backwards between machines to be able to add more instruments when they were about to abandon the track due to tape 'hiss'. There's always a little hiss on analogue tape, but multiply that and you get to actually hear it. After, the last 'bounce' the hiss had completely disappeared, probably due to something being out of phase, but it worked in their favour.

An early comment did surprise me as I was obviously aware that the Stax Studio Musicians were a mix of black and white. While the owner, Jim Stewart, Steve and bass players, Lewie Steinberg and Donald 'Duck' Dunn were white, most of the other musicians like Booker T Jones, David Porter and Isaac Hayes were black. Steve explained,

"Black and white folks didn't mix a lot back then and everyone was happy with that. The guys in the studio were my brothers, but mostly people kept to their own."

Steve kindly gave me a couple of hours of his time; I had my photo taken with him by his assistant and then left for Memphis. I had enjoyed Nashville, but didn't know anyone there then like i do now, so didn't manage to get into the famous Bluebird and failed to find good food, well good for me.



Before reaching Memphis I stopped to fill up with 'gas. The guy pumping was friendly,

"Where ya headed?"

"Memphis."

"Oh, really?"

"Do you know it? "

"Sure."

"What's it like?"

"Oh, black, very black!"

I wasn't expecting that in this day and age.

Having been lucky with two hotels, I wasn't with the third. The listing on Expedia.com said it was in Memphis, but it wasn't, it was in a shopping precinct a good twenty miles away. The hotel was fine, but the location wasn't. Or the weather. Along the street a sign read 'Restaurant' so I got myself there through the rain. It was packed, but they shortly found me a table. I ordered and asked for the wine list.

"Oh we don't serve liquor."

Great!

The main drink round here seemed to be iced tea, which I hate so chlorinated water and dreadful food it was.

I explained to an understanding receptionist that I needed to be IN Memphis for business and checked out early the next morning and set off in torrential rain for the city and found a very cheap Day's Inn near the centre.

This day, St Patrick's Day turned out to be the wettest day anyone could remember. I waited for the deluge to abate and after watching 2 motor races on TV braved the elements and took refuge in a bar.

"Welcome. Happy St Paddy's day; would you fancy trying our special green beer?"

"I'll give it a go."

Then,

"Are you enjoying that, sir?"

"Not really."

"I'm not surprised, try this one... it's real beer."

I had asked where I could find a GOOD restaurant after all the bad food I'd eaten and was sent to a steak restaurant, "the best in town" that was situated in the premises of an old butcher's shop. Once I found it, I ordered the smallest steak at 8oz, a filet that was cooked rare, just as I like it and it looked wonderful and cut like butter. It tasted of nothing! The vegetable 'bar' offered some quadruple-cooked, soggy broccoli. An expensive but awful meal.

I found Memphis disappointing. It seemed they'd realised what they had too late and had pulled down too many historic venues and even the old Stax Records studio, located in a cinema had gone. How could they? This is exactly what Nashville is doing today. The music seemed plasticised and, like lots of cities, there's a BB King club with some great musicians but not with real Soul. I took a tour of Sun Studios, which was terrific, seeing the little room where Elvis, Johnny Cash and Jerry Lee Lewis recorded. They even play you some out-takes that are really funny; worth a visit. Still, I walked on Beale, got a feel of the place and soaking wet.

From there I drove through Mississippi to Alabama, taking the smallest roads I could find. I had, in my mind's eye, quaint little towns like in the movies with the diner and saloon and hotel on Main Street. The towns were there and I did find one magnificently preserved 50s diner with jukebox selector at every booth. Sadly, I never found the hotels; they've now all gone to be replaced by big hotels outside towns in malls: Howard Johnsons, Day's Inns or Hampton suites and the like although I did find one motel on a fairly pretty lake so checked in there. They had food and there was just one couple eating in the restaurant; they were both HUGE, probably because everything on offer was fried and pretty awful. I came to my own conclusion that people over there are so big because they eat a lot, of course, but it's crap and the body is still crying out for nourishment so I was hungry not long after having eaten.

I talked to a few very friendly folks, but couldn't detect noticeable intellect. I don't think people travel far from where they're born in these quiet, rural areas.

One afternoon I stopped to fill up the car and was having a coffee in the garage store, which was situated at a T-junction with no signposts showing where each direction might lead. We had no SatNav either. There was a young lady serving.

"Excuse me, do you know in which direction Branson is?"

"Oh er, sorry... Cally, do you know the way to Branson?"

"Branson Alabama?"

"Yes."

"Oh er... I am really not sure."

I elected to turn to the left and three miles along the road was... Branson! These folks sure do not travel far!

I returned through Georgia and took my flight from Atlanta to LA. I arrived in time to head straight down to Le Petit Four, one of my favourites on Sunset Plaza and ordered a scallop salad that was HEAVEN. Good food at last and even the food at El Cholo, my Mexican place of choice, where I always went with Martin, George and Shelli was great compared to what I'd experienced.

On the Sunday, Jane was having some sort of party at the Malibu house and it was great to see her and some of the lovely people she knows, especially the delightful Darcie. We talked a lot as usual.

I returned home via London where I stayed with John and family, giving John details of the trip, playing him Steve Cropper's tape and, hopefully, making some improvements to our second act.

What hadn't dawned on us at the time, however, was that 9/11 had a huge impact on tourism from the US to London. I'd witnessed this during the first Gulf War. Eddie O'Laughlin was the only American I saw in Cannes for MIDEM. The EMI group even turned around their private plane and flew back to the States. I had a letter printed in Music Week enquiring whether Americans actually thought the south of France was close to the Middle East. An outraged citizen replied that he was aware it wasn't, but terrorists could now be retaliating. And who could blame them?

Still, the upshot was that London theatres weren't doing so well and we were concerned that Clearchannel might want to delay things. We soon found out they were.

I was home for the Spring, electing to enjoy the summer and not to think about Soul Searchers too much, but we did still continue to improve act 2.

As quite a few guests had visited, some several times, we had fewer for the summer so elected to rent out the 'cottage' as a 'Gîte' and advertised in a couple of small travel magazines, getting quite a few bookings that brought in some useful income... and it was fun and we met some lovely people.

On Sunday in September, we visited a wine fair in a local village. We were talking to a 'Vigneron' we know who told us that extremely heavy rain was forecast. I looked at the clear blue sky,

"It sure doesn't look like it."

At around five o'clock it started raining, then harder and harder until it was torrential and it never let up until late the following morning with non-stop thunder and lightening. By this time there was widespread flooding from the Cevènes to the Mediterranean. Goudargues was under water, the main A7 motorway was closed; people died. It was a disaster.

The following day was glorious with warm sunshine. We drove to check on friends' houses. Montclus had become an island the day before, but, being on a hill was fine. Only one bridge out of five across the river Cèze was open to traffic though badly damaged. On one side an industrial dishwasher had been deposited. In the middle of a field nearby sat a lonely toilet.



The next day in Goudargues. Below the water up to the first floor of a shop.



Goudargues was a disaster; it had been under three metres of water. All the bars restaurants and shops had piled their furniture and fittings out front. We helped a family to clean up. When we arrived, the son was attempting to wash ornaments in the muddy brown swimming pool. The family's display cabinet had been thrown against a back wall by the power of the water, but the mud had formed a protective coating so nothing was broken. Eventually power was restored and a neighbour arrived with a Kärcher and power hosed the whole place with water running into the cellar and away through a drain. The family cat that had disappeared before the storm, returned unharmed. Smart critters, cats. I hope this never happens again.

I'd been having back problems for way over a year. One Christmas Eve my back seemed to give way and I ate Christmas lunch standing up, leaning on the kitchen counter and eating with one hand. The near unbearable pain subsided quite a bit, but evolved into sciatica that forced me to rest quite a lot. I was lucky in that I had no pain while lying down so I slept pretty well. After some time, Chris Sandford's wife, Gelly, recommended to me a London specialist whom I visited followed by X-Rays and scans. Nothing much showed up. In France I visited an acupuncturist and left with a bad pain in the side of the leg; she'd left a needle in there. I saw a mesotherapist, a physiotherapist and anyone who could help. Nothing did so on my next London trip had another scan that showed a slight bulging on a couple of discs, but nothing obvious. The specialist then gave me a 'Root Block' where they inject Cortisone into the root of the nerve causing the most excruciating pain I'd ever suffered, but when it subsided, I was pain-free. For twenty minutes.

In France, we visited a specific café on Saturdays, market day, in Pont St Esprit. I'd been told that Christian, the owner, was a 'healer' so, one day, mentioned my back to him.

"Give me a few minutes and I'll see what I can do."

He then called me into the kitchen and asked me to bend over the hob (yes, really). His hands emanated enormous heat.

"Ah, I feel arthritis here."

"No, it's the discs," I explained.

"Oh, sorry, I can't do anything about those."

One day I received an email from my Norwegian friend, Philip Kruse. He published a big song and he thought it merited English lyrics. This wasn't what I usually did, but was ideal for me right now; I could lay on the bed, playing a cassette and scribble my new words that weren't very far from Philip's literal translation. I still think *Tir Na Noir* is one of the most beautiful melodies I've heard.



Where I wrote the lyrics. See the rather smaller cat between my legs!

I'd have loved to have written this tune also:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yvWwyEwwhVI>

Eventually, after nearly three years of discomfort (pain) the specialist agreed to operate. At the beginning, I would have done anything to avoid an operation, but now I'd have killed the guy if he'd refused. A date was fixed.

I flew to London and checked into the hospital. My room at the Wellington was huge and with a terrace that looked over Lords Cricket Ground. Thank heavens I'd kept my UK private health insurance going.

My operation was delayed, but I woke up in the night hungry. I'd brought carrots and nuts, but the food in this hospital was great. Eating lying down wasn't so easy though. The lovely South African nurse was amazed how quickly everything started working until she looked in the drawer and saw my stash.

"Now I know why you're so healthy!"

The surgeon came in.

"You're sorted, I found the problem immediately. An arthritic spur of bone had come away from the spine and was rubbing on the sciatic nerve; that certainly would have caused the pain... and we shaved a couple of discs while we were at it."

'Arthritic spur'? Christian, the healer, was the only person who'd spotted arthritis. It just goes to show.

Rita and my aunt Pearl came to visit and later in the day I walked. Two days later Ron McCreight came to see me and we watched the cup final together. I ordered him a smoked salmon sandwich and beer and an Oriental gentleman came in doing a survey on the food.

"It's really terrific. Last night's salmon and vegetables were great... as good as a restaurant."

"Good, because, if not, we'll cook you something different."

Just like the NHS. Then Chelsea lost 2-0 to Arsenal.

I had to rest for a week and Heather's lovely friends, Peter and Michael, picked me up and let me stay with them at their superb flat in St John's Wood and spoilt me. I went out one night to the local pub with Ron and another old friend, Duncan Johnson. I stood up most of the flight home.

At the beginning of 2003, after her parents' five-week stay, Heather made an announcement.

"Look, we've put an awful lot of money into Soul Searchers and I think we should put some in to getting my acting career off the ground again."

"Fine... good idea."

I meant it and was secretly hoping she'd have huge success and stay in England, but wondered about 'We've spent' as it was totally my money from my years of working and, anyway, EMI's advance had covered everything I'd laid out; yet I said nothing.

Heather stayed with friends and nothing came of the trip, but not much later she was asked to go to London for an audition for a new series. I had to drive her to Marseille for her 10:30am flight. We left in the dark in our 2CV as our Citroën was in for ANOTHER head gasket and we broke down north

of Avignon. We made it to a parking area and a very charming truck driver offered her a lift to the nearest spot to the airport he was allowed to go. I suppose it was risky, but by this time, if he abducted her, so be it. The man was north African so I would trust him anyway. Heather missed the flight, but got a later one and they agreed to let her audition later that day.

I spent four hours on a bench in a freezing garage to where they'd towed the car, but a large cat jumped up and settled on my chest so that helped. I wandered round Sorgues, the nearest town, and had lunch until the garage had fixed the 2CV that allowed me to drive home. Three days later, I drove to Nîmes to pick up Heather and the car broke down again. I hired a car while they fixed it.

As it happened, Heather got a part in the series called *New Tricks* playing an ex-wife of Denis Waterman and, by coincidence, Carrie Armitage was selected as one of the other ex-wives. The series was a great success, but their roles didn't endure.

We both went to England for Tom Gutteridges wedding to a feisty TV lady of Italian descent. A great wedding it was too. I saw my old friend, Anthony Van Laast who had choreographed *The Hot Shoe Show* and, more recently, *Mama Mia*. I congratulated him, but said how disappointed I'd been with the stage show.

"Pity! Never mind, it made me a multi-millionaire!"

Next time, keep quiet, Mindel.

The previous year, Tom had asked us as part of the 50 he'd invited to his 50th birthday weekend expecting about 40 to accept. All 50 did and Tom acted as chef, cooking a superb meal with Soho House staff aiding him for the Saturday dinner, lunch the following day being at Babbington House where I sat with the legendary George Martin, such a delightfully charming man. Tom had booked and had most generously paid for our accommodation at a lovely, local B'n'B. The only thing wrong with the whole weekend was the band he'd booked so, for this wedding, I booked my old friend, Mingles' drummer Graham Walker and his terrific covers band again. They went down a storm as they had at Ron's wedding to the lovely Annette Barratt a while before. Marco Pierre White oversaw the dinner, everyone enjoyed a superb evening and the following day I nursed an awful hangover, I assumed I had put down too too much Raspail d'Ay, my favourite Gigondas.

Some time later, I was speaking to Graham about the wedding and he claimed the whole band had been 'Roofied' by a TV presenter and DJ who had got them a drink and I remembered that he'd got me one at the same time. They'd passed out and I realised that my 'Gigondas nap' was probably caused by the same culprit whom I knew and liked. Not funny!

In the summer Heather went to London for a couple of weeks to film the pilot of *New Tricks* and shortly after her return, by the pool, quite casually suggested we end our relationship. I think I was almost upset as the implications with the house were not worth thinking about. Still, in the autumn she set off for England and we parted on good terms and she even came out to visit. On a trip to London, I met up with a lot of old friends and so invited Heather as I thought she was a friend of theirs too. How wrong I was.

Rita took me aside.

"Why on Earth did you invite Heather?"

"Well, she's on her own and I thought you liked her."

“NOBODY here likes her or wanted her here.”

That shed a new light on everything. How dumb and blind had I been?

When our local friends, Irene and David decided to move back to Essex, they asked us over to introduce us to the new owners, Martyn Crespel and David Trett. We took to them immediately. Martyn worked in finance and they both lived mostly in Geneva, but would come down some weekends and for holidays. After my return, Martyn called me.

“I’m sorry to hear about you and Heather, but at least we can see you more now because, actually, David couldn’t stand her.”

You live and learn.

Not to bore you to death, but I was supporting Heather, had come up with a name for her new gardening business Stocks and Shears and wrote to her offering what I thought was a very generous sum of money to get her back on her feet.

Apparently,

“It’s not enough, I can’t buy a house with that.”

“But you didn’t own a house when we started going out, only a £19,000 interest in one and haven’t spent one penny on anything since. What you’re living on now is apparently ‘our money’ and what you’re now earning is ‘your money’. How does that work?”

After two years when she’d gone through three lawyers, we came to an agreement, but on the day she was to sign papers on the sale of the house, she demanded the original sum she’d wanted or she wouldn’t sign. So I parted with a ridiculous sum and would need to work again simply because I put her name on the house deeds. How stupid was I? Be warned.

On the plus side, I heard out of the blue from Max Finbow who said he’d never lost faith in our Musical and had got Clearchannel to put in 50% of the cost of another workshop if we were interested and he thought he would find enough to put it on. My sister and Allen kindly put in £1,500.

I was glad we’d worked on the second act and improved the first so the date of March 19th 2004 was agreed upon to hold our second workshop, but this time, at the Venue Theatre off Leicester Square that held 300 people and was easier to reach and a far better space than where we’d held the first.

Once again we started work on the Monday morning. This time Clarke Peters had been asked to direct. His show, *Five Guys Named Mo* had been very successful and he definitely knew Musical Theatre quite apart from being a talented actor.

Straight after everyone had been introduced he asked me to go and get teas and coffees. ‘I see he’s stamping his authority on this’, I thought, which was perfectly acceptable to me. The only downside was having to make my first visit to a Starbucks where I couldn’t understand what the hell they were talking about.

“What do you mean, ‘Tchai Tea’? Tchai means tea in Chinese, so you’re asking if I want tea tea? Speak English! And just give me a bloody coffee, not a half and half, frothy, decaffeinated whatever you just said!”

We had a very talented bunch of actors including my friend, Tim Frances, from the first workshop. Chris Sandford's son, Jamie, also played some parts. On Friday morning as some scenes hadn't been completely worked out, Clarke dispatched me with a group of the young guys to take them through a song and work out some movements. Me, a choreographer? Whatever next ????

I thought that, as she'd been involved with the whole process, I should invite Heather with whom I was still reasonably friendly at that point. My sister, Allen, a cousin and his wife and many of my session singer friends plus Andy Spence who'd designed our terrific artwork and Di Evans and a few more were invited by me. Out of the blue I'd received an email from David Ballanyne's gorgeous ex-fiancé who wondered if I remembered her (who wouldn't?) who told me she was going to be in London so I invited her as well.

I can't say I wasn't nervous and, at lunchtime, I went out and bought a very cheap guitar.

It was a really filthy London day, but the Venue was filled. In the first scene (Victor's prologue) the actors play Lance Tommy and Evelyn as children who get lost walking to church. John had cleverly adapted the lines to let people identify each character when we see them next as adults. The kids (played by our adult actors) meet a white man walking with his daughter, Lynda; he seems nice and asks them about the guitar that was given to Lance by his aunt; he asks if it was stolen. Then he asks to see it.

"You see, your aunt Clara bought you a white guitar, but we can fix that."

He smashes it over his knee.

"There y'are, now it's a nigger guitar."

The gasp from our audience was palpable. We wanted to shock them and we had and I was glad to sacrifice that real guitar, something we hadn't done the first time.

The first half went better than well.

I met my sister and co in the bar in the interval and greeted Chevron. My sister was perplexed that someone I hadn't met for thirty years had been there and I'd also invited her to come to stay in France later in the year.

The second act contains the scene where Tommy and Lance are stopped by the cops, taken to the motel and made to strip down and sing their new hit about being a great lover. The terrified guys actually try to sing *All Night Man*, but our brave actors took down not only their trousers, but their underwear also. More gasps from the audience, but a lot of John's script is very funny.

All ends happily and the show and cast got a standing ovation. Clarke made a speech and called John and me down to the stage. The Head of Clearchannel in London made an announcement.

"I can't believe we let this great show slip... we're definitely seeking partners now to put it on."

Felling pretty good although we'd heard it all before, John and I, with Clarke, had invited the cast to have Champagne and cake outside a local restaurant and as we sat under the awning to avoid the drizzle, the phone rang. It was Heather. I'd been surprised and a little annoyed that she'd moved for the second act to sit near John and me.

"Hi that was great, can we meet up?"

"Sorry, we are out having a drink with the cast."

"Maybe later,"

"No, John and I are having dinner with Clarke... just us!"

Weird, but I guess the potential of success had made me more interesting again.

After a nice dinner that had followed a hard, intensive, tiring, but rewarding week, I took a cab to Richard and Cath Simpson's house in Tufnell Park where I was staying the night as both Richard and I were taking early Easyjet flights from Stansted the next day. Richard had videoed the workshop and all his three, great kids stayed up, eager to hear the news.

Richard and I were up early and shared a cab to the airport. I had decided during this tough week that my next goal would be to buy Oysters on my way home and eat them on my sunny terrace in France. I succeeded and later that Saturday, after stopping in Pont St Esprit market for the molluscs I was sitting in T shirt and shorts in the warm sunshine eating a dozen of them and drinking our local white wine. A lot of it... The end of great week.



At least the cats were waiting for me, but leaving no space.

Our cleaning lady, Jany, had taken a full-time job, but, I found I could easily take care of the house, reclaim the overgrown part of the garden that Heather claimed was 'Too much work' and look after the renters in the 'little house'. That year I had 26 weeks rented. Saturdays were spent cleaning the place completely and changing the beds. I found it harder when people left the place spotless as I still had to scrub and shine everything just in case. New people moved in and I showed them round. Sunday mornings were spent ironing bedding, tea towels and anything that had been washed. I also offered to cook and deliver dinner if ordered in advance and some guests availed themselves of the service. I enjoyed cooking so liked doing that. Bella the cat usually spent a great deal of time with the renters and on more than one occasion I had to stop a couple leaving as the cat was lying on the back shelf of their car.

I finished up renting only to Brits, mainly through the Civil Service Motoring Association magazine so got doctors nurses, police officers, all great people who told the same horror stories of too much of their time being taken up filling in papers to justify the work they were trying to do.

Once I'd paid off Heather, there would be no way I could now keep the house even if she had accepted my initial offer and it was too big for one person and expensive to run. I didn't want to use the local agent as I didn't trust him so put the house on the market with Knight Frank whose local representatives were a lovely English couple who produced a very good brochure. Again I asked top dollar.

Max Finbow was getting a prospectus done for investors, but laws meant it all had to be done fastidiously so not to make errors.

Chevron came to visit and we got on so well that we extended her stay and she decided to return later in the year.

Still no prospectus.

My local friends, Steve May, Ray Adams, Harvey Harrison and I would sometimes do a fishing trip with Franck the builder at a lovely spot, an old watercress farm about two hours away towards the alps. The trout weren't stupid and not easy to catch, but Franck was an accomplished fisherman and always bagged a few. The rest of us sometimes got lucky.

I loved two-week bookings for the gîte because I only had to deliver sheets and towels mid-term and not clean the place that Saturday so during a two-weeker we went fishing. Franck booked a local one star hotel that was run by two sisters. One cooked, the other served and cleaned. It was 'different'. As in Fawty Towers, letters were missing so the sign at the side read 'ESTAURAN'. The rooms had carpets on the wall; Franck's toilet was IN his room. I shared with Harvey and Ray shared with Steve avoiding the need for anyone to share with the morbidly obese and not so fragrant Franck.

When we went into the dining room there were several travelling salesmen watching TV during their meal, but boy, could this lady cook. Knowing that we were coming, three days before our arrival she would collect a bucket-full of baby trout and purge them before serving them fried like whitebait, but far tastier. Roast guineafowl followed with the biggest dish of the best pommes Dauphinoises you've ever tasted. During dinner Franck asked me where I was going to live.

"I'll have to find somewhere I like, but I don't want another stone house... no one buys a second stone house... and I don't like any modern ones I've seen."

"You should buy some land and build one, it's far cheaper than buying a standing house."

Those words would come back to haunt me many times. Many, many times!

Before coming home we went to a great little local restaurant that did a brilliant €11 menu. We sat outside when someone came out to ask if there was a medic there because someone had been taken ill. On the next table was a fireman who rushed inside and the owner came out to apologise for any delay. Eventually an ambulance arrived and the two drivers went in and brought out a lady on the gurney and sped off with her on board... no one else.

When I went in to the men's room there was a large table of very jolly, rather elderly people scoffing down their meals, seemingly unconcerned about their poor companion suffering the malaise. Who knows if she even survived.

With no Heather or her parents, I could again at last spend Christmas alone... just as I liked it... and I did. Bliss!

Max eventually sent the prospectus almost exactly a year after the second workshop, but of course, it was too late, the people who had been so smitten with the show had moved on or completely forgotten about it. For now, I could do no more, I'd devoted so much time, effort and love into the project that I could in no way face starting over again. I'd had enough.

Late in 2005, when Heather was threatening to sue for her share of the house, I put it with the local agent, but on condition that the wife, Zella handled the whole thing. She quickly brought round an Irish couple who agreed on the asking price. The sale took months due to the agent's husband offering to arrange a bridging loan that he failed to do. Heather came to get her belongings so Ray, Simone, his lady and I fled to the south, taking the 'Route Napoleon' and staying in a quaint little hotel in La Napoule near Cannes that we liked.

On my return there was a long letter from Heather saying how disgustingly dirty the house was, but she'd GONE and, as I said the sale eventually went through. Meanwhile, while dining at the cozy restaurant in a local village I saw a friend in there. Marc was the nephew of M Gonzalvez (we called him Speedy) who'd been the plumber during our renovations of the Mas.

He asked me where I was going to live and I told him that I was going to build and was looking for land.

"There's a nice plot next to me."

"You don't want me living next door to you!"

"Why not?"

So I went to take a look. It was huge; in fact it was two plots, but I REALLY liked it and the village, which was just along the valley from Montclus and I'd always preferred that side of the hill and the Cèze valley.

By walking round the plot, I could tell that if you built a two-story house, you'd have a lovely view. I was very interested and had been looking for somewhere to rent while I was looking for land and building. What I eventually did was buy one plot for my house and the other with Martyn with the intention of developing it. Mine was in front with the view and would partially obscure the view from the one behind.



I'd asked Franck if he was qualified to oversee the build and he confirmed that he was certainly capable of that.

Then one day an agent called from Bagnols, "There is a rental in St Michel d'Euzet, but I'm not sure it's right for you; it's really two apartments."

I saw it and it was ideal... yes, too big for one person, but with enough room to store all my furniture and piano; it had land with a view and infinity pool; just the job and what's more, it was easily within walking distance of the land.

"It's too expensive!" offered Franck.

"If you take cost of renting a villa plus storing all my stuff, there's not a lot of difference... and it's nice."

So, once the house sale was completed I moved over from the stone house I'd worked all my life for to a modern build with cardboard walls, shedding a few tears on the way... but it was perfectly OK.

Franck knew a lady architect about 90 minutes' drive away and she did everything I asked for even when I changed my mind. She could not have been more helpful. Eventually we put in the plans for consent.

Since 'Miss Take's' departure and excluding the visits from Chevron, I lived on my own for about three years. In the winters I saw almost no one and got very few phone calls. Charles and Andy Spence called the most and my sister phoned about three times a year and was always eating when she called. I would have so loved to have facebook then so I could see what friends were doing; have chats and put up offensive posts. But it was what it was and it was France. I assumed that I'd now live alone for the rest of my life. French women were out of the question... far too neurotic. A friend suggested online dating, but I didn't fancy that. Anyway, what would I say?

'Ferrari driving composer based in the south of France seeks a companion.'

Who'd be interested in that?

The money I had left was invested and the interest helped pay my rent, but it was obvious that I would have to do some work in order to keep living here. On a visit to London I went to see my old friends and competitors, Mike Connaris and Toby Jarvis at Mcasso Music. I had done a couple of projects with them by sending midi files that they'd record and we'd split the fee/royalties, but I needed to record at home. They used Logic Pro and that seemed very complicated, but Toby took me through the process.

"How do you group more than one instrument on a track?"

"You don't, every microphone gets routed to its own track."

"Holy crap, even drums?"

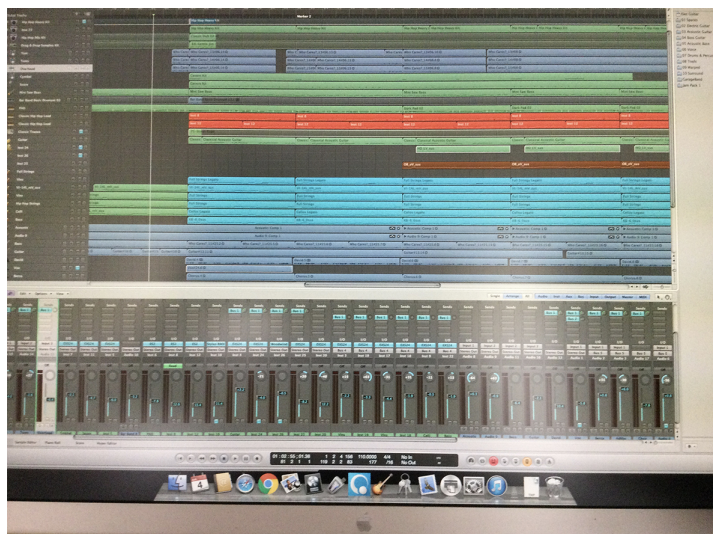
"Yep, you have maybe nine or ten tracks of them. Tracks are unlimited."

"Holy crap, when did that happen?"

"For a while now."

I'd really been out of the loop.

On my return I drove to Nîmes and bought a Mac Pro, Logic 9 discs and an interface, getting an iPod thrown in. A guy I'd met at a local music store came and installed it all. I got the biggest 'cinema' screen. It looked impressive... then! I had a midi keyboard and my Neumann U87 from Music by Design. I wondered if we'd bought it in an Abbey Road sale as the box certainly came from there.



The Mac Pro with Logic9 Pro.

Once it worked and Manu had showed me how to get started, I started. I first recorded with Apple Loops and then added samples and it sounded pretty good to me although it was, of course, absolute crap. I really had a lot to learn.

Then I fell in love with making music again. In this \$199 programme I had more capabilities that we had in our Soho Studio... all the compressors, reverbs, guitar amps, loops samples; it seemed miraculous. I started writing songs again... not acceptable ones, I had to relearn how to do that also!

Franck was now so obese that he couldn't do physical work and any jobs he was doing required his assistant, Sylvain, to do the actual work with him surveying so no one wanted to pay two people to do one man's work. Still, he was just overseeing the building work and that was fine and I introduced him to Marc's friend who had built the house with him. This guy did good work and had a team and Franck liked him so we agreed that when they were available, they'd start. I wasn't in a rush, but, once they started, they mustn't stop as the money would be going out of the account and interest would fall. They agreed. Franck would receive a fee for making sure everything was done correctly and on budget.

After signing for the land and getting our planning permission, we went to look at the plot to work out where the house would go. The guy who lived behind, whose view of the valley we would obscure and who would be my neighbor introduced himself.

"You know this land has clay on it?"

"What does that mean, Franck?"

"It could make building tricky?"

"Great!"

I'd hired Franck to oversee everything from the plans to building to finishing on budget. He'd failed to do the obvious (to everyone else), to get the land surveyed. NOW he had it done... it confirmed there was clay, but not everywhere and we could avoid it.

The architect was brilliant and accommodated my every whim and change of mind. This is how her artist visualised the property.



Some of my songs required vocals and Marc had a friend who was a singer who could sing in English. I had to run cables for the microphone and headphone into the bedroom next to the room I'd set up as an office. The girl wasn't great and neither was the sound. The room was too live even though I'd put rugs down and closed the curtains, on top of the session fee, there was a charge for social security that seemed to be the norm here. I then heard of a system called file sharing whereby you send a singer or musician a track and they send you back their performance. Magic! Of course it's commonplace now, but it seemed so incredible then. So I got better singers cheaper and with better sound. I never looked back.

The first time my dear friend, Miriam Stockley recorded some vocals I was quite excited to hear the results. They came via a transfer site, a company whose site you could load your files (too big for emails) onto and then the recipient would download them. I dragged the files into the song. They were in the wrong key and at the wrong tempo. I was totally lost until I discovered they'd been recorded at a different bit rate. It took me the day to realise that, if I downloaded them and then imported each one, Logic would recognise the bit rate and convert it. Learning the Logic ropes took time. But the vocals sounded great. I had bought 'Logic For Dummies', but never got past page 43!

A date in January 2008 was decided on to start building.

One day in the Daily Mail (the only English paper on sale that day) I saw an advert for a business class only airline that had an offer of Stansted (London) to Los Angeles for £600 return so I booked flights for January before the building was to get under way. It seemed too good to be true. I hadn't been over for a while, but at 6'1" tall, I had no wish to fly economy; I'd rather not go; business was too expensive and Premium economy didn't yet exist so this was perfect. I thought the visit would be useful as I'd take in Nashville also. I had really got into Country music and was writing Country material so I'd go to Nashville again to learn more about what works and make more contacts. Lorna Flowers, a lady I'd already met there, would make some appointments for me; apart from being a songwriter, this is what she did.

I liked this file sharing or recording at a distance, but not many singers or musicians yet had the technology to record at home. It was a matter of asking around until you found someone. It occurred to me that the industry needed a kind of 'Yellow Pages' for live and recording artists and a website that people could sign up for and advertise their services seemed to be the way forward. It would, if successful, expand into a site where artists could also offer their tracks for download at a far better

rate than iTunes offered... there were endless possibilities. I told Martyn Crespel who loved the idea and, as he was in finance, was able to kick off a business plan.

I decided to invite Stephanie de Sykes' son, Toby, to be our technical expert and the three of us met at the Gare du Nord in Paris as it was easily reachable from here, Geneva and London. It was cold and we headed for the nearest Brasserie where we waited to be served while the waiter ignored us and then served locals who'd just arrived. We moved to an adjacent hostel. After discussing Auditious our temporary name for the project, we left for home in the evening, much enthused.

Before Christmas, Martyn called to say my new budget business class airline was struggling. Not long after, he called again, "I'm sorry, they've gone into Chapter Eleven. What will you do?"

"Bugger... well... not go, I guess."

After a pause,

"Look I have about two million air miles I can book your trip with those."

This was totally in character for Martyn, generous and kind.

I thankfully accepted and made arrangements. The only suitable flight available on air miles was return from Lyon, which just over two hours away, but that was fine and I'd pass through Heathrow to LAX with British Airways Business Class; nice. No, better than nice.

After another Christmas spent alone, which is how I so enjoyed after years of entertaining Miss Take's parents, Martyn announced that he'd arranged a meeting with an investment company in Sherman Oaks in 'The Valley' outside L.A. where we could present the Auditious project so he'd fly in from another US meeting and join me. I'd told Jane about my upcoming visit and she suggested I call the lovely Darcie who was again divorced, so I did. We agreed we'd meet up.

The flight to LA was extremely pleasant. I'd booked a room at Le Parc as the Château Marmont was now too expensive and it was pretty nice.

It was now 10:30pm and I was hungry so headed round the corner to La Cienega Boulevard (restaurant row) where I located a reasonably priced place with a wooden facade called Mark's. It was heaving, but the charming Maître D' quickly found me a table for one. After being seated, I couldn't help noticing that, in this fairly large restaurant, there was only one woman and she was on a table with three men. I then realised it was a predominately (99%) gay restaurant. I really enjoyed it; the staff and the food were great and very inexpensive. I stopped at a bar on the way back to the hotel that was full of beautiful people far too cool for the likes of me as was my breakfast spot on Melrose where it was 'de rigueur' to carry a script. You gotta love LA.

I'd ordered a sim card for my phone to be waiting at the hotel, but, of course, it didn't work so I headed town to T-Mobile Beverly Hills where it was deemed necessary for me to BUY a phone for the card. I then sat having a coffee watching the Bentleys, Rolls Royces, Ferraris and Mercedes driving towards me with glamorous 40 year old women with their equally glamorous daughters inside. But when they got close, I realised that the mothers were in fact around sixty years of age and the daughters, at least 40. I couldn't help thinking of the little village I'd left the day before where the average age of an inhabitant's Renault is ten years old and the people rarely dress up, never have cosmetic surgery, don't care about straight teeth... and are happy. A different world.

I saw a few friends and called the lovely Darcie who invited me to the Superbowl match at Jane's house, but we met for brunch at the Marmelade Cafe in Malibu precinct beforehand. As usual we got on really well and didn't stop talking. There were two groups chez Jane: The football aficionados in the cinema and the rest of us around the kitchen and living room. I couldn't understand how these guys played for under a minute and then there were at least 5 minutes of adverts that held up play although the ads were great and the game was exciting only for the last five minutes. Don and Annie were there on their way to Australia and I had a lovely afternoon and invited Darcie to Gladstone's, my favourite place on the ocean for lunch on the Tuesday.

On Monday I had dinner with my friend, Jeff Scheftel, who had been so supportive of 'Soul Searchers', even playing the songs to his neighbour, Lamont Dozier, a Motown legend...who, incidentally gave them his stamp of approval.

I had a sushi dinner with Darcie on the Thursday and I felt there was really something there, but there was no point in pursuing a romance when I was leaving on the Sunday. I did invite her to join Martyn and me for dinner on Saturday, but she declined. Pity!

On Friday we had our meeting on Ventura Boulevard and it seemed to go well. We went to lunch with the guy and then headed back to the 'too cool for us bar' in Hollywood and dinner at Al Pacino's restaurant also too cool to give us our table anywhere near the time we'd booked, but the house wine at the bar was magnificent. Before that dinner we'd arranged to meet Pam Shayne's husband, Nigel Rush, at the now glamorous Sunset Marquis. The valet guy opened the door,

"It's \$40 to park the car, sir."

"You're kidding me, last time I stayed here a room didn't cost that!"

"Give me ten bucks and I'll leave it at the end of the road."

I also had lunch with a young English couple who were being quite successful with their songs in the US. I did mention that I didn't think the quality of audio on Logic was top notch and they said that the problem was probably the interface. Later I got a better one and they were right.

Without Darcie, Martyn, George, Shelli and I went to dinner on the Saturday night. I picked the 'mostly gay' restaurant I'd been to on my first night. Again, nearly everyone in there was male and, again, it was very good. Immersed in conversation and until some loud music came on, none of us had noticed that, at 11pm, it had morphed into a lesbian disco. We headed for the bar at Le Parc.

Martyn and I both left on the Sunday, him for Europe, me for Nashville. I got a seat on Southwest with extra legroom having boarded early but the most enormous lady came and sat next to me. She actually apologised as it's a five-hour flight to Nashville and turned out to be really nice and owned a Christian label and had been in LA for the Grammys.

Again I stayed at the Union Station hotel, heard a lot of music and got invited to the famous Bluebird Café for a songwriters' 'round'. It was far smaller than I imagined and was rather unimpressive, but the atmosphere was special.

One day, Lorna Flowers had arranged for lots of songwriters to come to meet me. They all arrived at the bar of the hotel; one an hour. I was amazed she'd got these hot writers to come to meet me, but it seemed my track record held some sway over there. I really liked all these Ladies; Benita Hill, Kirsti Manna, Alison Joy Williams and some others and I finished up writing with several of them. Lovely ladies who enjoyed a glass of wine or three.

The following morning I had a breakfast meeting with the head of Peer Music at the hotel. Peer London's, Nigel Elderton, had set it up for me. We discussed many music issues and I mentioned file sharing and he was well aware of that.

"Do you know of a guitarist here called John Willis?"

"Sure, he's an A lister and actually played on a song I wrote with Gary Benson; great player."

"Quite, well I used to see John on sessions all the time and hadn't seen him for months and wondered if he was OK until I saw him at a reception and mentioned not having seen him for an age.

"Well, I hardly leave home now, do all my sessions from my studio there."

I took his email address and John has played brilliantly on many of my tracks since and charges incredibly reasonable rates. Everyone in Nashville does.

The guy also told me how difficult it was to get covers in Nashville now. This really wasn't big news to me.

"I had a hold with a girl singer who said she was definitely going to cut the song. Then the producer said they wouldn't do it because it was in the wrong key! Can ya believe that?"

I'd never heard anything like that before. What a business!

I headed downtown for more music.

My return flight was from LA to Lyon via London so I had to fly the 5 hours up to LA. I had an early flight so I was up at silly o'clock. George kindly picked me up at LAX and we had a drink in Venice Beach and lunch in Santa Monica before he dropped me back for my transatlantic flight. After a lay over at Heathrow, my flight landed in Lyon at 9pm at night. I was tired and freezing in the bus to the car park but amused by the recorded announcement in English, "Make sure to take all your belongings behind you."

I should have taken an overnight stop over in LA, but here I was and told myself I'd stop at an hotel on the Motorway if I got drowsy, but I made it home and was happy to get into bed thirty six hours after leaving Nashville. It had been a good trip.

The following morning was sunny and I walked over to the 'building site' where I found a big hole and five men arguing.

The upshot was that there was clay where they had dug and therefore far more substantial foundations would be required. In London, every build has deep foundations because of the clay, but here, mostly the foundations are shallow.

"Franck wants to fill this in and dig elsewhere, but I'm not doing that" said head builder.

"But deep 'pilons' for foundations will add a huge amount to the budget."

"How much?" croaked the poor proprietor.

"At least 10,000 Euros" replied Franck.

More arguing took place until the head man interjected.

“We should dig deeper and make a cellar that would work as perfect foundations.”

“No, that will cost even more!”

Franck was panicking. So was I.

“Yes, it will cost around double, but we can make a slope down so you’ll be able to park two extra cars (there was already the garage reached from the rear); you’ll have a laundry and wine cellar and a huge amount of storage space and it will add a great amount on the value of the house when you come to sell.”

Already he’s talking about selling the place before a brick is laid.

So with heavy heart and gritted teeth, I chose that option and thank goodness I did as the garage and cellar are both crammed with all manner of stuff though not nearly enough wine. Now I’d really have to pull in some work to make up the cost of this cellar.

I had been to many ‘Brocantes’, stores where they sell sub-antique material and had bought old pine doors that the ‘menuisier’ was going to strip, furnish and build frames for. I’d loved my old house and wanted the interior of the new one to feel like a converted farmhouse rather than a new build. On a trip to the lovely market in L’Isle sur la Sorgue, I’d fallen in love with a door that would become my front door; it even had a hole for a cat flap... that was even before the building started. A friend had bought a pair of fireplaces that were up to 600 years old. I bought one from him... very chipped, but with real character.

As the builders were finishing the first level and adding insulation and the cement for the first floor, it rained. For days! Eventually they put a ladder to reach the first floor and head man called up Franck who only now realised why I chose this piece of land. He’d wanted me to buy a plot down in the village, but now he could see the gorgeous view from up there. Then he fell off the ladder. Luckily the ground was so muddy that he simply left the outline of his gigantic frame rather than being killed. Well, luckily for him, anyway.

Every day required decisions and more decisions and more ordering of bathroom equipment, tiles, lights, toilets and so on. The electrician needed to know what sort of light switches I required and where they should go. It was endless. I wouldn’t have had time to work. Meanwhile, a pile of rubbish was growing in front of the house.

Charlie, the electrician had told me it takes five houses until you know all the pitfalls of building a house.

“Ah the first time you saw someone throwing a cigarette packet or bottle onto the ground, you should have told him to pick it up; now you’re screwed!”

I asked Franck why they couldn’t all be like Charlie who carried a large carton into which went all the discarded wires and boxes.

“ I know, he ruins it for the rest of us!”

I could go on and do a Peter Mayle yet again, but I’ll just say that Franck messed up at every turn; we went way over budget with him not being able to account for €26,000 of costs although I know that didn’t end up in his pocket and even when finished, repairs... yes repairs... putting things right, to this NEW house cost another €15,000.



Charles visiting in the summer.

Despite the agreement on 'Once you start, you don't stop', many days were lost because of the many bank holidays and the days between the bank holidays and the weekends and nothing was done in August.

"Oh nobody works in August." So they stopped.

Because of the rising costs, I'd already decided to paint all the many shutters that I had delivered to the rental house before the break and spent the time painting them. In the afternoon I availed myself of the pool and read each evening on the terrace. One afternoon, Annie Gould phoned.

"Hi, I've got someone here to talk to you."

It was Darcie.

"We're at St Catherine's (Jane's house near Bath), can you come over for a few days?"

"Sorry, I'd love to, but I'm in the middle of painting and buying stuff for my new house, can you come here, I've had it with decisions, I need HELP!"

"No, I'd love to, but I have to go back to work and collect the dogs."

"Well maybe soon."

In September the roof was being added and all the interior walls had been built. Before the under floor heating was fitted (a fascinating process), Claude, the plumber, installed his pipes. I'd never given the installation of toilets a great amount of thought, but all the floors were concrete and included insulating materials. How do the toilet outlets to the sewer pipes happen? Well, Claude has a wide kind of drill with which he drills the appropriate hole sizes right through all this. Impressive. Franck was puzzled.

“Why do you have four toilets for just you?”

“Good question!”

My friend, Alasdair Sealy, who was a kitchen builder, gave me a fine price for all the kitchen materials. I gave him measurements and he sent me designs and would come down in October with his lovely assistant, (Princess) Sophie to fit everything.

I was exchanging emails with Darcie and we found a date when, work permitting, she would come and help me to make decisions. It would be lovely to see her, anyway. It might well coincide with Alasdair and Sophie’s stay also, but there were plenty of rooms in the rental house, even a complete apartment downstairs.

Apart from the other cost cutting, some of which I now regret, I decided to do the house painting myself, but enlisted help from a friend’s daughter. Stephanie and Misha are from California and Steph was trying to earn some money; she’s bright and very capable and, once the plastering was done, we had fun trying out colours on each wall. There are natural ochres near here that you can buy in powder form to add to white paint. I kept note of the quantity of whichever powder to a ladle-full of paint. I was happy with the results and only had to get one of the builders to paint the upstairs ceiling as we couldn’t reach even it with ladders. It’s high. I even colour-washed the wall where the fireplace would go. I liked it.

It rained and rained and rained and the land was sodden. Not only that, but the cellar kept filling up with water. Frank inserted some drains on the slope; no help. Then he added a pump; no help! The bossman built a step across the garage entrance at the bottom of the slope; a little help. The guy who was going to terrace the land, ie actually flatten it rolled his eyes and pointed out,

“All it needs is for the land to slope slightly AWAY from the house and it will be sorted. Why didn’t you ask me?”

Why indeed?

One evening as the water was building up on the side of the land next to the road I went out to dig a trench so it could drain away. I ended up with mud up to my thigh.

Chapter Sixteen... **A BETTER WAY**

On October 9th 2008 Darcie arrived to spend two weeks helping me with decisions. It took no time for us to realise that we should be together as Jane and Annie had always insisted, but Darcie lived in California.



The first picture of my beautiful Darcie and me together and with Alastair and Sophie for a day off work in Uzes.

Together we bought wall lamps and other fittings and enjoyed being together. I'd been searching for a big light to go above the dining room table. Darcie spotted a solution in a store in L'Isle sur la Sorgue where I'd taken her to enjoy the Antique and Provençale markets that take place every Sunday. We bought three matching lights that Charlie's bright, young assistant suspended beautifully above the spot where the table would stand.

I'd actually built the house around the furniture I had so knew where everything would go and had a special spot for my piano. I had also made a plan whereby there would be no corridors, which waste space and stop light getting in. So, it's an extremely bright house, especially upstairs.

It rained again a lot and the men doing the façade had to surround the area on which they were working in plastic. The wet did help the uneven (rustic) look, though. There were now boards right across the front 'garden' so that the guys could walk without sinking in the mud and bring materials in wheelbarrows. One day the bossman called me into the living room.

"You know you said that, if the house goes any more over budget, you'll have to sell it? Well, do it today, it has a river view!!"

Sure enough I could see the Cèze in the distance had burst its banks.

Alasdair and Sophie arrived, the weight of all the kitchen gear in the van delayed them a lot. Darcie had suggested making a pea and ham soup for their arrival, but they were so late that it had thickened to the point that I had to offer them

"A slice of soup?"

The following day, through the rain, we brought everything for the kitchen into the living room; took each unit out of the packing and I painted the doors while Alasdair and Sophie started installation. Darcie was wearing overalls in the sodden garage painting other furniture. I had bought some cheap items for the spare room and had painted and 'distressed' them and there they remain.

Some of the other workmen would come to the kitchen at the end of the day to watch Alasdair and Sophie sweeping and tidying up. This was so new to them.

At last the rain stopped and I brought lunch from the rental house that we could now eat on the not yet tiled terrace. The view was so lovely.

Not long after Alasdair and the Princess left, Darcie departed for LA. It wasn't long before I bought her a ticket to come back at Christmas.

November saw the finishing touches being added and on December 4th I moved in. All the furniture was in by lunchtime and I had quite a few paintings up and the fire lit by the evening when Steph and Misha came over with a delicious lasagna that Misha had made and we toasted my new home. A great feeling.

After what seemed like a long wait, Darcie arrived on Christmas Eve and we spent a great two weeks over Christmas and New Year. We started looking at ways of getting her back here permanently.

The great thing here is that we have about 300 days of sunshine and, even after the coldest mornings, if the sun's out and there's no wind we can sit on the terrace and eat lunch in T shirts.

My Lovely friend, Lesley Davies, was now working at Endemol and, from her, I got to write the themes for the National Lottery and Euromillions shows that Toby Jarvis recorded from my midi files and made sound superb and we shared the royalties. Income, Hurrah!

Our 'National Lottery' Theme: <https://youtu.be/yxlcO1T9gv4>

In my new house, I'd had tie lines put in to the living room and the garage with 8 mic inputs, a jack (guitar) input and headphone socket in each for recording people in different sounding rooms. I acquired extra microphones, headphones and splitter so four sets of headphones could be plugged in at once. I bought a weighted keyboard and an 8 channel, firewire interface and various plug-ins for Logic including Vienna Symphony Orchestra so I could also record great sounding tracks here. With no building work to oversee, I could experiment with getting good recordings and really fell in love with the process of recording music again, feeling as I had in my bedroom in Putney with my old Revox. I got more and more used to what it took to get a great track and I had John Willis in Nashville who would provide me with brilliant guitar tracks. I still had the most important element: ears!

Darcie came back in the spring. We did a lot of work on the quarter acre in front of the house and, in June, the first girl to break my heart, Linda, came to visit with a daughter, Chloe. We'd remained friendly and, as she was a landscape gardener, she offered advice and to help.

One day, she and I set off for the Drôme where there is a lavender producer. I bought about 30 small plants and about six of thyme. Linda bought two bottles of lavender oil to take home as it costs a fraction of the price here. On the way home she remarked,

"Doesn't that lavender smell divine?"

However, when we got home we discovered that one of the bottles had broken leaving lavender oil all over Linda's bag and even her phone. Every time I drove the car for the rest of the year it made me drowsy. We planted the lavender along the new pathway and she made a pretty square of lavender and Thyme.

I did some more work for Lesley and I did one job that Toby Jarvis asked me to do. Well, I didn't complete it. It was for a new reality show like the baking cook-offs, but for hairdressing. Who thinks up this stuff? Toby was writing one and wanted to pitch two so would I do one? I did.

The brief was patently written by an intern who simply chose, as they do, her favourite kind of music that was totally inappropriate to the programme so we were already wasting our time. After we'd submitted our tracks she sent out another email.

'I may have slightly misled you. I now think that a single instrument maybe a banjo, is the way to go as it's less incongruous.'

Again this showed how little she actually knew; a banjo is hardly the way to go and a single instrument is far more distracting than a full orchestra, but how would a musically illiterate teenager know this? I composed an email asking her if she knew how much of people's time was being wasted because of her ignorance; how many people (we knew we were not alone in pitching) had spent days not being paid for their work and to please ask someone who knew what he or she was doing to give a concise and sensible brief. Of course Toby wouldn't send it, but I felt better and told Toby I was done and to please tell this idiot to fuck off. Of course he didn't. This foolishness is directly the result of free demos. The client can ask twenty people to pitch because it costs nothing. If they have to pay, they choose carefully and give a sensible brief.

I got one more call from another TV company,

"Would you like to pitch for a new cookery programme? There's no actual fee, but you'll get all the PRS income."

"What network will it be on?"

"The Cookery Channel."

"Goodbye."

I was becoming a grumpy, old man. I got worse!

Darcie arranged to come back in the autumn and have her belongings shipped over. This was great news. How she packed up her life so quickly, I'll never know. She sold her treasured Mercedes Sports cars, left her house, bequeathed her much-loved dog to her brother and got back here in a month that included a week's work.

I planted a vegetable patch under the local 'rules': those vegetables growing below ground need to be planted during a waxing moon and those above during a waning moon. I soon discovered by my midget carrots that nothing grows below ground with this clay soil. Of 200 bulbs planted, two came up.

A couple of weeks after Darcie arrived, we spent a gruelling morning with typical French bureaucrats at the customs office at Montpellier airport before we brought home Darcie's belongings in a borrowed van.

We had been planning to get married in St Michel d'Euzet and invite our neighbours to a reception in our garden, but, in true Clochemerle fashion, some would refuse to be at an event with others. A pity, because we got on so well with them all.

After MIDEM in January, we made a point of going into Italy for a while, making sure that Darcie's passport was stamped so her latest visit didn't run over 90 days. Once we were married, we'd apply for a resident's card.

In February, I had to go to London for two meetings and arranged to have lunch at the Ivy with Lesley, her colleague at Endemol who was important for our continuing work and Toby. Darcie and I, for the first time SHARED a carry-on bag. Just as we were about to board and passing through immigration, the officer pointed to Darcie's last arrival date from the US.

"You've been here longer than 90 days!"

"No, we've been twice to Italy."

"That's still in the Schengen zone."

Until that day, I wasn't aware of the Schengen zone, but I sure am now.

With that, the officer, stamped a visa on Darcie's passport and drew a cross over it. I paid a €35 fine and boarded thinking, "that's not good!"

"That's not good," said the customs officer at Gatwick, "you really don't want that. You can't re-enter France for at least 90 days. So, you're going to get married, do you have a ring?"

Darcie did have a ring.

"I'm afraid he's bought you a fake."

This delightful chap gave Darcie a six-month visa and wished us well.

We were staying with my sister and over dinner she asked, "What are you going to do now?"

"We'll get married somewhere and apply for a longer term visa."

"But you said you'd never get married again!"

Very diplomatic, my sister.

Because I was working (and lunching) the next day, Darcie called Annie Gould who suggested Darcie stay with her and Don and they'd get things sorted before Annie and Sally went off to stay with Jane two days later. Annie is very efficient.

My sister gave Darcie a lift, with her few clothes in a carrier bag, to Don and Annie's. On the way, she informed Darcie,

"I don't think Heather's going to be happy about this!"

Ha! Did I say how diplomatic my sister is? Why would we care what the hell Heather felt about it and who would tell her? My sister presumably... the only person who chose to have anything whatsoever to do with her after the split. Until they too fell out.

At lunch, I explained what had happened; Lesley Davies seemed happy.

"Great, I'll be giving you away."

After a lovely Ivy lunch, I took the tube to Gloucester Road to meet Darcie who had been to the US embassy and then the French one in South Ken. We met in a café near my first flat opposite the tube station.

“Neither embassy was any use at all and the best we’ve come up with is, if you become a resident of Ealing (a London suburb) for three weeks, you can then apply for a marriage licence.”

“F**k that! Me, in a London suburb for three weeks? I don’t think so. See if Sally can get you on the flight to LA with them. Getting married has to be easier there.”

Sally, working for United, did get Darcie on the flight and Don joined them.

“I’m not going to miss a Mindel wedding!”

So the following day, Darcie flew to Los Angeles and I flew to Montpellier.

I didn’t know how long all this wedding business would take, but I readied myself for a trip Stateside and to include a visit to Nashville to incorporate some business. Might as well make the trip worthwhile.

The following Monday, Darcie called.

“We can get married at Ventura courthouse on Wednesday March 3rd at 1pm; all you need is your passport and birth certificate.”

“Oh, under two weeks; that’s fine, but not at lunchtime; we can’t miss lunch can you make it earlier?”

“She called back.”

“It’s noon. Did you get the list of clothes I need you to bring?”

“That’s better... yes, but I have no idea of what these names mean and have certainly not heard of those colours! Misha and Steph are coming over and will find them and pack a case for you.”

That’s what friends are for!

I told people who might want to come to the wedding and those who’d want to know without facebook being a conduit.

Lesley Davies was bummed because her boss said she was needed at Endemol. Martyn said he’d be there, but probably not David. Charles, for whom I’d been best man twice, wasn’t going to miss it, but Lesley, his wife, (all these Lesley’s - confusing, isn’t it) sadly couldn’t find anyone to look after their unruly dogs. Charles and Lesley would already be in France so it was decided that they’d take me to Marseille and we’d fly to London together. Andy Spence would pick me up and I’d stay with him and Di overnight and he’d then take us to Heathrow the following morning.

I was getting sorted for the trip and, the following Saturday, Martyn called.

“David has said he’d like to come so I called Swiss to see if they can help and they’ve given him a first class ticket.”

Martyn was one of their best customers.

Two days before I was due to leave and in the middle of making arrangements I woke up to an email from one of Darcie's friends.

'Think it would be nice if you could write Darcie a song for the wedding. I sing.'

I replied, 'I'm leaving here in under 48 hours and if you're thinking of going down on one knee to sing it, forget it; we Brits don't do schmaltz.'

'It doesn't have to be schmaltzy and I won't be on one knee.'

I went to make a sandwich. I started humming something and a short, very simple Country song came out. I finished the lyrics while I ate my sandwich and recorded it in an hour...

Getting married ain't so easy when you're close to 63...

It was light and silly so I sent it to Darcie's friend.

The reply didn't take long.

'That's brilliant. I know why she fell in love with you.'

Followed by,

'It might need a few lyric changes for Darcie's sake.'

Followed by,

'Sorry, I can't sing this, I'll offend Darcie.'

I replied,

'If she's offended, I'm marrying the wrong woman.'

Misha and Steph came to identify Darcie's clothes list. I told them about the exchange and they wanted to hear the song.

"That's great, you should sing it."

So I did.

Darcie booked a table for lunch at Paradise Cove for 14 after the wedding and Jane and James very kindly insisted on throwing us a wonderful party.

Charles and Lesley were in France so I flew to London with them and stayed overnight with Andy and Di. What I didn't know was that they had invited both of them and Charles's daughter, Grace, for dinner and we had a really lovely, memorable evening.

Again the next morning we arrived at Heathrow three hours before the flight... enough time for Charles to order us three Bloody Marys... and two more after take off. We arrived in LA and as we lined up at immigration, I suggested to Charles that he didn't mention my wedding as they might assume I wanted to stay and work there. He agreed and when we were called forward to adjacent officers, I heard his immigration guy ask, "Reason for your visit?"

"His wedding!" while gesturing towards me.

Typical!

Charles picked up his hire car and nearly killed us getting on the Pacific Coast Highway. We arrived at Jane's house and Charles went off to find his motel, the Malibu Beach Inn no longer charging \$50 a night. He returned for dinner suspecting that the place he'd booked charged by the hour.

The following day we picked up Martyn and David and dropped them at the... Malibu Beach Inn where they rested and took a cab to Jane's house. I'd been nominated as chef for the evening with Don, Annie and the lovely Diana assisting me. Before my arrival Diana and her sister, Ophelia who rarely worked together at Jane's had asked Darcie what food we'd like for the party in the evening after our wedding and she'd chosen Mexican.

Apart from David, Martyn, Charles, Don Annie, Sally Jane and husband, James, there was Corinna Gordon, one of Jane's oldest friends and Kenny Loggins who was giving music career advice to one of Jane's twins. I'd bought the dinner ingredients in the morning and started preparing. The main course, I remember, was chicken breast in a beetroot cream sauce... easy to do but impressive looking.

The next day was wedding day. I picked up Martyn and David and we waited, as ever, for the ladies to be ready. James picked and made a bouquet of sweet peas from the garden. We set off for the courthouse, which was actually like a very modern (70s) characterless government building... which it was.

We met Darcie's parents there; a first time for me.

"May I ask for your daughter's hand in marriage, please?"

"Sure, as long as you don't bring her back."

After signing papers, we were ushered into a curtained-off space with plastic flowers and rows of seats. Jane and Charles were our witnesses.

Enter the judge, a lovely black lady who welcomed us before beginning,

"If anyone knows of any just impediment" ...

"Shut it, Charles!"

At one point I looked down and noticed, under her long, black gown, she sported white sneakers. I wasn't the only one to spy those.

Having received our marriage certificates, we joined Jane's son, Sean at Paradise Cove for a splendid lunch.

Sean, who's a photographer and video maker, took some terrific photos on this joyful and beautifully sunny March day.



*Sally, Darcie Jane and Annie. With our witnesses, Charles and Jane.
Below, the happy couple.*



We were able to take a siesta before the party started. Jane had insisted on paying for everything, but at least I'd had the chance to nip down to Ralph's supermarket to buy all the wine.

I met more of Darcie's friends and family although I struggled to remember all the names. In the cinema (yes there's a cinema), in front of the screen instruments were set up. The twins' music teachers were members of Warren Zevon's band and had been hired to play bass and drums. Keyboards were set up for Don and I borrowed one of Johnny's guitars and we both played while James added harmonica from time to time. He's actually one of the best I've heard and Johnny Cash had once asked him to go on tour.



The first time Darcie had come to see me in France, next to her on the transatlantic flight was a nice lady to whom she chatted all the way. It seemed that this lady was a singer and worked in Belgium a lot. I didn't give it too much thought, but as they'd kept in touch Darcie had invited her to the wedding party. Her name was Thea Austin whose voice can be heard on Snap's *Rhythm is a Dancer* and what a singer she is. I can still see her performing *Respect* with Darcie's sister and two friends 'attempting' to do the backing vocals. She also gave us a CD of a song she'd written called, '*Darcie's Leaving L.A.*'

My only L.A. guest was George Sloan who arrived without Shelli.

"She couldn't get cover in her café, but if she'd known it was your wedding party, she'd have definitely have come." I should have mentioned it.

It was a terrific party and we really enjoyed everything and the food that Diana and Ophelia had made, although I had to be reminded to go and eat some. Our wedding cake was carrot from Costco with some decorations.

If Jane and James had been more than generous with the party, their wedding gift was way beyond generous. What a great day.

The following morning, an email from home neighbours showed our house and car under a foot of snow; very different from Malibu. We picked up David and Martyn and met Charles for breakfast at Marmalade where Darcie and I had our first 'date'. At one point, Darc offered us all a sausage dipped in maple syrup. There were no takers.

We picked up Medwyn who was in town on BAFTA business and had lunch at the Ivy At The Shore in Santa Monica. Medwyn was beyond excited as Cindy Crawford was in there.

We got to show Martyn and David around Hollywood and Beverly Hills, Charles headed home and the four of us had lunch with Don and Annie at Gladstone's the next day before they headed back to Switzerland.

I'd booked the Union Station Hotel in Nashville again and had written an email from 'my secretary' before I left letting the hotel know that it was her boss's honeymoon trip and, sure enough, we got upgraded to a massive room.

We saw The Time Jumpers, went to songwriter rounds, honkytonks and met up with old friends. Chris and Gelly Sandford were in town staying with Peter Collins so we arranged to meet for dinner. When we left the restaurant, they dropped us on Broadway for some more music. One of the most beautiful girls I've ever seen asked me to dance in a honkytonk; I couldn't refuse and Darcie danced with her boyfriend. I still have no idea why she asked me!!!

Darcie loved the music down there and, at one point, announced,

"I really like that Greengrass Music."

It's Bluegrass.



The fabulous Time Jumpers with (as usual) Vince Gill.

Back in LA, we had a couple of days before I set off for home. Darcie would have to stay out of France for at least 90 days and would need to find out what she had to do to return.

Over the next week, she went to the French consulate, called the Embassy in Washington and the US one in Paris. All gave her conflicting information. Eventually she found she could return on 90-day visa after her 90 day 'ban' was over.

Darcie's sister was going to Hawaii for two weeks in April so I booked a flight from London to L.A. on April 15th so we could spend some time together. As it happened, my friend, Harvey, was due to go to LA for a memorial ceremony for his sister so we decided to travel together, me arriving in London the previous afternoon and staying overnight with him and Sally.

After a pleasant evening, on the morning of our departure, I walked into the shopping centre in Wimbledon for a few necessities. I stopped for a coffee and glanced at my phone. There was a text from Claire, our friend who'd come to so many New Year's events; it read.

'All flights from England cancelled.'

I replied,

'Very Funny!'

When I got back to the house, Harvey and Sally were watching Sky News and there it was, the Icelandic volcanic dust cloud story. We were going nowhere... that day, anyway. A good lunch was the only solution. Things didn't look any better for the following day so Harvey decided that we'd have lunch with his cousin who was on an earlier flight that was actually taxiing for take off when it was instructed to return to the terminal... poor lady. Obviously I would pay for lunch in consideration for the hospitality and was happy when Harvey booked Côte, part of an excellent chain. The set lunch menu was very good at £9.95. I'd certainly have that. Harvey studied the menu,

"I'll have the foie gras, Dover sole and er... 2 bottles of the Chablis, please."

For the next few days we called Virgin Atlantic who were (this time) wonderful and would always book us on a flight the following day and then we'd have lunch; one with director and fellow bon viveur, Ian Sharp, at Groucho where he ordered a rather stunning Oregon Pinot Noir. On the Sunday, Claire came over for Sunday lunch and I made the decision that I would go home and leave my seat available to a American trying to get home. I found a seat on Eurostar for over £600. At least they were able to profit from the situation by laying on extra trains and charging stupid prices. I think this was the most expensive week of my life.

The carriage on the train was something like a private charter with everyone telling their stories of how they'd been stuck and how they planned to get home. A West African gentleman was getting the train to Marseille, then a boat to Algeria and then a flight south. Some Americans were returning via Madrid where the airport had remained open.

At Gare du Nord we wished each other luck, but when I got to the TER platform I discovered there was a drivers' strike. There had been no notice board or information on how to get to your next destination. How could these bastards cause more grief to people trying to get home?

I knew how to get to Gare de Lyon via the metro just in time, but I'm sure many didn't and as all trains were full, I wondered how they'd manage. I was very happy to get home having spent as much as I might have on a four week Caribbean holiday and now had to get Darcie back. We had six weeks in which to sort this out.

The cloud continued to do its worst and I looked at ships to Nice and Barcelona and Darcie found one that arrived two days before her ban ended, but I wasn't going to risk a 5-year ban. I even looked at freighters... "But what about my nice clothes?"... always the L.A. princess! We booked a flight after that date and hoped for the best. The day approached and flights were crossing the Atlantic, but with many cancellations and we just had to hope.

The day before Darcie's arrival, I awaited news and received a text,

'Boarding!'

I'd decided to take the train to Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris to meet Darcie as she'd never travelled alone in France. Or been on a train!!! My train was late and, as I approached Paris, was getting texts from Martyn,

'Dublin Airport closed.'

'Schiphol Airport closed.'

I could see myself going back and driving south to Madrid, but we were lucky and after finding Darcie, although not where we'd arranged to meet, we happily headed home.



Home.

Chapter Seventeen... **AND SO**

We happily settled into our life together in France and the time has flown. There have been some highlights, though, many of them involving road trips with our 'besties', Martyn and David, our new friend, Geoff Hall whom we met one night at dinner with old neighbours; the lovely Angela who'd left Music by Design and now was a health therapist and Lesley Davies. We've been to the Italian lakes, Menton on the Cote d'Azur several times, Venice for my 70th and many weekends in Grau du Roi in the Camargue before the girls normally return here for a few days.

In March we were watching in horror footage of the Japanese Tsunami. I can't remember seeing many more distressing sights on the news. I woke around 5am the next day and thought I had to do something so did what songwriters do. I wrote a song and started to record it. I emailed Charlie Morgan, Tommy Blaize. Max and Buzz Mazumbder, Miriam Stockley, Paul Ewing, Pete Whitfiend, Graham Preskett, Martin Jay and others and asked if they'd contribute. They all agreed, did their parts and by the time I got up at five the next morning, I had all their files and mixed the track by mid afternoon to which John Bryant cut footage. The link to 'Life Goes On' is here with its list of contributors. I was very grateful for my amazing, talented friends. It was all written and recorded in 24 hours.

This was the first multiple artist file-sharing project for me:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBjTzcdopkw>

The first summer Darcie and I were together, I was talking to John Harding about preparing Soul Searchers for other possibilities and even other Media... just in case. As Ryanair flights to Nîmes were so inexpensive, we decided he should fly out and we'd work on it here and we then spent a hilarious few days. We decided that Lance's character would, after the group broke up, do anything to make a living including singing jingles. I knew how to do this so wrote one for a hemorrhoid cream that Tommy sang for me at his home in London that very day. John added the end voice over.

Preparation X... for the (w)hole of the family.

That evening after dinner and a few glasses of red we sat on the terrace and wondered if the Musical would work for a small ensemble at the Edinburgh Festival and then thought we'd make it 'a Scottish play' and started to act out the first scene in a strong Glasgow accent.

"Rory, I thank we're lost."

"Nae wirr nort, gae ta f**k, Shona!"

And so it carried on...

You had to be there, but we cracked ourselves up. John and I had never had a disagreement, he was a faboulous guy, but I never saw him again; too soon afterwards, he was diagnosed with Asbestosis and died not long after that. I miss him, but not like Betsan and the boys have missed him.

When in London on the fateful trip, I had been for a drink with Pete Cox who worked at KPM and now ran Firstworks, another library company. We discussed what kind of library music was in short supply. It seemed a vocal album of varied, but unusual music was sought after and I thought that an ideal project to work on in the hope of future royalties and so contacted Miriam Stockley to see if she'd get involved. We decided to do the album together; her in Florida and me here and getting a few instruments added where necessary.

In short, the album took ten months. I'd come up with a track, probably with some of the melody added and Miri would come up with wonderful vocals and I'd then finish it off. On one tune she recorded SEVENTY tracks of vocals that, luckily for me, her engineer husband, Rod, mixed into just six stems. The tracks varied from Celtic to African to Italian to James Bond with Miri often adding her Vocalese as she had on the magnificent Adiemus tracks, sounding like a real language, but meaning nothing.



I even bought some drums.

I'd sometimes get an email in the morning,

'I'm re-doing the second part of the third harmony, one note is flat!'

Miri is a REAL perfectionist with a magnificent voice and I love that she and Rod are our close friends.

That genius, Graham Preskett, added a tin whistle for the African track and autotuned it. Miri said it wasn't authentic so he sent the out of tune one. Perfect. Richard Harvey who co-owned the company contributed some more pipes to the album and I sent Midi files and parts to Pete Whitfield who, with his 'Real Strings' colleagues, added some terrific strings. I'd bought a bass for €100, a Yamaha nylon strung guitar also for €100, congas and bongos from a new on-line company called Thomann. They all sounded great and saved me quite a bit of money. I'm really proud of the album we made and one of the songs is one of the few I've written that I actually like! Unfortunately, I don't believe the income derived therefrom shows how good it is. Oh well!

Here's my favourite: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=img5g46cZZo>

We returned to Los Angeles late the following February, mainly so we could see Darcie's family, but we also stayed with Jane and celebrated our first anniversary with her, George and Shelli and my oldest friend, David Reilly and his lovely wife, Fran, again at Paradise Cove.



The view from Jane's Malibu house... our digs.

Through an old boyfriend, Darcie had found David and Fran a house for the winter, far from their usual Canadian snow and, as Darcie wanted to show me Laguna Beach where she used to live and loved the place, we arranged a lunch there with David, Fran and David Ions whose job I inherited at Noel Gay with Sharon, his wife. It was a lovely day spent with VERY old friends called David.

After our return to France, I received an email from Tessa Niles who was now living in South Africa.

'I'll be in England in September, can you get over so that we can meet up?'

I replied,

'You can count on it, but I'm sure there are a few other people who would love to see you.'

Well, apart from a lovely lunch, we had a get together that totaled 138 people that got known as The Jingle Ball. I booked the upstairs room at Kettner's, the iconic Soho eatery, and the lovely Keith Attack, ex-husband of Kate Robbins very kindly offered to put a band together adding, "There has to be music!"

Organising 150 musicians and singers was like herding cats, a nightmare and as I was about to lose the will to live, Stephanie de Sykes and Angela stepped in to help, with the latter creating a spreadsheet so we had in columns:

'Names of everyone asked'

'Reply... Yes or No'

'Paid'

They saved my sanity, but I still had to deal with the invitees.

"You still haven't paid."

"I'm sure I have!"

"You haven't!"

or

"I find I can't now come, can I have my money back."

"I'm afraid not."

"OK, I'll come."

Then we decided that with all the talent there we'd ask people to perform and some would be asked to help with backing vocals. Only one singer queried this.

"Well, tell me who gets to decide who sings what?"

"The person who has spent three months organising this and paid the £1,500 deposit, that's who!"

Darc and I booked two nights at Hazlett's hotel in Soho, which was lovely and, despite atrocious weather, the evening was a triumph. I'd managed to keep the price to £30 a head with drinks and nice finger food included.

We started in the bar with all my old competitors: Jonathon Hodge, David Dundas, Tony Satchell, Alison Wallace and Garry Bell, Maggie Rodford, Mike Connaris and Ronnie Bond and then met all the wonderful singers and musicians who came. It was just a shame we couldn't fit in those who asked to join after we'd reached our limit.

Tony Burrows sang his (Edison Lighthouse) No1 hit, *Love Grows Where My Rosemary Goes*; Roger Greenaway sang his composition, *I'd Like To Teach The World To Sing* while playing Ukelele; David Dundas performed his *Jeans On* and Kate Robbins sang various Bond themes as Victoria Wood. Then Zoe Nicolas and Susie Webb (The Fabba Girls) in full contume performed a couple of numbers before the others sang their allotted songs and it all then became a mammoth Jam.

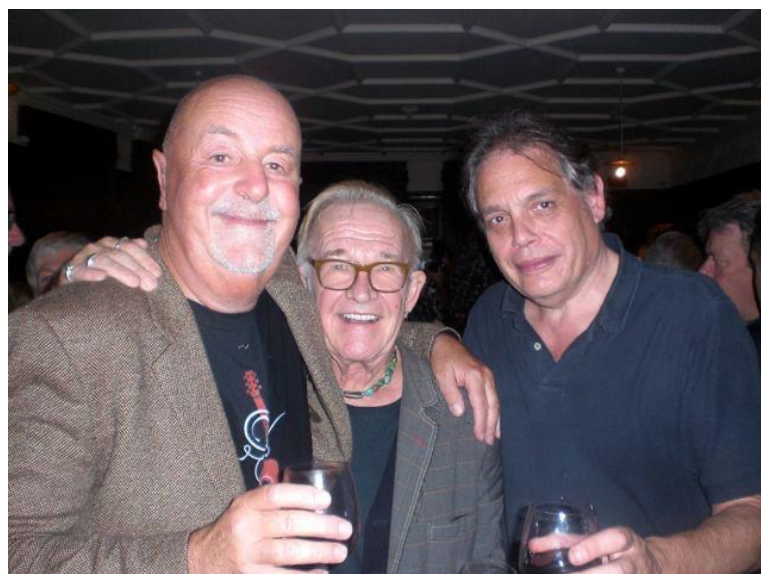
It was an unforgettable evening and, as Ronnie Bond said before the end, "I've never seen so much talent in one room."



Keith Airey with Annie Skates, Sarah Fearnley and Tessa Niles on 'Hey Joe'.



*8 of the 'Family of Mingles...
Sharon, me, Dani, Steve, Lisa, Chuck, Elton and Sarah. I think Don was away.*



With Ronnie Bond and David Stark.

We returned home via Paris in order to see our lawyer who was still fighting DDB on our Action Man case. Darcie wasn't fancying going through the tunnel on Eurostar and during the journey pleaded,

"You will let me know when we're in the tunnel, won't you?"

"We've already been through it and are in France."

It was unusually hot in Paris and the city looked gorgeous, but we only stayed one night and took the TGV back to Nîmes the following lunchtime after a disappointing dinner at Brasserie Julien, one of my favourites. As for the service, anyone who has seen 'Emily In Paris' will understand. As we sat in the First Class carriage on the TGV during the 713 km journey, I thought, at a cost of 30 Euros; how different this was from the UK.

We applied and received Darcie's resident's card. It was for ten years. A result!

Chris and I sold our shares in Angell as did Elton. Nick wanted his own shop and that was fine. Unfortunately for me, my share value amounted to less than the valuation at the time of my divorce. Such is life. Sadly, a few years later, Nick was forced to close the shop. It's so hard to compete with home studios these days.



My very favourite place. The Café de France in Goudargues for my morning coffee.

Lesley Davies had been offered a good job at Warner TV and that brought work for me. What a great friend and client... she actually calls me 'Dad'!

Some Warner series were being sold to new territories and licencing the music for those would be prohibitively expensive so I, with Toby Jarvis, would recreate various cues and often the theme. Sometimes we only had a copy of episodes and had to try to hear what was being played while the track was fighting the dialogue and sound effects. We often had to 'guess' what followed.

We worked on *The Mentalist*, *Cold Case* and *Gossip Girl*. For this last one, the theme included the voice of a young girl whispering on the phone. In order to be able to send a guide, I persuaded Darcie to record this for me and despite my bossiness, we got a good take. I put her voice through telephone equalization and took it up two semitones to make Darc sound younger. Lesley liked it so I called her.

"Shall I get Lynda (Hayes) to record the master now?"

"No it sounds great as it is!"

Hurrah, not only a fee for me, but one for Darcie that would pay for a Premium Economy flight back to San Diego to see her parents. These sums from Warners helped us a great deal after the Miss Take robbery. Thank you, Lesley!

On the minus side, Lesley told me that a documentary was about to air about abuse perpetrated by Jimmy Savile. The programme caused tidal waves that immediately put an end to my best pension plan. The end theme had featured so often on TV commercials over the years and I'd just recorded an identical backing track to the TV version so that we wouldn't have to use the old one and Lynda and her husband, Steve, could easily do new vocals to fit the ad. I had quoted on two commercials and immediately heard that they were now not going ahead and one that had been running was being taken off air; the account executive called.

"The client wants his money back."

"I'm sorry, he's been running it successfully for ten months and I didn't choose for this to happen."

"We'll sue!"

"OK, well luck with that!"

Bye Bye pension: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Ow4nkTgUUE>

I was also looking at a way to create songs that could actually bring in a return, something that was getting increasingly rare. We wanted to go to Nashville again, but the expense of an hotel and hire car would make a trip of the necessary length pretty expensive. Air B'n'B didn't exist then.

I wondered about a house swap and so put a post on facebook asking if anyone of my friends in Nashville fancied a trip to Provence in February. I did explain that, although that time of year can be cold, often it's sunny and quite warm. I did get a few responses, one from Charlie Morgan, that great drummer, thinking that a friend might be interested.

She was interested and was called Calina Burns and we made arrangements. Calina arrived in late February and we picked her up and she stayed a couple of days so we could show her around and introduce her to neighbours, two of whom have a son who offered to drive her back to the airport and show her around if she wished. Until then there had not really been any real winter, but the day we left it was cold. We took the train to Geneva where we spent the night with Martyn and David. When we went out to dinner it was -5 degrees. Leaving in the morning, it was -7° and on changing planes in Zurich, it was -12°.

Miami was a lot warmer. We spent a couple of days in Naples with Ricki Steve and then some more time in Orlando with Miriam Stockley and husband, Rod before flying into Nashville and taking a cab to Calina's house in Brentwood, south of the City. The house was about the size of three of ours.

The great thing is with this type of house swap, we also exchanged cars and dogs although Calina's mutt was a lot less high maintenance than ours, Chelsea (I call her Growler), that Darcie had insisted on acquiring.



A young Growler (Puppy in my pocket).

I had hit on an embryo of an idea that I hoped would be very successful: an album performed and co-written by women who would choose the topic they wanted to sing about. Lorna Flowers had arranged quite a lot of writing sessions at the house where there was a guitar and a grand piano. Three songs for the album came out of these days plus several more songs and one written with the ultra-talented Bill White and Englishman David Bradley on Stephen Trombley's idea of a song about making America great again. This one turned out with huge potential, but we know what happened with that slogan so we hid it away.



Bill White, me and David Bradley in Calina's kitchen.

One night at a songwriters' round, Lorna Flowers introduced us to Alan O'Day who just done a really entertaining set. Alan had enjoyed a No 1 US hit with his song *Undercover Angel* and wrote *Angie Baby* for Helen Reddy amongst other great songs. We bumped into him and his wife, Yuka at another event and we talked at length, really hit it off and he asked me if I was interested in writing together. Not only was I interested, but had the perfect project.

The previous month at MIDEM, producer, Don Reedman, had asked me if I had a song for Michael Crawford whom he would again be recording. I said I might, but that I'd known Michael fairly well and could write something biographical for him. I thought he'd go for that if the song was strong enough and so did Don and this was the song I proposed that Alan and I should write.

The first few hours at their house, we discussed Michael, the style and kicked around a few lyrics and I quickly understood that Alan was not only a lovely man, but also an absolute perfectionist and we spent three days working on lyrics and melody before I had to leave. This was so different from the 'three-in-a-day' writing sessions that are the norm in Nashville and far more my style. *Don't Throw It All Away* had taken Gary and me six months before we had a chorus we liked. Alan and I kept writing and honing the song after I got home and I recorded a track and he sang it. I still think it was ideal, but, sadly, I don't think Michael ever got to hear it and Alan, sadly, passed away a couple of years later. I really liked and admired him.

If you happen to know Michael!...



Darcie and the lovely Alan O'Day in front of one of Alan's prized juke boxes.

Didn't It Turn Out Well: <https://soundcloud.com/soul-music-ltd/didnt-it-turn-out-well>

Apart from writing songs, we left having made some new friends, many of whom became great friends and with whom I've since worked. Miri, Rod and Darcie's old friend with whom she lost contact (there was a song in there too) and her husband came to stay and we heard some great music. Calina enjoyed her stay in Provence, but endured the coldest weather in years, before the sun came out and warm days returned.

Thanks to Lorna, I had met and written with a lot of people on this trip. I had a great session with Eddie Heinzelman and probably never wrote a note, but put the world to right. Until writing with Alan, many of the songs were becoming formulaic. I was writing one morning in a studio with the lady owner and a guy who worked at the local Hard Rock Café. They knew each other well and any ideas I threw in seemed to be pretty much ignored. The thing was close to finition when I suggested,

"Look guys, I really don't think I'm adding much here."

They looked surprised.

"Why, don't you like it?"

"Of course I do, I've written it three times this week already!"

But in true Nashville fashion, you 'add a word, get a third'. Several other times I thought we'd hit on something good, when my co-writer would suddenly say,

"Sorry, I have to go to my next session."

My take on it is that some people write 10-12 songs a week and, after several months, decide which to demo... if any.

So I came up with this one: <https://youtu.be/nPxeSpiX19k>

I played this once at the Millenium Maxwell house during a later Nashville trip. The reaction from the other writers there was mixed as you might imagine.

On the Southwest flight to LA, a guy sat next to Darcie on the aisle. He started to write out Country charts which is the equivalent of our chord charts, but with numbers in stead of letters so, if you're in Cmajor, C is 1, F is 4, Ami is 6mi and so on. This started when artistes, Elvis in particular, wanted the key changed during a session. The numbers system allowed the musicians to change key without charts needing to be re-written and all the numbers are appropriate to any key.

I asked the guy if he could give me a little more detail on this system and it turned out he was on his way to a big Festival in California where he would be playing bass for a lot of big acts. We exchanged numbers and have become good friend; I introduced him to Charlie Morgan by booking both on a remote session and they're now buddies also. John Howard is a great and talented guy.

After a few days with Jane, we returned to France, looking forward to the spring.

I got stuck into my new project that would be called Band Of Sisters. I contacted my mega talented lady friends, all of whom wanted to be involved. After all these years, getting sudden inspiration was in no way easy, but when I had a serious project, that got the creative juices flowing. Apart from the album being unusual, I figured that as well as building a following for the project, each artist would have their own existing supporters and this, put together, would create a huge potential audience. So for months I'd be exchanging ideas with the girls and starting the recording process here at home.

Songs were co-written with Tessa Niles, Miriam Stockley, Lynda Hayes, PP Arnold and one I'd written solo for Leigh Matty. I wrote one with Mim Grey a talented lady recommended by Ron McCreight plus one I wrote for newcomer Kim Alvord, a very pretty girl brought to me by Steve Colyer and one by Bridie Shine the very young daughter of my friend, Lesley Ann Jones. Bridie, still at school, did a great job on my song about bullying.

When I asked the ladies for the thing they'd most like to sing about, several answered, "Shoes!" and I wrote a song called *Shoes*, but it didn't make the cut. Alissa Moreno, Alison Joy Williams, Jacqui Michaels and the amazing Angela Kaset all from Nashville accounted for 5 more songs on 'Issues' by 'The Band of Sisters'.

I started every recording here bar one that Gareth Hicklin started with Mim Grey and I finished them all here, playing everything on the basic tracks and then replacing a lot with better musicians so ending up with 8 guitarists, 5 bass players, 4 drummers and various other string, brass, mandolin and other top session players in England, Los Angeles and Nashville. Pete Whitfield again recorded the strings in Manchester. Everything he does sounds great.

One day, a guy called Steve Hampton got in touch through facebook. He'd been in that group, Last Orders, 'discovered' by Elton having submitted a tape and had laid down several tracks with his band that Elton co-produced with Andy Hill. Steve was, and is, a great guitarist and contributed to Stevie Lange's song along with better-known guys, Ray Russell, and Jamie Moses. Stevie's song was mixed by her husband. In Nashville I'd met a lovely lady called Beth Hooker and her other half, Harry Stinson, drummer with Marty Stuart's Fabulous Superlatives who was delighted to play on our PP Arnold track and he and Beth added great harmonies. I was delighted to have them on the album. Steve Hampton couldn't believe that he was playing on the same album as Harry, his favourite drummer.

The musical styles on the songs varied greatly, just tied together by female artistes and subjects dear to women: loneliness, looks, regrets, best friends and even addiction that Stevie Lange really ripped up.



Alison Joy Williams was the only singer to add her vocals here at my place in France.

Andy Spence did some terrific artwork and Ron McCreight introduced me to Colin Peter at RightTrack distribution with whom I arranged a pressing and distribution deal. Ron would promote the album and two singles to radio and suggested I use Dave Clarke for press, which I did



Guitarist, Ray Russell, called and suggested we should do some gigs around London. I'd never considered the live aspect of Band of Sisters and wondered how it could work. He explained he'd put a great band together and the singers who wanted to perform. I said I'd give it some thought.

I didn't think anyone would be interested in just hearing the new material so suggested the ladies should choose other songs they wanted to sing. As Ron called to say that a showcase at the BBC Club would really help promote the album, it was decided that on the evening of October 8th they'd perform at the BBC Club and then do two gigs at the Pheasantry in the King's Road, Chelsea that we'd been offered on the following Friday and Saturday.

Ray said he thought we needed a second guitarist and, to save money, could I do it? I haven't played live in front of 20 people for 40 years.

"I guess I can do that." I lied.

I persuaded enough of the ladies to take part to create a fine evening and they included Stevie Lange, PP Arnold who came over from Spain, Mandy Bell who would sort out the vocals, Monica Ward and two of the others who shall remain nameless at the moment. Lynda would join us on the Saturday. Don agreed to play 2nd keyboard for a vat of rosé and he enlisted the genius that is Graham Preskett to play on a song or two.

Ray booked the top guys and Mandy started rehearsing the ladies who would be required to do harmonies and backing vocals. Alison Joy Williams would come over for the events and would get up for a song or two and Virginia Henning-Mills, a friend and great supporter would come with her husband for the shows that quickly sold out. Ray's plan had come together well.

We managed to get a great deal at a new hotel in Carlisle Street, right in the middle of Soho. Martyn and David and Geoff Hall were joining us as they had invested in the project.

A few days before we left for London, one of the singers called.

"I'm afraid I can't do the Friday, I have a chance on being on The Voice."

"What???? You're booked!"

"I know, but I've worked with Tom Jones, I know he'll recognise my voice."

"If you can't do the Friday, there's no point you doing the Saturday."

"OK."

That's someone I'll never work with again. She's lovely and super talented, but you don't do that to me twice.

Mandy suggested Gina Foster who agreed and took over, but, of course, I had to pay her. She had a lot of harmonies to learn. Still, she was magnificent.

Ray had booked a big rehearsal space and arranged for Kevin Townend to write us parts for all the songs. We had just one full day. When we turned up on the Monday morning at the Bermondsey rehearsal space, no one was there. I greeted the guys outside. We had Steve Pearce and Trevor Barry for bass duties, Trevor doing the BBC showcase and Steve doing the Pheasantry as neither was free for all three evenings. Ralph Salmins was on drums, Geoff Castle on piano, plus Don and Graham. Quite a band of A Listers. And me. When we got into the room, nothing was set up and it took an age to do so. Not impressive... the space... the musicians certainly were.

As the guys were setting up, I got a call from the other unnamed singer's manager.

"I'm sorry she's not well, she's at the doctors."

"WHAT!!!!...we have ONE day's rehearsal."

"I'll call you back."

He did.

"Errr... she's been told to rest, I can send you a doctor's certificate."

"Fuck a doctor's certificate... I might accept a death certificate, but a doctor's certificate... no way!"

But the precious, little thing was 'too unwell' to come, which I don't believe for a moment; Mandy thought she just found the harmonies too difficult. I knew that any of my old brigade of pros would come from their death beds if they'd made a commitment. Things had sure changed. They've got worse since. As it happened, later that morning, Alison Joy Williams came to say 'Hi' and stood in having never heard some of the songs and never having been a back up singer. She was a real trooper and saved the day. So the day went pretty well and Darcie and the boys had discovered a great Vietnamese restaurant in Soho.

The following day, Ray and I played live for Pat (PP) on the Robert Elms Show on Radio London. I enjoyed that a lot. She joined our hotel group plus Angela Allen and boyfriend for dinner at the Soho House.



I asked Lynda Hayes to replace drop out No1 at the BBC and asked if she'd MD it as she's hilariously funny. She agreed to, but didn't think she'd remember all the lyrics to her song. It's pretty wordy.

"If you don't, just make them up."

The wonderful Pete Whitfield volunteered to come down and to play the fiddle lines from the songs and that made a big difference.

I went to the BBC Club to meet Ron, Dave Clarke and the sound guy who turned out to be totally calm, efficient and talented. Allen Varnfield, a very good, young drummer I'd used on a couple of tracks arrived shortly after that with his father. He was so excited about the event that he'd arrived that early. He went off for a snack. I'd invited everyone who'd sung or played on the album plus a few close mates and Ron, Colin and Dave had invited press and radio people. The new BBC Club was more like a works canteen as opposed to the elegant, old version, but was close to Radios1, 2 and Radio London and was fine once it filled up. Obviously drink and finger food were free to guests who seemed to make the most of it. It was rammed.

Ron was the one who would call for the start and Mandy kicked off with *Someone Like Me*, which she sang brilliantly. Everyone was great. Lynda excelled and sang her song, *Too Late Now* that is about all her past loves who didn't match up to her expectations so she was now alone. Towards the end of each verse about a certain lover she held up a photo... the first being Ralph that brought a roar of laughter. Next time around Trevor was the victim, then Ray and finally to the lyrics, 'He was getting heavy and his hair was thin; other women never looked at him', she held up a picture of me. That did it!!! But even more clever was that Lynda had her lyrics written on the back of the photographs.

Lastly, PP came on and knocked them out with our composition, *Beautiful Song*, but Ron had asked that she finish with *The First Cut Is The Deepest* the smash that Cat Stevens had written for her. What a great way to finish. Our performance was short and sweet.

The first person to come up to talk to me was Paul Rogers, head of Radio2.

"That was brilliant; everyone else I've seen here takes these things so seriously; it was great to see some light-hearted fun!"

Ron confirmed that, in his opinion, it was a great success.

I then circulated talking to everyone I could and it was great to see musicians who didn't know each other chatting away like old friends. Roger Goodgroves was the official photographer and his photos were top notch as were those taken by Steve Hampton's wife Jax. Darcie and I really bonded with Steve and Jax immediately.



Photos from a fine evening. From top left (excluding me) Graham Preskett. Lynda Hayes. Miriam Stockley, Lynda Hayes and PP Arnold. Steve Hampton. Full group, Bridie Rose, Mandy Bell, Lynda Hayes, PP Arnold, Mim Grey, Alison Joy Williams, Monica Ward. Monica Ward. PP Arnold and Ray Russell.

Having kicked out the usual suspects who hung on until the end: DJ Adrian Juste and ex Radio 2 man, Bill Bebb, just Geoff, Darcie and I were left and we walked back to the hotel. Darcie was tired, but I hadn't drunk or eaten anything and was starving and so was Geoff, but we struggled to find anywhere still open until I remembered that the Soho Hotel stayed open late so we got a table there and ordered grouse. I hadn't eaten one in years. Geoff never had. What a treat, it was superb with an Australian red and two grappe di Sassacaia. Overall a great day!

The next morning I thought I would show Geoff some of my old Soho haunts so we set off for breakfast at the Star Café, but it was no more because of the Crossrail building work so off to another old favourite, The Carlton Café that had been turned into a PataNegra ham shop. What the hell had happened to Soho?

Ray had told me that a piano stood on the stage at the Pheasantry that's a part of the Pizza Express chain, but it could be moved if I paid £100 and we needed to as we would be 7 musicians and quite a few singers. I agreed. On the Friday afternoon I took a London Taxi in pouring rain to the venue.

"What are you doing there, mate?"

I told him.

"You wanna get on that Robert Elms Show on Radio London, that'll really help, mate. I listen every day."

"We were on it on Wednesday."

"Oh, I didn't hear it on Wednesday."

When I went in, the piano was still on the stage. I asked for the manager who turned out to be a real dick. It took over an hour to move it and we were just sitting about waiting for a sound check. Eventually, it had gone and we started setting up. Alison's husband came in to help.

"You can't come in here."

"I'm here to help my wife as you've caused everything to run late and please take your hands off me!"

Once Mr Dickhead had done so and Dennis had gone to the stage to help, Alison confronted him,

"You're lucky; my husband has been in the army all his life and you could have been dead before you hit the floor."

Love it!

He gave us no more trouble, but by the time we started the soundcheck people were already coming in to eat!

We had placed Don and Graham on the mezzanine and Don would play the fiddle lines of album songs on keyboard and Graham on the violin. They sounded great and every single person played and sang brilliantly. I can't really include myself with that ensemble. I had been concerned about The Stylistics *You Are Everything* as there are so many modulations that, if you take your eye off the part for a second, you're lost. For the first time I got through it perfectly, then noticed the red light on my guitar. I'd tuned it before the song and that mutes the guitar... my epic performance hadn't been heard.

The evening was a huge success and even the really excellent sound guy enthused, "We haven't had an evening like that down here for years!"

The following night might have been even better.

I think you'll get the best idea of the gigs from here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYN-zm8lrWA>

I had a ball as you'll see from the link and lots of friends came to the BBC and/or the gigs.

Back home I had some more to do for Lesley and Warners, which helped with the income.

Ray and Mandy organised another show at the Half Moon in Putney that I didn't attend and the second single *Everywhere I Go* by the lovely (in every way) Leigh Matty was released.

Everywhere I go: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIE-wkZUI24>

Charlie Morgan, 13 year's Elton John's drummer, a mate and a good guy had come to the Band of Sisters gig on the Saturday and thought the concept would work in the US. I actually thought it could work anywhere with groups of talented ladies going out under that moniker. Charlie managed to get 3rd and Lindsley booked in Nashville. It was the ideal venue and big enough to cover our costs. Mandy, Ray and I would go over and Charlie would source musicians and some singers; we already had 'Sisters', Alison, Angela Kaset and Alissa Moreno based there and Miri would come up from Orlando.

Several things made the event tricky: 3rd and Lindslay suddenly notified us that they had taken a booking for a live broadcast and we'd have to take the 6pm slot where no door fee was applicable; the entrance would be free.

I, outraged, wrote to ask them if the food and drink bought by the people who had turned up to see the band would also be free. I got no answer. Poor Charlie, his girlfriend, Melanie, and friend Stephen Trombley started looking for alternatives. Stephen eventually came up with two smaller places and suggested splitting the gig, the main one being on Wednesday 18th February at the Douglas Corner Café and the other at the fooBar the day before with us backing Stephen as the opening act. It wasn't ideal, but could work. I arranged a house swap with a lady called Juliana Ericson who'd wanted to do so the first time, but we'd gone for Calina's place.

One day I heard Darcie ask her parents if they wanted to join us for her mother's birthday. I pointed out after the call that this was a business trip and I didn't need diversions, but not only that, Darcie's two sisters, a husband and three aunts and partners invited themselves. I'll say no more.

We, as usual, stayed with Jane in LA and visited friends. Don and Annie were there also and, one day, Don said,

"Come and meet someone,"

Jane and James had been producing a documentary on Glen Campbell and the sad progression of his Alzheimer's, some of which we'd seen and the lady to whom Don introduced us was Glen's daughter, Ashley. She was lovely and I liked her especially the day she invited us onto the deck as she was making Bloody Marys. They were so good, I knew we'd be friends.



The first meeting.

We flew into Nashville from LA and Charlie picked us up and took us to the house that was a lot smaller than Calina's but very cosy and with two great cats. A friend had told us about a 'not to be missed' gig at Brown's Diner. I called.

"Do we need to book?"

"I don't think so."

We got there and walked through a small, crappy bar to a crappier dining area with unspeakable food. Music brought us back to the bar where there were four patrons and a drummer with the smallest kit I'd seen, no tom toms; a tiny lady of a certain age in a hat playing a Steinberger bass, a singer/sax player and Andy Reiss, only one of the best guitarists in Nashville who played with my favourites, The Time Jumpers, but was now not playing Southwest Swing, but more like Larry Carlton. They were brilliant and without Charlie and us they would have received about ten bucks in the tip jar. There is great music everywhere in Nashville. People just don't appreciate it enough

The following day, I got a call from Deb, Jane's assistant, "You left some underwear in the dryer, but it's OK, I gave it to Ashley to take to Nashville."

How embarrassing!

I called Ashley who said to come right over. We did go over to this lovely house with Glen being there and he was so sweet, but already very confused and we spent some time chatting to them... and I picked up my underpants.

"Thanks Ashley, if you're ever in southern France, do come to stay."

Next we picked up Darcie's parents at the airport. They both arrived in wheelchairs and I was supposed to go back for Ray and Mandy, but queues at Washington International meant they missed their flight.

The Sunday was a nightmare of criss-crossing Nashville, Picking up Ray and Mandy and taking them to their apartment; picking up Charlie's girlfriend as Charlie's flight had been delayed and ferrying Darcie's relatives around.

However crummy the rehearsal room was in London; the one in Nashville was the opposite, roomy with a huge stage, everything ready for us, our own, individual monitoring... total efficiency. Charlie had booked Mark Prentice, a very talented Grammy winner to play bass on one night as it turned out John Howard couldn't do the Tuesday show. With John present Mark would play keyboards; without him, I would. (Help!!!) Mark plays everything well. It was great to see John again and we all gelled with Ray acting again as MD. For lunch, there is only really one option close by a specialist burger place that was very good. The lovely ladies working there asked what we were doing and we invited them to the show free of charge.

"Oh, I'm not sure how we'd feel or go down over there" said one.

They didn't come and I took it their colour made them feel uncomfortable. How sad



Great rehearsal space.

Charlie had also booked Mark's wife, Michelle, and her daughter, Gabrielle Caldwell, to do BV's and a couple of their chosen numbers. They joined in the afternoon. What a lovely and talented family.

That evening I took Ray and Mandy to see The Time Jumpers who'd moved from the Station Inn to 3rd and Lindsley. I didn't mention the gig cancellation. About 12 of Darcie's relatives joined us!!!

The fooBar was a bit of a shithole. You reach the venue by the way of a smoky bar so you'd stink when you got there. Trombley who'd acquired two gorgeous acoustic guitars and an amp for us for the shows opened with a few of his songs. We followed with a truncated set. Stephen had a friend, Jim Hoke, who was a talented guy join us. He played sax really well, but played through everything so I had to suggest that he didn't join us the following night.

Stephen had also introduced us to Collen Lloy a lovely singer and real hoot whom we asked to join us for a song on the Wednesday, which was a great show. Colleen sang *Me and Bobby McGee*, Alissa Moreno and Angela Kaset chose to simply accompany themselves, Alissa singing *Fragile* from the album and Angela singing her huge hit *Something In Red* and our *Hymn to Her* which actually brought tears to people's eyes, such was the strength of her performance. Miri decided not to do her album song but *When Will I Be Loved* as a tribute to Phil Everly who'd just died. We winged it. A friend of Charlie's, Jonelle Mosser, came up and did a Joplin song. She's just like Joplin... a real pistol; Goose Gossett, Alison's guitarist and John Reno, Mark and Michelle's sixteen year-old both played guitar as did Gary Talley of Box Tops fame and it was a fine, pretty impromptu evening. The owner of Douglas Corner mixed the sound and really knew what he was doing. Sadly, since then, he has died and the place has closed down. Rumour has it that another club will take its place.

The following day, Darcie's parents left and we went (at last) to the Bluebird to hear Collen and she invited us up (against the rules) to perform Mandy's album song. That's one to knock off the bucket list.

The next evening, our last, Ray, Mandy, Darcie and I of us joined Colleen at a songwriters' round at the Commodore Grill in the Vanderbilt Holiday Inn. I think we outnumbered the audience and then watched the next rounds until a tornado warning was sounded and we were all hounded into the dining room, which was tornado proof... we hoped. All except Mandy who decided it would be fun to go outside and watch... not a great idea.

It was an enjoyable, if tough trip and I was happy to be home via Newark and London.

Warner Brothers had decided to licence some of their hit series to be made in other countries and this would involve new music in some cases and, in a few, new themes as the existing ones would be prohibitively expensive. This meant another challenge... not that doing something new was a problem for me, but Warner Bros would not pass anything unless their musicologist cleared it and this person was the same musicologist who later found for the Marvin Gaye family in the Blurred Lines case.

No word from the original could exist in my new version; no two notes from the original could exist together, using the same notes from a chord was rejected and each of them took many attempts, but Judith Finnell was a nice lady and eventually I always got there, but, boy, what a process! I finished up (re)doing *Nip Tuck*, *Two Broke Girls* and *OC*. For the last, I asked the young John Reno Prentice to play guitar and sing, which he did really well and was happy with the generous fee. This theme, like the original was Indy Rock and I was adding drums. Not being a real drummer I was struggling with a snare sound and getting right an appropriate, frenetic fill. Eventually by using my cheapest mic that I use to make things sound old, I got my snare sound and in exasperation I thrashed round my kit in anger and got the ideal drum fill!!!

In the summer, Ray Russell and his lovely wife, Sally came over. We really love those two very special people. We also invited a facebook friend, which is kind of a risk. I knew she was taking a trip from her home in Australia to London so invited her here for a few days. She was also staying with a facebook friend in London and that turned out to be a disaster as the 'friend's' flat turned out to be a disaster and the hostess, completely unstable and, frankly, toxic. Wendy Dalchow's trip here was fun although we argue all the time, but she has returned and we love her.

One day, surprise email arrived from our new friend, Ashley Campbell. Her mother had never left Glen's side since his Alzheimer's had been diagnosed and since Glen had been in a local facility, she'd visited every day, but Ashley thought her mother needed a break. She wondered, if they spent a couple of days in Paris, could they come and stay here about six days? We were quite moved that they'd come here rather than to other friends or relatives.

We had a really lovely time with Kim and Ashley and visited quite a few of the lovely towns in the area. Kim has returned here and Ashley comes three or four times a year. I don't know why she likes hanging around with old people, but we love having her here and I refer to her as 'The daughter I never wanted'.



Another day, I received an email from my old mate from Pye days, Trevor Eyles. I saw Trevor every MIDEM in Cannes and something often came out of it (apart from our record deal). One year Trevor asked me about Shades the Crown Paint music... he thought it would be great for a superb string quartet he managed called Stringfever... they're still wonderful... and could the tune carry a lyric?

"What about England?"

The soccer World Cup was coming up and Stringfever duly recorded a single of England; Jeff Chegwin wrote the rest of the lyrics and Stuart Penred recorded the vocals. He's a great singer, but it was really a bit too operatic.

Trevor and his filmmaker friend and sometime drummer, Jon Diamond, also looked after a terrific girl singer called Bianca Nicolas. Bianca suffered from Cystic Fibrosis, that most horrible of illnesses. She'd had a very good single out produced by ex-Angell sound engineer, Bill Gaultier and I'd asked her to sing a version of my Tsunami song. Singing helped her condition so, wherever possible Trevor and John always tried to get Bianca involved on projects.

I already had a fun track prepared for Stringfever and I thought it would be a hoot to have Stephen Fry do the vocal, but Lorraine Hamilton, Stephen's manager and ex-partner of Richard Armitage, made it clear,

"Stephen can't sing, not at all, can't hold a note, he's the worst!"

I was sitting on the track when I received Trevor's email.

'Bianca needs a bit of a lift, do you have anything for her?'

Later that morning, I emailed Trevor back.

'What about the Stringfever track?'

Trevor played what we had to Bianca who loved it even though my vocal was on it.

Having done some work on it, I emailed Trev again.

'Would Bianca consider being part of a duo for that song?'

She would and I worked on it some more. I had become aware of Electro Swing through a great French group called Caravan Palace who mixed Jazz Manouche with electro rhythms. As I'd done some work with Menton-based Adrian Bax White, an ex touring drummer and hooligan I'd met through an introduction from my German Publisher, Adrian Facklam Wolf (what is it with the Adrians,

do they all have double barrelled names?) I sent the track to him as he was far stronger on modern production than me. He transformed the song to real Electro-Swing and it sounded great. Now we needed a male singer and Bianca to add their voices.

The lyric idea was a man singing to his wife/girlfriend who's on a 'vacation' and the wife/girlfriend replying to her man... left at home and slightly jealous.

Ashley Slater, a trombone player who is also a singer and producer had an Electro Swing duo with his wife and I wondered if he'd consider being the other half of our duo and was quite surprised that he accepted. At about the same time I read in David Stark's Songlink online newsletter that the BBC were taking submissions for the *Eurovision Song Contest*. I wondered! I thought we really had nothing to lose and the song was really unusual so why not?

I suggested to all parties that our track, *Still In Love With You* might be just different enough to make it worth entering. Everyone agreed that we should; Adrian edited the song down to under three minutes and Jon Diamond made a really good video of Ashley and Bianca in the studio recording it live as was required by the BBC. We entered through Eddie Levy's Chelsea music and waited. Eddie, whom I'd known since going to watch Chelsea as a boy, thought we had a chance, as did Ron and Darcie. I didn't.

In the October, Ashley Slater featured on *Britain has Talent* with his wife who was much younger. They were good, but Simon Cowell opined that he thought that the wife was really talented and should go through to the next round, but that Ashley was 'Too old and should maybe get a job out of the business' without having any idea how all-round talented Ashley is being a trombone/trumpet player, singer, composer and arranger. His wife, though far less talented surprisingly, agreed to continue on her own. Ashley called a few days later.

"I'm sorry, but I just got trashed by Cowell for being so much older than my wife and Bianca's even younger; I can't go through that again."

"But the song is about a guy with a younger wife."

"WE know that, but I won't risk another humiliation."

I understood and so sought a possible replacement and as we were putting out the song anyway I thought we should be making a video for the single. Film maker, Goatus Foot (yes really) suggested a singer called Alex Larke who fronted a Rolling Stones tribute band and seemed ideal. We spoke and he agreed to step in.

Thinking about the lyric, I wondered about shooting the (very low budget) video on the Cote d'Azur. I thought that would really give Bianca a lift. I'd emailed Goatus about the video; then emailed again.

'If we pay your hotel and flight, would you be prepared to shoot the video in the south of France?'

'Fuck, yes.'

The Côte d'Azur location for the video would feature only Bianca, though; the poor guy (Alex) being left behind in England to shoot his part later.

So, with a contribution from Trevor and Jon, we booked the guys' flights to Nice and a hotel in Menton.

The day after Darcie's birthday in November, we drove to Cannes where I'd booked a room at the lovely Gray D'Albion Hotel at a silly rate. I guess not many people visit Cannes in November. While I was 'in the bathroom' I checked my emails and there was one from a BBC producer saying our song was on the short list for Eurovision. This would be good news for the guys the next day. We had dinner and then a brandy outside Le Voilier on the Croisette at nearly midnight IN LATE NOVEMBER. How lovely.

The next morning we drove to Nice airport and met Goatus, Bianca and her fiancée, Gearoid who knew how to take good care of her. We drove along the coast and stopped in Villefranche, which is gorgeous, for coffee and on to Menton. Adrian took the guys to various locations, we all had dinner together and the following morning, they shot on a yacht that Adrian had managed to purloin. Bianca looked very glamorous. We had lunch on Adrian and Stephanie's terrace overlooking the sea on a glorious, sunny day. Later, we dropped off the Britain based trio and headed home.

In January, I received an email asking me to call a number at the BBC. I called and spoke to two people over their speakerphone: Eurovision producer, Helen Ridell and Head of Special Events, Guy Freeman. I was told our song was in the last three or four... good news. I had to come clean about Ashley and said his replacement, Alex Larke, was younger and very talented.

"Do you know him well, have you worked together?"

I lied! I also convinced them that the two of them had done enough work to be perfectly able to perform in front of two hundred million people.

Again, I'd lied, but Bianca had performed to big audiences, one with members the royal family having attended.

Obviously, Helen and Guy wanted to hear Alex so I got him to record his part and then asked him to make some changes. Helen and Guy were fairly happy, but requested a new vocal direction from Alex, which he achieved and it was a lot better. To be fair, over the next weeks Helen and Guy asked for several changes, all of which improved the song and the last request for backing vocals finished the thing off perfectly. Adrian and his friend Colette Marx-Nielsen recorded Adrian's repeated line 'Everybody Dance' in about ten minutes.

By the end of February, Alex and Bianca had presented themselves to Helen and Guy and I had received the great news that our song would be the year's *Eurovision* entry AS LONG AS word didn't get out, in which case the 2nd ranked song from the 400 entries would replace it. Everyone was delighted, especially Alex, Bianca and Darcie.

The duet didn't have a name, but Alex's suggestion of Electro Velvet was accepted and Adrian and I were invited to London (at our expense, of course) to be present at part of the video shoot at the Cafe de Paris.

We met up at our hotel, the St Giles, and the following day set off for the shoot. I led Adrian to the Café Royal in error, but we eventually bowled up at the less salubrious Café de Paris that I hadn't visited in decades. We couldn't believe our eyes; the cast and crew must have numbered 100.

"What the hell must this cost?"

I couldn't begin to give Adrian an answer, but meeting Guy and Helen, Guy maintained that it would all be recouped within seconds of announcing the *Eurovision* Entry via the BBC red button.

After a take, Bianca and Alex came over and hugged us, Alex pretending we were old friends.

We went on to lunch in Soho with pals including David Stark who'd put out the *Eurovision* notification, Ron, Steve Pearce and Steve Elson, but couldn't say a word about being in the *Eurovision* finals.

We then went for a drink with Tommy Blaize and singer Annie Skates for whom I'd brought over a nice sized truffle that caught the attention of a Rasta gentleman who seemed impressed.

"That smells like good shit; got any for sale?"

Back at the hotel, we were buzzing about the video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6r1tUhl1cQ>

From this point, we had instrument stems to send, unethical contracts from Universal Music to sign... "Don't sign and you're out!"... Alex and Bianca received media coaching and were told to absolutely NOT look at comments on social media. Adrian and I got the impression that our creative input had ended and we had no idea of the staging or costume ideas that would happen. Our duo was booked as special guests at a 50th Year *Eurovision* concert in Hammersmith, but we weren't invited. Alex and Bianca were also expected to perform at various pre-Eurovision parties around Europe while we, without a record deal were pretty much obliged to release through our Band of Sisters label. Andy Spence did some terrific artwork as usual in conjunction with the BBC and Ron, once more, would promote the record... yes, an actual CD.



Before the announcement was even made, I told Darcie,

"I've pretty much had it with this now... bored!"

The final blow was receiving an invitation to the two performances in the arena in Vienna, but not anything else. When I questioned Helen about it she replied, "The thing is that Gearoid will be there to help Bianca and we'll need the hair and make up ladies in the Green Room in case they win."

"So the make up lady is more important than the composers?" wailed Darcie.

I contacted my good friend in Norway, Philip Kruse who, as an artist, writer and publisher had taken part in many, many contest finals. He gave me the information I needed.

I replied to Guy, 'Thank you for your kind invitation; I've discussed this with Adrian and he's elected to attend the Red Bull party for the Monaco Grand Prix to which he's been invited that night and I've been invited by the neighbours to watch the final at their house so some other people can have the tickets.'

Regards...'

This brought an immediate response asking what we wanted so I quoted the *Eurovision* rules that Philip had sent me stating that, basically, the writers were part of the delegation and had to be included in all events and were entitled to be in the Green Room. We made our point and won.

We had arranged with Angela Kaset to do a house swap in Nashville in May. This gave us time to go to LA afterwards and leave from there, Darcie to France; me to Vienna.

At last, the final song (ours) was announced via the BBC red light programme on Saturday March 7th in the evening. This was a great relief to us all, especially Alex and Bianca who couldn't even tell their parents until now. After all these years, I finally made it to the final.

The initial reaction to our song was dreadful. We immediately had more 'dislikes' than 'likes' on Youtube. An old friend of mine posted on facebook,

'Who chooses this crap, can't we do better than this?'

'David M wrote it' added a mutual friend.

'So sorry' answered Howard and I had to reply,

'It's fine, Howard, we all have different tastes.'

I think some of the press had already written their pieces before the song was even announced, it's easier just to put down the UK entry as usual.

I got some lovely messages, but some people were offended that we hadn't told them. I could only explain that we could tell NO ONE. Goatus even unfriended me on facebook.

Alex handled everything very well. He and Bianca did many TV interviews and were always totally positive. We started getting some nice Radio2 play. Ron asked if we could get a band together for a live Graham Norton radio session as the producer had Elton John's old piano outside his office.

"Sure I can, what's in the budget?"

"Radio 2 doesn't have a music budget."

"A music station doesn't have a music budget??? WTF?"

I promised Don and Graham Preskett some Rosé and Alex got two mates to play guitar and drums. They all did a great job although you couldn't hear any guitars and you'll see someone making coffee while they're playing. When it was posted on Youtube, somebody wrote,

'Useless, you could see they were miming.'

They weren't.

<https://youtu.be/8rLR3B4ve-s>

Darcie and I spent a couple of days at home with Angela and Bruce to get them acclimatised before heading off to Newark where we spent the night before our onward flight. Amazingly, at the airport, my cheap phone received a call from Helen Riddell. Electro Velvet would be appearing on the Graham Norton TV show two weeks before the contest and could we pay for a band as they (also) had no music budget. This time I refused and Helen kindly agreed the BBC would pay the dancers/backing singer and would use the track. She also told me that Ron was getting too many Radio2 plays and that might seem like favouritism.

Unbelievable, you work so hard to finally produce something that will get national radio play and then someone tells you not to. No wonder the UK never succeeds in the contest.

Martyn and David had wanted to see Nashville so would join us after a few days. Angela and Bruce's house was gorgeous, tasteful and with some glorious art, a lovely patio garden at the back and Angela's magnificent Bosendorfer piano ("My engagement ring").

As usual we met friends and saw some songwriter rounds and to my amazement Colleen Lloy had included me at her show in the famous Bluebird.

I have great difficulty remembering my own lyrics so had needed to learn six songs.

Martyn and David flew in to Nashville from Geneva via New York and took a cab straight to the Bluebird as we'd be on our way there when they landed. Because of traffic they got there first, leaving their bags in Colleen's car.

Steven Trombley and Virginia Henning Mills were in the audience and I'd tried to get extra tickets as soon as they went on sale, but they'd all been sold, as usual, in two minutes.

Colleen introduced us: Billie Lee, Antoinette Olsen, Jack Bond who would be helping out on guitar and me. She then asked who had been the first arrival for the show. A lady put up her hand.

"And what time was that?"

"1pm"

It was now past 6pm, but the Bluebird had always been a sold-out spot, but since the TV series *Nashville*, even these places at the bar were gold.

Billy performed one of his rocky classics, Colleen did a song with Jack and then it was my turn. I talk better than I sing so I made some (poor) jokes.

"I'd like to welcome two friends who've come all the way from Geneva for this; you'll know them as they're the only guys in Nashville wearing jackets... and if we get through this quickly, they'll make their flight back." (polite laughter).

I asked if anyone had heard of the *Eurovision Song Contest* and many had, some even cheered. I explained I was using a *Eurovision* theme and though my first song hadn't been selected, it had made the UK finals and had been recorded by all these artistes... *Don't Throw It All Away*.



With Colleen, Jack behind and a little of Antoinette.

I loved playing the Bluebird, a legendary venue with the best audience because they so want to be there. Eventually I did *Still In Love With You* as a duet with Colleen with some lovely guitar from Jack in an almost southwest swing style that worked rather well.

We adjourned for dinner opposite at the California Pizza Kitchen with Colleen, Jack and Virginia. Jane had been friendly with the guys who'd started the chain and had invested and done rather well. Darcie had declined. Oh dear.

We drove back to East Nashville via Broadway in order to show Martyn and David, but David, as ever, was already fast asleep.

We enjoyed showing Martyn and David around Nashville and the surrounding countryside; Franklin, Leaper's Fork and hearing great music. We went to Franklin on Saturday to hear Colleen perform outside a restaurant bar and Trombley did a few songs, but was wasted. The next day we returned to enjoy The Box Tops' Gary Talley and we spent a delightful evening at the Prentice household and were treated to a private concert.

While having coffee with Chas and Melanie Sandford and Sanda Lee, Sandra asked me if I'd join her at a round at the Commodore Grill to play guitar on a song we'd written about Darcie and Melinda Bennett finding each other again after years (*Back Together Again*). Her daughter Brittini Black would also be singing so on the appointed evening, Miri, Rod, Martyn, David and I turned up and heard some great music. I was called up and a gentleman lent me his lovely guitar. Sandra told me he'd play some harmonica so when it came to the solo I nodded at him to play it rather than me (phew!). He played beautifully.

Later he introduced himself to me.

"You're a Brit so you might recognize this."

It was the theme from *The Old Grey Whistle Test* that he'd written and played. He was only the legendary Charlie McCoy!!!



Charlie McCoy, Brittini, , me, Sandra and one of the other songwriters.

We then hired a big car, a van, really and were going to visit my old pal, Ray Williams in North Carolina and then Gordon and Melinda Bennett in Virginia, but Darcie's back was bad and we elected not to do two eight-hour drives, but only head for Virginia; pity!

I have to say the scenery was glorious all the way. We stopped in an hotel on the edge of Asheville where the largest house, the magnificent Biltmore, in the US is situated. We loved the hotel and the view from the terrace over the Blue Ridge Mountains was magnificent even if it's not Switzerland.

Virginia was full of horse farms with magnificent lawns and picket fences and I fancied buying shares in a lawnmower company. Melinda had booked us into an Air B'n'B, a gorgeous little house on a farm with rabbits and deer running around. We had a lovely stay and enjoyed our time with the Bennetts and discovering the lovely little towns nearby.



Our lovely Air B'n'B.

From there we headed to the airport, Martyn and David flying to Geneva and us to LAX. We spent a few good days there at Jane's and hung out with George, Shilli and some other old chums.



We dropped in on the slightly successful Hans Zimmer.

Eventually we flew to Munich with me going on to Vienna and Darcie being picked up in Marseille by Geoff.

I was asked by some writers to tell them about my Eurovision experiences and below was my reply; forgive me if I repeated myself.

There were about six very difficult weeks when we knew, but had to stay schtum. Not even the singers' parents could know until March 7th when the song was to be announced. Alex and Bianca were going to rehearsals and briefings and I think everyone got very suspicious. Two weeks before the 'Red Button Reveal', Adrian and I went to London for the video shoot. 'Creative Director' Dan and choreographer Jay had done an amazing job and we were blown away. I've never seen so many cast and crew for a video shoot. What was, and is obvious to me, is that the BBC team really wants to win and did everything possible to make it happen. The wonderful Chris McCluskey, the press officer, gave the 'kids' media training and warned them not to look at reviews and Youtube comments or obnoxious Tweets and to put aside anything they saw.

No one can really be prepared for the wave of venom and negativity that spewed out on the announcement of the choice for the UK entry so you'd better have a pretty thick skin before you decide to enter and your poor artist(s) need hides like a rhinoceros. I've seen a Tweet one national newspaper critic posted minutes before he wrote his article and critique of the song. He'd actually made up his mind before hearing it. At one point we had more 'dislikes' than 'likes' on Youtube. Some messages were sick, vile and unprintable.

Because of the ambiguous, restrictive and non-negotiable Universal Records' contract the entrants are obliged to sign before the song is accepted, many record companies will not get involved and I truly hope this contract is re-negotiated or entirely thrown out. Really our only option was to put the song out ourselves, which we did through Righttrack. This involved promotion that was done brilliantly by my old friend, Ron. He achieved a ton of radio play. If the same course is taken this year, apart from the recording costs, you

may find yourself shelling out to make the song available and to get airplay. We had live Radio 2 and TV sessions for which the BBC has no budget for musicians (really!!!)... they have to be paid by the 'record company' as 'promotion'.

Alex, Bianca and Helen travelled to various countries promoting the entry to Eurovision fans and opened the 60th Anniversary Concert. Adrian and I were pretty much out of the loop as far as the performance of the song was concerned until we arrived in Vienna. The horrendous Tweets continued so we, and especially the Beeb guys, tried to keep everything positive and deal with Universal's cock-ups.

Vienna was something I would not have missed for the world. We first saw the Electro Velvet performance at the second rehearsal where we made a couple of suggestions about improving the sound and that was pretty much our involvement. There was a really fun reception at the British Embassy and a nice performance (in the rain) at the Euro village and Adrian and I loved meeting real fans whose positive attitude really made it so worthwhile. Some of those fans are now 'friends' and Vienna is a glorious city.

If your entry is in the final in Stockholm, you should be aware that it will become obvious that the song takes third place behind the artist and the performance, whereas the songwriters come somewhere between the make-up artist and the people serving coffee in importance. This is not a gripe; it's a fact. Be prepared. Eurovision rules say that songwriters are part of the act and as we had 4 wonderful singer/dancers, there were only places for Helen, Adrian and me in the Green Room with them. Dan and Jay should have been there. Chris should have been there, but there's a limit. Of course sitting there was the absolute highlight and something I'll never forget. Having a song represent the UK is something of which Adrian and I are immensely proud and now the reaction to the song has turned and we hear mainly good things.

I have the regret that our lovely Bianca had to endure some vile, terrible remarks that have left a scar. Alex is probably too dumb to notice (just kidding). I have huge respect for Alex who was the consummate pro and kept everyone smiling when things were tough.

If you're going to enter, I wouldn't send an Electro-Swing song this year, obviously! People are talking ballads, but there are always about 70% ballads in the final. Something completely different will certainly stand out. Whatever is chosen will displease 70% of the people whatever it is and expect enthusiasm only from Eurovision fans. The Beeb guys will pull out all the stops to help the song win although Terry Wogan, bless him, has a lot to answer for.

There you have it, but bear in mind that there may be thousands of songs now the national press has carried the story. We had an 0.25% chance of getting chosen, it could be less this year. I doubt that I'll recoup what the exercise cost me. You probably won't win the final so you won't get rich and perhaps not even if you win, but Charlie may be able to tell you about that. The BBC paid for flights, hotel rooms and per diems that nearly covered my bar bill. The artist will be out of pocket as there is a very low fee paid to them. Universal will take 11% of your download royalties. You will need to explain why you wrote the worst Eurovision entry EVER! Your faith in humanity will take an almighty dive... and the sensitive will be permanently scarred.

So is it worth it? You bet!

I think that about sums it up except to say we met some great people, made a ton of facebook friends... real Eurovision lovers... spent a lovely evening with Bianca's parents, uncle and aunt who had travelled to Vienna. Adrian gave his tickets that were worth thousands to Bianca's uncle and aunt. I have to say that after rehearsals, 2 semi-finals (luckily we went straight to final) 2 dress rehearsals, the full Jury Final and the Final, I'd had enough. There was a lot of pretty boring down time.

Adrian and I were very disappointed in the staging. We thought there might be holograms as the Swedes turned out using but, instead Alex and Bianca had to wear hugely cumbersome suits with special lights that didn't work most of the time. Alex wasn't allowed to deviate from the strict choreography and only showed his huge stage presence at the Embassy performance. There were too many acrobatics in the dancers' performance so that they had no more breath for the vocals at the end that were live...and out of tune. The BBC's allotted seats were about the worst possible, in the heat at the top of the stadium and Alex's fiancée, Tam, was especially upset as she'd expected to be in the Green Room. We'd watched the first semi-final from there. Half way through the Swedish performance, Dan gave me a look.

"Yes, we're screwed!"

Darcie and Eddie Levy had come out, but I couldn't even see them from down below. The Green Room was great with lovely ladies bringing round an endless supply of Champagne and wine of which Adrian and I handsomely availed ourselves. Helen showed no pleasure whatsoever in attaching the green stickers to our passes that allowed us access.

Electro Velvet performed 5th so there were only two of us until the poor buggers had shed part of their costumes and were, with the rest of the group, able to join us. We were all delighted with how our duo had performed. We expected Sweden or Russia to win so, as Russia wasn't very popular at the time, it was Sweden. There is another award voted on by the songwriters that went to our friend, Mike Connaris, for his Cyprus entry that was totally deserving of it.

I know Bianca was very depressed by the voting. I was probably too refreshed to care much. We came 24th of 27 with 5 points, but Austria and Germany got no points. Other UK entries have done worse since.

We went around saying goodbye to the artists with whom we'd become friendly and then waited for everything to be packed up in the dressing room. This took quite a while. Then we needed to wait for our allotted bus and pack all the gear onto it and unload it at the hotel so it was about 2:30am before we made it to the bar. We'd been accommodated at a Hilton that was lovely as was our room.

Everyone, bar Eddie who was leaving early for Stamford Bridge to see Chelsea accept the Premier League Trophy, was in the bar and drinks were taken. We'd been happy to participate and had a great time. I didn't realise that Alex had chatted about his future plans with Graham Norton who'd replied,

"You'll never work again."

Nice!

Ken Bruce was really lovely; he'd often mentioned my name when playing a song of mine and I enjoyed meeting him.

We retired at about 5am. Some idiot at the BBC had booked everyone returning to London on a flight at 10am that morning meaning that everyone had to leave the hotel at 7 30!! I'd convinced Bianca's parents that, after what she'd been through, she would not be up to that so they booked Gearoid and her onto an afternoon Easyjet flight. Adrian and I were up to say goodbye to the party. Helen overslept. I went back to bed; Adrian stayed up and later, Darcie and I explored the lovely city and had dinner with Bianca's family. On the Monday we flew home.

There are lots of positives to take from the experience: I managed to make the final. Since then the tide has rather turned and many people mention our song as one of the better UK entries. There are about three times as many 'likes' as 'dislikes' on Youtube and some lovely comments. We topped the national physical sales chart. Other artistes have recorded the song. I'd had an email from the lovely Nichola Martin, ex-wife of Andy Hill AND Steve Glen who told me it was her favourite *Eurovision* song since Abba's *Waterloo*. I was amazed, but it meant a lot. I guess it was as Alex had described it, 'A Marmite Song'. You either love it or hate it.

Despite the disappointment, Bianca did eventually agree to record another song with Electro Velvet that I thought was stronger than the first. We got no airplay. Ron was pretty hopeful when he took it to Graham Norton's producer.

"Why would we play that, we didn't like the first one... or them!"

"Because it's a great record and you wanted them to perform live for you."

"Nope!"

I have to say we, especially Don, used to record some music inserts for Graham's TV show and found him to be delightful. Jury's now out.

*I then recorded a Country Swing version of 'Still In Love With You'
with Colleen and Jack and some top Country players:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DbfY4UYS0Nk>*

A strange, Dutch language version came out in Holland.

Two years later, Bianca was interviewed and said that she regretted doing *Eurovision*, and had never wanted to do it in the first place. I know it did scar her because she ignored advice not to read what people said online, but the rest was completely untrue as she had jumped at the chance to be involved and it was extremely hurtful as I had kicked off the project simply to help her. No good deed goes unpunished. Never mind, but she lied and it stung!

Chapter Eighteen... **LATER DAYS**

I continue to write from time to time and enjoy recording here in my office/studio. Steve Hampton has a Country Rock group and I've been trying to help them with direction, seeking songs and writing a few also to put in the mix. Feeling that the intended album contained mostly up-tempo material, I wrote a song that is actually called *Dead Crow Road*, the band's name that is perhaps the best of my bunch.

'*Dead Crow Road*': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SN-MDbazYkw>

I wrote a song that was recorded in vision for a new documentary called *One More Time* directed by Alan Boyd; the story of all the great UK session players of the 60s and 70s and they were filmed discussing and recording the track that I hope will remain in the edited and final version, even if my interview ends up on the cutting room floor.

I've also written with Steve Womack, an amazing talent who was in Wesley Park and Smith. One song was called *My Hero* that was written for Fathers' Day. Again, Trevor Eyles came up with the perfect girl to sing it as she had about 60,000 facebook followers and her mother was a media expert who would extract the maximum coverage for the song. I decided to record her in a new studio in Nice with Adrian who had produced the track. She came over on a Saturday morning with Trevor and Jon Diamond booked on a slightly later plane but in time for Jon to shoot the studio performance. It was a horrendous morning with torrential rain. I had stayed in Menton the previous night and we'd had a couple of Grappe after dinner so Adrian was suffering and in a foul mood. We got to the studio and our lady recorded a perfect vocal pretty quickly with no autotune whatsoever, but Trevor and Jon's plane was late. We had finished by the time they arrived in Nice so we told them to wait at the airport and we'd pick them up. Unfortunately, they misunderstood so took a taxi to the studio that was now closed. By the time I'd searched the airport, we got another message from them so headed back to the studio to find two drowned Englishmen with a load of equipment. As usual, we decided to head for lunch on the beach, but my old favourite seafood place that I always visited with Charles had been torn down. We had a decent meal with a lot of rosé before depositing the three of them at the airport and heading back to Menton to our wives. And dinner.

Jon made a marvellous video, but when our singer eventually posted a teaser on her social media pages she only got one 'like'... from Trevor. Her mother avoided any marketing meetings and we realised that all the hype was just that and we never put out the single. Such is life.

But Poppy is a delightful girl and lovely singer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ul0C4DmagpA>

At last DDB capitulated over Action Man. What finally swung it was when we visited a court-appointed musicologist. The crook from DDB (allegedly named Thierry Brossard), who had sold his apartment to his son for just €1 to avoid having to cough up the money himself was defiant to the last. He played one track that we hadn't written claiming we'd infringed his copyright.

"Listen to the drums and guitar and it's up-tempo and..."

The musicologist had a wonderful response,

"Well, it's a 'Boys action toy'; I wasn't expecting a Viennese Waltz."

The most difficult thing for me was the French politesse; it all had to be very cordial although I really wanted to punch his lights out. Still, after just 16 years from instigating proceedings, we received our royalties on 106 films, costs and some damages. But when I mentioned the timescale to a local notary, she just replied,

"That's about right."

In October, we drove, with Ashley and Lesley to Venice stopping in Menton, Sirmione on Lake Garda and Padua on the way to celebrate my 70th birthday (how did that happen?) in my favourite city. Martyn, David, Angela and boyfriend and Ashley's best friend, Amanda, joined us for a wonderful 5 days. I had found a five-bedroom, five-bathroom apartment with huge living/dining room and small terrace between St Mark's and Rialto. It was just ideal. For 3 days, Darcie had been calling Amanda 'Amber' so it stuck and she calls us Dennis and Denise.

We bought magnificent fish and vegetables from the markets, mouthwatering cheeses and wine so we could have a large dinner at home. On the 23rd, Junior and Susie Campbell and Charles and Lesley Armitage arrived to help us celebrate and immediately came for the dinner that Angela, Ashley and I cooked. Junior was delighted to meet another Campbell, especially as he had been such a great admirer of her dad. We explored, ate at restaurants and then, on the 25th had lunch in Burano and, in the evening, took a water taxi from the Armitage/Campbell hotel to my favourite restaurant where the owner had arranged a set menu with wine for my birthday dinner. It was superb and after the girls left for Florence, and Charles, Junior and wives for London, we rather overdid it the last lunchtime.



Dinner at the apartment.

L-R Angela, Darcie, Susie Campbell, Martyn, me, Junior Campbell, Ashley, Amber and David.



Birthday Dinner....Charles and Lesley at at the far end on the right.



An unforgettable lunch (and bill).

Darcie, David, Angela, Lesley, Martyn, Craig (who was with Angela) and me.

Darcie and I stopped in Finale Liguria for one last night before coming home. It was a terrific, unforgettable trip.

The following February, Lesley Armitage called. She'd taken Charles a cup of tea to wake him up, but he wouldn't; he'd died in the night. He was 62, Richard, his father had died at 59. My old friend, Richard had died the year before. This sadness happens when you get to my age. This was just terrible news. Since then, my old friend, Gordon Sutherland, has died as did Ronnie Bond our famous jingling friend. David Dundas and I headed to the coast and raised several glasses to Ronnie.

Charles's funeral took place in Surrey two days after Lesley Davies' 60th birthday dinner. I'm so glad he and Lesley had made it to Venice.

One day I received a message from an old friend, Debbie Arnold. She had become an ambassador to the Bullying Hotline, a kind of 'Samaritans' to people of all ages who are being bullied... a terrible state of affairs. Debbie wondered if it would be possible to have a song for their website and helpline in time for the upcoming Anti-Bullying Week. It's good to know that I can still come up with something when given a brief. The whole song was written in two hours. I recorded the track before lunchtime the following day and some really talented kids I'd been working with agreed to sing it although only three of the four were available.

Jon Diamond stepped in and made a great video, recording the vocals live and cutting the full song together. He sent me the vocal tracks and I found it really difficult to match them all up as the guys stood at varying distances for each take. When done, Trevor Eyles suggested we release the song and I resisted as I didn't consider the track or vocal compilation of master quality. I relented, however, and am glad I did.

Debbie Arnold gave interviews on several shows and gained us some airplay. She let me know that, one afternoon, a young lad called a radio station to tell them that he was just about to commit suicide, but heard the song and called the helpline in stead. Christine Pratt does a great job with the helpline and as a songwriter,

As a songwriter, I can think of no greater achievement: <https://youtu.be/5ztwTgejAxQ>

By the way the lovely lady in the middle is the daughter of Stephen Prebble who put out the music from my Crown Paint ad, the other lovely girl's father was in the advert and is Debbie's daughter.

About twelve years ago, Claire, who had made so many visits down here over the years, decided, with her father, sister, Sue and brother in-law, Steve to buy a place nearby. I found them a gorgeous house in a beautiful village across the valley and enjoyed their regular visits. A friend of theirs asked if I'd meet with an English lady he knew to see if she could sing. Rebecca Fountain came to the house knowing she loved to sing, but not knowing if she really had a voice. I was impressed. She sang well and we have performed at several fêtes together. She is now part of a working duo as well as being a businesswoman.

Another regular visitor is a lady whom Angela introduced us. Génia is an incredibly talented concert pianist from Ukraine who is very close to Darcie and refers to her as 'My Godmother.' Génia's great uncle was Vladimir Horowitz and you can see from where the talent is derived. Our neighbours enjoy the occasional impromptu concert as do we.

For the first time in 50 years, I wasn't making a living from music, but still enjoying working, but with no pressure. I had time to spend with our guests and, each New Year's Day have prepared and served lunch to between 15 and 24 people: usually, oysters (up to 10 dozen), foie gras, seafood salad, a main course that had usually been wild boar casserole (boar courtesy of neighbours) with veggies, many cheeses and desserts that guests brought. I think I may have held my last 'grande bouffe' just before Covid struck.

Steve Hampton, being a big Country fan was very interested in Nashville and somehow, during a conversation, we decided the he and Jax should come with us to Nashville and Los Angeles and in October 2018, it happened. Calina Burns had moved to a house near Franklin, 25 minutes from 'NashVegas' and wondered if we'd like to do another house-swap. So we did. Our friend Geoff had also never been so we took the whole of October and Geoff came for three weeks. This was pretty brave for all concerned; Darcie had only met Jax once and Geoff didn't know her or Steve from Elvis, but it couldn't have worked out better. We all loved every moment of our time together.

Darc and I met Steve and Jax at Heathrow and took the new direct flight to Nashville... easy! We were met by Ashley who had delayed her flight to Europe for a day so she could see us. She took us to a Mexican restaurant in Franklin where Kim joined us and then delivered us along with some bottles of wine 'to keep us going' to Calina's house.

As we enjoyed a nightcap, Steve looked stunned.

"I can't believe that we were picked up and spent the evening with Country Music royalty!"



The next morning was sunny and warm and the three of us swam and drank tea while Darcie slept in. Then it was down to the Waffle House for an American Breakfast and then to Broadway for late morning and afternoon music. We stocked up the fridge and spent our time listening to music, visiting or meeting my friends and sightseeing round the area. Steve and I participated in one songwriter round so he could say he's played in Nashville.

One restaurant we visited in Franklin is called Gray's and has excellent food. We chose the Saturday night as there was to be music on their spacious stage. The opening act, a solo male singer was the weakest we'd heard... until the 'main turn', a solo female who opened with, "I wrote this song as I cradled my dying husband in my arms."

Well that was a cheerful start. After a few more dirges, she announced, "After my granddaddy died, I couldn't sing or play for two years."

"Not nearly long enough."

I think it's fair to say around Nashville, 'the better the food, the worse the music' and vice versa.

'Our round' at the Millenium Maxwell House...well, Steve had to do one gig there.



Exactly a week after our arrival, we picked up Geoff and continued where we left off. Near the house was a beautiful winery where you could picnic without having to buy their wine and on Sundays they had 'Bluegrass In The Barn' with, as usual, phenomenal musicians. One Sunday, they had another group that Charlie Morgan played in so we listened to them before moving over to the barn; they'll even take you by golf buggy. Boy, do they know service in the US. Just like France... not!



One day when Miri and Rod were in town, we all went down to Murphreesboro to have lunch with our old friend Freddie Cannon and Rose his lovely lady. There were lots of stories. The following night, Charlie, Miri and Rod came to dinner at the house. Being out all day meant we usually ate dinner at the house, which saved quite a bit of money.



Geoff, Darcie, me, Rod, Miri, Freddy and Rose.

Steve and Jax bought cowboy boots and family gifts, we heard a ton more songs and after two weeks we took Darcie to the airport for her flight to San Diego to see her dad. We remained another week. We met up with more chums and Colleen came to cook Mexican for us one evening and we drank far too many of Geoff's marvellous Margaritas. Colleen was advised to 'sleep on the sofa'.



Lunch with John Howard.

Eventually it was time to bid a sad farewell to Nashville and head for Los Angeles. After trying four cars that had boasted room for five people and luggage that wouldn't even hold 4, we set off in a large van and headed straight for Gladstones where my friends got their first taste of California food and sunshine...the perfect place to start; right on the ocean. I drove them down Sunset, picked up essentials at Ralph's before locating our Air B'n'B that looked little like the photos that were taken when the place was in better repair. Geoff's room was on such a slant that we had to place books under two of the bed legs. Despite this, we loved the place with its garden and running fountain where we could have breakfast, late night drinks and listen to whoever was playing at the Hollywood bowl... Willie Nelson one night.

The following day, we met Darcie and her dad in Laguna Beach and headed down to Tom and Jo Gutteridge's house. Tom had kindly invited us ALL for lunch and what a lunch it was. Tom is some wonderful cook and we spent a memorable day there with them and Jo's parents whom we knew also.



Lovely to meet up with Tom.

The ten days were spent meeting friends and showing the guys our favourite places. Often, on the way home, we'd stop at my old haunt, Le Petit Four for happy hour. Tour buses stop in front as so many 'faces' go there, so we took it upon ourselves to take photos of them and wave. One night, a very suave, young black guy arrived in a Chauffeur driven Rolls Royce. Then his stunning wife/girlfriend drove up in hers. They pushed their salads around the plate while she gave him hell the whole time. I don't know what he'd done, but he mostly ignored her, looking away and saying nothing. They finally left together, but not very together. It goes to show you, money can't buy you love.

On my birthday (again) I'd invited Jane, my friends Lance Aston and Shirley Greene to Paradise Cove for lunch. We picked up Jane and had a bottle of bubbly on her terrace overlooking the Ocean before heading off to our wedding spot on the beach. I love that place; the weather was perfect; the ocean was deep blue and Janes' current partner, David Green, joined us. We left with the remains of a seven layer chocolate cake that would have fed 15 people and an invitation to spend Saturday at Jane's house to have lunch and relax. Diane made a superb lunch... she does the best guacamole ever... And Jax still treasures the photo of Jane and her in the Jacuzzi.



Birthday lunch at Paradise Cove.



Jax and Jane in the Jacuzzi.

Leaving LA was hard as was arriving in 4 degrees and freezing, driving rain in Marseille. Geoff was still in shorts. I drove his car home in the blackest night I can remember. What a great and memorable trip with some lovely people. We still talk about it.

I still get people recording my songs though there's not really money to be made. David Mackay chose three for an Eve Graham album; one written with Angela Kaset and one with Alissa Moreno. The third was *The Nashville Dream* and she actually recorded a fourth called *The Price of Fame*, but thought better of it as the chorus opens with, *Which Day Was It That You Became An Asshole?*...probably not ideal for her fans.

We still do road trips with Martyn, David, Lesley, Angela and Geoff when possible. For Darcie's 65th birthday surprise, I booked the wonderful Colombe d'Or in St Paul de Vence at Christmas.

In early 2019, Yvonne Johnson, a local friend asked if I would be able to get a band together for the 'Fête de la Musique' in Goudargues. This event is always on June 21st and each village has music; every town has a lot of music and each city has all kinds of singers and groups all over the place. I thought it possible as there was a decent budget.



Steve and Jax brought down the PA, guitars and amps etc in their car a week before the event. I'd called Darcie back from her Daughter's house near Lyon.

"I'm going to need a lot of help."

Sadly she came down with Bronchial Asthma and was unwell and on her back for the duration, only being allowed up on the night of the gig, but forbidden by our doctor to dance. Fat chance! Geoff spent a lot of the evening holding her back. Darcie love to dance.

Steve and Jax helped save the day. On various days prior to the gig, Ray Russell, Don and Annie Gould, Adrian, Colette and another great singer from the south, Jilly Jackson arrived for the event. Alex Larke invited himself and Steve's friends Alan and Karen Earp came down on their Harley Davidson and booked a gîte to see what was going on. Our friend Nick Henry decided to take a break here at the same time. One day, Steve Jax and I arrived at the market to buy kilos and kilos of vegetables to chop and make gazpacho and ratatouille to be frozen and ready to help feed this mob.

The weather forecast looked great; then it didn't. The night before our gig the table was laid on the terrace; I'd opened oysters and was about to serve soup when there was a shout out, "Don't bother it's raining."

So we decamped to the dining room and enjoyed the great company. At one point Jilly blurted out, "God, I can't tell you how much I've missed this musician banter."

I suppose I had a bit too.



L-R Alex Larke, Geoff, Nick Henry, Annie Gould, Jax, Steve, Ray, me, Jilly, Colette and Don.

Ray stayed with one neighbor and Alex and Adrian with others (poor souls). I served breakfast and then lunch...this was for twelve and we could only discuss songs from a list and not really rehearse.

When we arrived at the spot we were supposed to play, it was raining so hard that we had to remain in the cars. Eventually, Steve and I ran to the shelter of the old, Roman washstand to make a decision. We thought it best to call the whole thing off and return home but suddenly the rain eased and Yvonne joined us.

"The mayor says that, if it starts raining again, it won't start again." And it stopped.

"Steve, do you think we could fit everything under here in the dry?"

And that's what we did; the singers didn't fit, but stood out in front of us; they're only singers after all.

With Steve and Ray Russell on guitars, Alan Earp joining us at the end for two Clapton numbers, his specialty; Don on keyboards, Adrian (hungover again) on electronic drums, Jilly, Colleen and Alex on vocals and me being very basic on bass we killed it. Even being a small village with two other bands and the awful weather forecast, we attracted 800 people according to the lovely Isabel who had supplied and ran out of wine twice. People sang along, danced and cheered and towards the end Jilly came up to me.

"There's a guy just asked for a 'Slow!'"

"But we're rocking it!"

"He only has one leg and wants to dance with his wife."

"Oh... Well, we'd better. What about *I Will Always Love You*?"

Jilly did such an incredible job, we could not follow that. We packed up, had something disgusting to eat and headed home for a last glass or three.

Sadly, the girls had to leave the following morning, but the rest of us met on the terrace for breakfast. I could hardly keep up with double espressos and kept getting calls about how Goudargues has never seen anything like that before and never will again. We'd got away with it!

.The weekend was spent eating and drinking far too much with neighbours.

On the Monday, Steve, Alan, Alex, and I played an acoustic set in the courtyard of Polly and Hans, local friends, for our lovely Doctor, Christiane's, African girls' charity. Polly provided a superb meal on a sweltering, yet lovely day.



Steve, Alex (Junior), me, Alan Earp.

Steve and Jax were able to spend another couple of days relaxing and then returned in October for a complete rest.

That New Year was probably the last we'll do with 22 people. Ashley came with her friends, Banksy, Chris Baron (The Spin Doctors) and his wife Lindsey. And were here 5 days. New Year's Day they were joined by the usual mob and Ron and Annette brought Peter Gordeno (Depeche Mode) and his wife. As always, the weather was wonderful.



In March 2020, as you know, Covid took over. France went into a Lockdown that was extremely strict; we could only go out for essentials and walk within a kilometre of our house and were legally obliged to fill in a form to do so as, if you didn't, you would be fined 130 Euros if caught. As I'd spent a night in hospital with severe arrhythmia and as I was 74 year old, I was considered 'high risk' so the Chardins delivered our supermarket shop and Anne Meziane delivered 30 litres of our local wine at the enormous cost of €35 every few weeks. We have great neighbours.

As we have space, the lockdown was pretty easy for us; we walked the dog in the vineyard 200 metres from the house and we're happy in each other's company. Also, if it's sunny, we can go out onto the sunny terrace. We really felt for people in apartments. We zoomed a lot: one group with Lesley, Martyn, David and Geoff and another with Ashley, her bestie who's visited often, Banksy, plus Chris and Lindsey Barron nearly every week.

A benefit of 'lockdown' was we were doing three MPG (months per gallon) and spending no money. Google maps told me I'd been no further than 7kms from the house in a month. As soon as the first relaxation occurred, I would take a flask of coffee and sit at one of the empty tables outside the closed café in Goudargues. On the next stage I could sit and order a café or meal outside and eventually we started eating out more regularly and even by the sea when Lesley Davies visited. She and Ashley who always finds a way of getting here were our only visitors. We only ate outside restaurants or with guests at home. With dinners on the terrace, everyone got their 'nibbles' in individual bowls with hand sanitizer on the table. A vaccine seemed a long way off although that turned out not to be the case, luckily. Dying hadn't been the thing that bothered me; dying in hospital with a metal tube down my throat and leaving Darcie alone here was.

I kept busy and tried to keep my musical pals busy. I wrote a lockdown song for Dead Crow Road, one of many lockdown songs eventually. I recorded collaborations: a mash up of *Stand By Me*, Marvin Gaye, *Get It On*, *Dreamin*, *Every Breath You Take* and *Dream Lover* with a bunch of talented people.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k4Svf2IDXRo>

We recorded a rewritten 'Cotton Eyed Joe' with some very talented and very silly friends:

<https://youtu.be/1gaJPBuOyVI>

Ashley's friend, Eli Bishop, not only plays brilliant fiddle, but holds the Guinness World Record as The Fastest Handclapper!

With Fred Fairbrass, I started a musical help group on Facebook called 'Music Advice Exchange' and we held a song contest for writers who'd had no songs covered. There were a lot of very strong entries. Steve Hampton and I produced Chloe Foston singing her terrific winning song with Dead Crow Road.

I kept busy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hj6zqLdZLQQ>

My back hurt. It again got worse until, in October, I had an operation where the surgeon sliced down my vertebrae to give air to the nerve that was trapped inside. That was painful, but that soon got better and after 6 weeks' rest and walking, it had improved immensely. I still get bad days and can only write at my desk for an hour at a time, but it's much better.

This year, places were closed again, but though MIDEM was cancelled, I vowed that, if it was possible, I'd have lunch on the beach in Cannes again... as usual. I hadn't slept anywhere other than hospital and home for two years. The laws relaxed so Darcie, David Trett, who now lives here all the time with Martyn working from Dubai and I drove to Menton on May 31st, ditched the car at the hotel and met Adrian and our friend Caroline Sterling on the beach for lunch that lasted until 6 15 when, after saying goodbye to Caroline, the four of us walked along the boardwalk to another restaurant where we had dinner with Colette and Jilly. There was a curfew of 9pm so we had to be at the hotel. We resisted the bar and had an early night.

The next day I was a little 'slow', but we managed to make the train to Cannes where we met Ian St James, the last MIDEM attendee who'd taken a nine-hour train trip to join us. Adrian arrived hungover and grumpy as usual. We had a great lunch on the beach and headed back to Menton for an early dinner and a couple of bottles at the hotel's roof bar. The weather was great and it was a real relief to get away.

We had several guests when things opened up again including Lesley and Ashley, of course. Mo Foster, legendary bass player and raconteur, asked me to write a song with him for an American movie. I really enjoyed that.

Joel Chardin, our neighbour had, since his retirement, been absolutely focussed on getting our village café open again after having been closed for three years. After agreeing a fair rent with the owners of the building and obtaining a licence, he asked for volunteers as the place absolutely could not survive as a business that would be required to pay wages. About 15 of us volunteered to serve, wash up and basically man the place about twice a month. It was due to open on a Saturday in June while Ashley was here, but as the European Soccer Championship was on and France was still involved, I suggested

that Ashley perform the night before. A team of volunteers scrubbed the place clean, we picked up the wine and empty bottles and a free sound system was provided and the mayor supplied tables and benches, the first help the town hall had provided in any way.

Ashley was brilliant, even singing some songs in French with me joining her on a few, including the finale, *Aux Champs Elysees*. It amazes me that France is the only country where Glen Campbell is completely unknown so I had to point out.

"You do realise that I'm more famous here than you are!"



Not any more! The café took €650 and Darcie collected €340 in the hat with Ulysse, the ex-mayor contributing €2 as usual. The weekend total was well in excess of €1,000 and Joel and the volunteers were overjoyed. The following week, Ashley helped me serve in the café and brought a speaker and played 'Old French songs' to give extra atmosphere. It worked.



Joel, Darcie, Françoise and me on duty.

The café is only open on Wednesday and Friday evenings when the pizza van parks opposite and Saturdays and Sunday mornings, but has really brought life back to the village. Steve brought his self-played backing tracks in October and we played a Friday night and he amazed everyone with his brilliant singing and playing. I joined him to share his glory and it was great to see the whole road in front of the café filled with people dancing. Again Ulysse contributed €2 to the collection. Cheapskake!

CONCLUSION

So here we are. I have little else to say. I'm still working... currently on several tracks: I still love it. Darcie's daughter met a young man at a party next door and they live with their two boys near Lyon. Her son is married and is doing well in Los Angeles and Darcie makes regular trips to see him and her parents.

To my amazement and delight, I tend to get invited to the 'Scribblers, Twangers, Thumpers and Warblers' (Scribs') lunch in Barnes, London. Instigated by Dire Staits' manager, Ed Bicknell, the event is now organised by Lesley-Ann Jones, David Stark and Rab Noakes and is attended by legendary musicians, singers and music journalists. And me. It's a huge honour to be at this delightful event.



Blue Weaver (Amen Corner, Strawbs, Bee Gees), Me, Clem Cattini (Drummer on 43 No1 hits) and David Stark.

Ashley and I, for some strange reason, decided we should write a song *Let's Go!* for Marrowbone Jelly featuring The Six Instruments of the Apocalypse. We have: Banjo, Bagpipes, Accordion, Bodhrán, Recorder and Viola.



They said it couldn't be done.

They hoped it wouldn't be done.

It turned out rather well!

I'm still writing with Steve Womack and had also spent an inordinate amount of time on a new version of *Don't Throw It All Away* for a Scottish lady with a lovely voice while taking care to keep her happy with everything I added. As musicians, I enlisted the help of Mo Foster, Ray Russell, Charlie Morgan, Brian Bennett of the Shadows, Pete Whitfield, Judd Lander, Jean Roussel and even Gary Benson who added vocals to our song. All legends! One Friday I checked that she was happy and that she liked it. She replied, 'Like it? I can't stop playing it!'

The following Wednesday, she wasn't happy and didn't like it at all. After Band of Sisters I'd decided to only work with pros, but made two exceptions: Chloe Foston, who was a delight and this person who clearly has mental issues.

You live and learn. Then you forget and learn again!

Not long ago, I was in a facebook discussion on politics. A mistake, I know. People tended to agree to disagree, but one young person, the badly brought up daughter of one of the singers mentioned above, to both my amusement and annoyance, felt it her right to let me know,

'Well, it's must be easy for you from your villa in the south of France.'

I have to admit that I'm a grumpy old man and am fed up with the entitled, done nothing, but know everything, opinionionated kids that far too frequently feel they need to share their wisdom with us these days. One obnoxious kid, who'd wriiten one song, recently shared his disparaging views of my work on our Music Advice Exchange page. I am just as fed up with the parents who defend them.

If you've read some of what I've written here, you'll know that no one gave me my villa. I don't believe this person has ever done a paper round, worked in a teacher's garden, cleaned cars; had to stand for eight hours in a department store, worked selling trousers, driven a taxi or made heavy deliveries. She certainly hasn't taken the risk of starting a business, worked fourteen hours every day and cleaned the toilets without pay. And the irony is that we earned people like her parents literally millions of pounds!

I know I've been incredibly lucky and when I think back to that hopeless youth with no mapped out future whatsoever, I can't help thinking, "How the hell did I get here from there?" I guess by being in the right place at the right time for the wrong reason.

Other favourite photos.



Our 2CV in the sunflowers.



Oysters from not far away.



The garden on a good day.



With besties, Ray Williams and Judd Lander.



Local Popies.



Growler.



With David Dundas at the guinguette.



Darcie with her lovely dad.



Our Midem Group.



Lesley, Glowler and Geoff at Christmas.



With Junior Campbell a long time ago.



Darcie and Ange.



A meet up with David Ballanyne... and Glowler.



Old friends, Eddie O'Laughlin, me, Ron and Philip Kruse.



Darcie.



A New Year's truffle.