



(Header by Sven)

October 2021

Welcome to our new readers.

Outlook seems to have had some sort of security update, which is preventing me sending all the newsletters out at once. This has only been a problem for the last two months. We are over the new limit for the daily number allowed. At the moment I can send them out over two days. If you know someone else who gets the newsletter and you don't both get it at the same time, don't worry...it should arrive the next day. If it doesn't, then please get back to me. I asked for help from a very nice person at Microsoft Support, who sent lovely messages but wasn't able to give any actual help other than to change the password!!

I am getting a few newsletters returned as "undelivered". Occasionally, it is because the newsletter is too big for the recipient's mail account, or their inbox is full but, most often, it says the email address doesn't exist. It is obvious that most of these emails are work emails and it appears that the recipient has changed their job and not updated me. So, if you are going to be in that position or if you are just changing your email address for another reason and you want to go on receiving the newsletter, don't forget to give me your new email address.

This month we have a treat from Bob Henrit. He has been amusing himself over the lockdown months by writing more. Here we have his article about his favourite guitars. This will be fascinating for guitar enthusiasts but it is full of stories and rock history. For some time, Bob has been working on a documentary about drummers and drumming. He makes an appearance himself and is an Associate Producer. It is called "**Count Me In**" and it was released recently on Netflix.

Best wishes
Sue

THIS MONTH FROM RUSS

Hello, one an' all.....

On Facebook, Carole posted some of recent songs, recorded in these pandemic months and I have quite a few more to be posted in coming weeks, once we - (Christian and I) - have decided on the final mixes. When I first started a studio at home, many years ago, I always performed the engineering as well as playing the instruments. I've always enjoyed working with e.q. - Compressors, reverbs and delays, but after listening to Christian's mixing the last few years, it's obvious he's a better engineer than me. So, I asked Chris if he would engineer for me, maybe three days a week when I put tracks down. He said he would - Now he's working with me three days a week and I love it! - I now only have to focus on the playing and arranging while C. watches the dials and twiddles the knobs. I love the new arrangement and he's great company.

What else has been happening these past weeks? Oh yes, I had a flu jab, and last week I received my Covid booster, so, that's a good feeling.

Also, good news to know the UK tour is confirmed for February. At the moment we have these shows, however, there will be more to come.

10th February London 100 Club
12th February Kinross Backstage
14th February Milton Keynes The Stables
15th February Chislehurst The Beaverwood
17th February Wolverhampton KK's Steel Mill

*I look forward to seeing you at the gigs - Ahh! - What a nice thought Take care and lots of Love,
Russ*

RUSS - LIFE STORIES

I ended last month's biog describing the process of transporting patients to the operating theatre in 1950's - 60's....it looked to me quite horrendous.....

Thought, "I hope I don't have to have an operation" - The doctors agreed that the eye would develop a traumatic cataract, however, it would take a couple of years to develop and that I would indeed require an operation.

I recall when the doctor took the bandages off my eyes and saying to the nurse, "You can leave the bandages off now, just give him dark glasses". My dad hadn't seen the eye from the day I was injured and was picturing the worst. When they came to visit that night, I took my glasses off and showed him, he was pleased that I didn't look disfigured and became a little emotional.

I came out of hospital after twelve days. In those twelve days my life changed, emotionally and physically. I adjusted to only having vision in one eye but I was aware the eye looked cloudy and slightly damaged - I also knew my ambition to be a footballer would now never come to be. I was told to come to outpatients in two weeks. The doctors issued me with dark glasses, which didn't bother me, until people started making remarks like, 'Flash Bestard' - There were so many times I nearly got into fights until I realised I could get the other eye blackened, or worse. I had friends who actually did get in to fights on my behalf, however, I can understand now that I must have looked like I was making some kind of statement.

I took ten days off school, which was great and mum and dad didn't make me practice piano, which was a relief. However, I couldn't wait to get back to playing my acoustic guitar. One day my mum said, I'll buy you an electric guitar when we go in to London for outpatients, and - true to her word, after going for my check up, we took a tube train to where I knew there was a great music shop, called 'Lew Davis'.....

GERMANY TOUR - 2022

Last month we gave you the dates for the tour that should originally have been happening now but was postponed until next year. Now, thanks to Sven, we can bring you the tour poster.



NEW TRACKS

For those of you who are not on the Facebook page, as Russ said above, he is releasing tasters (or teasers!) of his new tracks. Here are some links to the ones that are there so far. You should be able to get them even if you are not signed up to Facebook. What do you think? Why not follow the Facebook page then you will get the tracks as soon as Carole posts them. Please give them a "like" on Facebook and also on the videos on YouTube. These tracks are not yet available for public viewing on YouTube.

Runaway Child <https://m.facebook.com/story.php?>

My Last Amen <https://m.facebook.com/story.php?>

One Who Breathes Me <https://m.facebook.com/story.php?>

Soul Music <https://m.facebook.com/story.php?>

PODCAST

Sven and Ian have now completed part 2 of the Chris White podcast. You can find it on the website. <https://russballardmusic.com/podcast.html>

FROM BOB HENRIT

Favourite guitars I've sat behind

I suppose it's slightly odd for a drummer, who doesn't know anything other than the four quite important but still slightly-mundane chords A, D, E and B minor on the guitar. Sufficient enough to write 'Winnebago' for Phoenix and play various Buddy Holly songs to entertain my family when they're seriously bored! However, you might say it's invidious for a drummer to have the unmitigated gall to have favourite six-stringed instruments in the first place. But just like paintings, I know what I like - so please hear me out.

When I was working with Ivor Arbiter on the 'AT' drum project I picked up a good deal of knowledge on the subject of Fender guitars. Mainly because his Arbiter company had been their UK wholesaler for many years and he had sold an awful lot of them. Also, Fender guys from California were frequently hanging around Arbiter HQ and knowing my background they wanted to talk about The Kinks. So, by association I knew quite a lot about what made that particular iconic product tick.

Backtracking a little, I think the first 'Stratocaster' I saw was owned by Buddy Holly and on the cover of an album called "The Chirping Crickets" released in 1957. The second I saw belonged to Hank Marvin. Buddy's was a 'two-tone' sunburst. (An important fact to know for would-be-experts is that the three-tone version: black and canary yellow with red came along a year or so later.) Hank's, when he was with The Shadows, was said to be Fiesta red (or was it Salmon Pink?) Either way it's generally accepted by the cognoscenti it certainly wasn't a factory finish. However, it was one of the first Fenders we saw in the flesh. That said, Chas McDevitt, who had a million-selling record during the height of the skiffle craze with the song "Freight Train" was said to have had one in the late fifties. I know he'd been to New York to be on the Ed Sullivan Show so I suspect he'd had the opportunity to walk down Broadway to Times Square and pick one

up from Manny's on West 48th Street. This was the main music shop in New York in those halcyon days and this was the time just before the swinging sixties really got going when, like Ludwig drums and Zildjian cymbals, Fender and Gibson guitars, were like Gold dust over here in the UK.

The solid-bodied Fender Telecaster (nee Broadcaster) and Stratocaster looked so different to anything else we'd seen before, almost as if they came from another planet. This I suppose was the general idea. The post-war embargo on imports of American instruments to the UK was instigated to help Europe rebuild its industries, so there were some weird, make that, exciting looking guitars here made in recently war-torn countries behind the Iron Curtain. But they certainly weren't Fenders and mostly didn't pretend, or even purport to be.

The first to come close was used by every guitar-hero-to-be that I knew: Jimmy Page, Jeff Beck, Richie Blackmore, Russ Ballard, Tony Sheridan and of course George Harrison. The guitar in question certainly looked the part although its playability I'm told was evidently no match for the Fender. It was a 'Futurama' (also called Grazioso) produced in Italy therefore allowed to be sold here and Peter Thorp, who was already in The Roulettes when I joined in May 1962 certainly had one. I can't find any evidence of that particular model being available in different colours and assume from the evidence of those I've seen over the years, that like 'Model T' Fords, you could have it in any colour you liked so long as it was black. This was at a time when, as I said earlier, Leo Fender and Orville Gibson's futuristic inventions certainly weren't readily available in Great Britain. So, many of the guitarists I've mentioned were waiting patiently to get their hands on one to kick-start their careers.

When I first met my childhood next door neighbour Cliff Richard's backing group, they were actually known as the Drifters like the American vocal group featuring Ben E King who hit it big with great songs like Doc Pomus' poignant song "Save the last dance for me". As far as I know, no one in America seems to have tapped any writs on Hank's or the rest of 'The Shads' shoulders before ordering the UK Drifters to cease, desist and become 'The Shadows'. But I'm guessing they must have been issued with a stern warning.

When I was in the Daybreakers we did a charity gig with Cliff and the guys in Cheshunt. This was when Tony Meehan was still in the band and we got to see Hank's Antoria guitar up-close in its cardboard (?) case. We were sharing the same classroom Harry Webb had been educated in along with my sister at their old school in Cheshunt and using it as a dressing room. Jim Wilkinson, one of our

pals, who was responsible for the holes and equal bouts on Russell Ballard's unique Fender guitar - and, while I'm on the subject, invented the original late sixties 'Argent' futuristic logo. Jim couldn't resist strumming it gently in its case whereupon its famous owner with the horn-rimmed glasses growled: "leave it alone son, it cost a lot of money." It was an 'Antoria' which to my mind, really did look like the proverbial 'plank of wood'; although no more than other solid six-stringed instruments available from Europe at the time. These were known disparagingly as 'Martian Cricket Bats' and made by Germans, Czechs, Italians and people of various other mainland European nationalities.

However other decent electric guitars were more readily available which not only played properly, they actually looked like they did. Arguably the best of these were made by Hofner and Framus. Hofner were originally made in Czechoslovakia but forced to relocate to Germany during the war. They produced smaller-bodied versions of regular Spanish 'proper' guitars, rather like Gibson's Les Pauls. The Hofner 'Committee' Brian Parker from The Hunters owned, had a full-size hollow body which was about as good as you could get outside of America. Brian eventually joined us in The Roulettes but by this time he had invested in a Fender Jazzmaster which was much more of a rock 'n' roll 'Axe'. Not that guitars were called that then. Brian didn't last long with Adam and eventually gave it all up to sit at home and write hit songs like "Concrete and Clay".

As I said, the most prevalent of these late-fifties guitars came from Germany and were made either by Hofner or Framus. The Club 40 and 50 and 60 models were made by Hofner and the first two were more or less identical with a single cutaway except the 50 had two pickups. It was the 60 which I saw the back of mostly because Russ Ballard owned one when we were in our first real group. As befits its ten digit's higher number, it was a more salubrious version of the 50.

We once played at an audition in Barnet at the Drill Hall with an amazing array of talent on display. Neil Christian with Jimmy Page, screaming Lord Sutch with Richie Blackmore, (or it could have been Jeff Beck?), The Outlaws with Billy Kuy (with his Burns Weill guitar) and Chas Hodges, and Russ Ballard with me and the rest of the Daybreakers -: and so on.

It's significant to note even though punters would suspect otherwise, we gullible musicians were getting absolutely nothing for our appearance - ***because it was an audition!*** The fact that Ron King, the promoter, was charging the audience

half-a-crown to get in seemed to have nothing to do with it. His adage was six groups tonight, six groups tomorrow night!

I was interviewing Ivor one day for what started out as his biography and morphed into a film then back into a book ostensibly about drums to be called: 'Crash. Bang, Wallop'. This, as the French say, "à la grace de dieu", will be out soon. He confided in me that it was he who was responsible for bringing guitars of sorts from Holland into this country when would-be rock 'n' rollers were crying- out for them. He called them 'rubbish' guitars which he sold for five pounds each. Believe it or not this princely sum included his profit. These were mainly meant to be worn and he had a full-length mirror in his dad's shop on Shaftesbury Avenue to show them that they really did look the business! It seems they weren't necessarily meant to be played although evidently some of them were optimistically fitted with jack sockets so were at least capable of being attached to amplifiers. Whether they worked or not was open to conjecture. Ivor told me the story of "one little Herbert" who put an electric plug on the end of the guitar's jack lead and plugged it directly into the mains! Of course, the guitar blew up and I suppose everybody in the music business learned an invaluable lesson,

I wonder where that Little Herbert is now?

This would have been some time before Cliff brought home a brand new Fender 'Strat' ostensibly for Hank after a visit to America. In 1960 this wonderful instrument would have cost him \$259.00 which at the time equated to £86.00 .I've tried to ascertain how that might be compared to a pint of milk but have nothing to offer other than the fact that it was 3 pence a bottle then complete with cream on the top. This is now equivalent to 44 pence. And in the UK, if Ivor was selling them, they'd be priced in guineas (one pound and one shilling which equals £1.05 in decimal currency). This would give him an extra 5 pence profit.

There was one guitar which I saw the back of quite a lot. It belonged to Adam Faith and had quite an illustrious history which made it arguably the most famous instrument I'd sat behind, It was pre-owned and had once belonged to Lonnie Donegan. It was a D18, a Martin Dreadnought and 'Tel' had always coveted it. It was the subject of a lot of hard bargaining every time the 'King of Skiffle' and the 'Prince of Pop' were together, which eventually resulted in a change of ownership. Lonnie had fitted it with a microphone inside which was highly unusual then.

With Adam, the Martin was called into play for the skiffle medley which consisted with one exception of a bunch of skiffle songs made famous by Lonnie Donegan himself. No, I'm afraid I don't know if any money changed hands for the guitar but I do have my own thoughts on the subject.

Even though Lonnie had used the acoustic guitar almost exclusively through his skiffle career he eventually capitulated and the guitar became the property of Terry Nelhams esq, As I said I'm not aware if Lonnie charged him but I do know it became part of the stage show and it was going to be my job for the next few years to catch it every night when Adam threw it at me.....

It went like this: I would jump off the drum rostrum and run to the front of the stage holding my valuable Ludwig tambourine at the ready. We four Roulettes and Adam would cluster round the microphone and launch into the skiffle medley which was followed eventually by (I'm sure you've guessed it) the rock'n' roll medley.

The Skiffle Medley comprised several of Lonnie's songs and one other from Peter, Paul and Mary called "Settle Down". The last song in the medley was "Putting on the style" and when we hit the last chord I'd run back to the rostrum and elegantly clamber on in time to catch the guitar which was sometimes thrown in my general direction from the front of the stage! My job was to capture the Martin in full-flight, lay it down carefully on the rostrum and park myself safely on the drum stool ready to count-in the next song.

Guitar throwing and catching over several yards with spotlights in your eyes, is not an exact science and depends on the guitar coming accurately in one's direction and the 'goal-keeper' not being forced to dive too far left or right off the three feet high rostrum. It should have been a team sport but I actually think it became more of a competition - drummer versus guitar. (Or maybe drummer versus pop star!)

To be honest I managed to catch it most of the time although sometimes Adam's aim wasn't accurate enough. What this meant was the guitar would crash into the curtains at the back of the stage and slide gently down them to the floor to come to rest safely on the folds where they gathered on the floor. - which was good! However, not all stages had curtains at the back and while a brick wall would certainly halt the Martin's potentially dangerous trajectory, of course it wouldn't do the guitar any good at all - which was bad!

It would need to find its way to the repair shop until the next time. I don't know what happened to Adam and Lonnie's guitar although I understand it was loaned to someone by Tel. That guy may unwittingly still have it.

By the time he joined Adam Faith, Russell had a Stratocaster and moved on to a Gibson SG in that dark red colour, which was all the go then. All the band had these Gibson guitars and basses in what IMHO was not a particularly exciting finish. (This may be why George put psychedelic patterns on his?). Russell also had a Gretsch or two including an orange Country Gentleman with a double cutaway and a small Les Paul-sized guitar called a 'Duo Jet' which I really liked mainly because it was covered in silver glitter like my Ludwig drum set.

In the fifties I'd done gigs with a band called the Bluejacks which was run rather well by a chap called Fred Wilkinson, who eventually became our road manager with The Roulettes, Unit 4 + 2 and in the fullness of time: Argent. I was already in a band with Russell and his brother Roy but Fred had more gigs in US camps so every now and again I found myself playing with him and Nobby Dalton - who went on to play bass in the Kinks. Fred had a very rare guitar called a Gretsch 'Roundup' which was stunning. It had the hot poker branded 'Big G' on the front, a leather binding around the slab edge of its body and a belt buckle tail piece showing a cowboy scene with steers. In his innocence, Fred eventually swapped this rarity for a Fender Strat.

Russell had a favourite Les Paul which he'd once hired for a session from a company in Shepherds Bush and which he liked so much he eventually managed to persuade them to sell to him.

He had several guitars which were useful in the studio like a low bass with rubber strings which I always suspected was a Kubicki but ultimately wasn't. And a seven-string Fender both of which seemed to be superfluous to stock at Arbiter, so Russell bought them for a song - pun intended. While I'm on the subject, it always surprised me that Fender didn't produce a genuine 5 string Telecaster for Keith Richards and a version of Russell's 'Holy' guitar for anybody else.

John Rogers, who was unfortunately killed in a road accident on the way to a gig, had a Fender Precision bass but like the other Roulettes had swapped it for a Gibson with the equal double cutaways of the SG body shape. Within a day or two of John's sad death we had a new bass player named John Rogan who was immediately named Mod - obviously because he was a rocker. He arrived with a

precision bass but decided to keep John Roger's bass and take over the payments on it. Mod's Fender bass ultimately found its way to Chas Chandler of The Animals who was of course responsible for bringing Jimi Hendrix over to London.

Otherwise, all the bass players I played with had a precision:: Lem Lubin, Mark Griffiths, John Gordon, Mickey Steed, John Rogers, Mod Rogan, Chas Hodges, Dave Wintour and Jim Rodford. Bobby Skeat, most certainly did have a precision bass, although he used a Music Man 5-string a lot with us.

Mod tells an incriminating but great story about a gig at a golf club in darkest Hertfordshire with Jim Rodford on bass. They were playing a Chuck Berry song (say !Sweet Little Sixteen), when Jim, having decided to segue to another of Chuck's great songs, turned round and said change key up to A. Mod said: " I'm already in A!" I think that might have been the birth of 'Progressive Rock' in that very snooty golf club.

I've been fortunate to have played with exceptionally good bass players, all of whom as I've said, all seemed to have that one thing in common besides talent - at least one Fender Precision bass. Mod brought one with him when he joined but as I said immediately switched to the bass his predecessor had used: that Gibson EB3. I don't remember Bernie Benson ever having a Fender precision (although he had somehow acquired an unusual Gretsch acoustic guitar) from somewhere .

Mark Griffiths played with me in 'The Insults' with Ian Mathews in the seventies and owned an absolute plethora of unusual vintage guitars which came in very handy when I was asked to be Art Director for a film by an ex-next-door neighbour. She lived on the opposite side of us to Cliff Richard and his family. We were charged with fitting out a fifties music shop situated in London's West end (say Denmark Street) with relevant instruments for a film called "Absolute Beginners" starring David Bowie, Ray Davies and Patsy Kensit. I had all the necessary drums to dress the film in my loft and threatening to bring the roof down!

Griff had all the right guitars for the era including Macaferri guitars made in France by Selmer from plastic. (These had been recently discovered in a warehouse near Paris and were snatched up by Griff.) The drums to dress this film were a piece of cake to find since they too were in my loft.

“Ab Beg” wasn’t overwhelmingly successful but it did lead to another film for me. It was commissioned by HBO to dress a film only loosely about The Fab Four. It was called “Imagine - John and Yoko”, which was more complicated since it was essentially a love affair without too much music being visibly played in it, but with a lot of dressing room and backstage locations to set up many iconic and well-known scenes. Obviously, these needed to be kitted out properly with guitars on seats so no one could sit down. You know how guitarists are? This necessitated Hofner basses, Gretsch and Rickenbacker guitars, Epiphones, Gibsons and of course Fenders; of all shapes and sizes. And lots of different drums from Premier, to Ludwig, Slingerland and so on, all with Beatles logos on the front of the bass drums. Strangely I haven't seen any of these heads since.

BTW Ian Mathews was something of an Epiphone collector with several of their ‘affordable’ guitars which for obvious reasons looked like Gibsons but were not. To ‘difference’ them from Gibsons, which were less - prosaically numbered ES 335, 355 and so on, they had slightly more exotically Italian sounding names inspired by hotels like Sheraton, Wilshire, Riviera, Crestwood, Tivoli, Casino, Coronet, and intriguingly Dot. (This I guess was an homage to the neck markings on early Gibsons like the ES335 which were simply small dots at the time, not the blocks found erroneously on Marty’s guitar in “Back to the Future”).

As I intimated, while I was involved with Arbiter every now and again, I would take tea with one or two of the Fender company’s marketing guys who were visiting and got to ask a few possibly impertinent questions. I’d always been confused as to why anybody would want more than one Strat in the same way that any drummer would want more than one or perhaps two, ‘Ludwig 400’ snare drums. (Unless he was fortunate enough to have one which was made from brass). To be honest I have owned quite a few Ludwig metal - shell drums but (cliche alert) if I'm honest probably never more than one of each model! The marketing people assured me since all Stratocasters were ostensibly different, Fender predicated their marketing message on three per customer. So now you know.

Jim Rodford used a Fender Mustang short scale bass because Dave preferred the more contained sound it put out and also had a Status graphite neck bass as a back up, which he went on to use for gigs with The Zombies and for casual gigs with me and the rest of his pals. However, his book ‘Sideman’ has photos of basses like his Danelectro twin horn for which one of his pals made an aluminium body. He also had a hybrid guitar made from a Strat and a Precision which I was always surprised Fender didn't emulate. It was ingenious and the guitars could be very quickly put back to their original conditions. We were in

Cincinnati in 1970 and whilst out poraging, I discovered an original Fender bass (not a Precision) which was \$100 and therefore not much more than £30 or so, painted what may have been 'surf green'.

Little Jimmy decided the colour probably wasn't original so he passed on it.

John Rogers had a Framus bass before moving on to a Fender Precision from the late fifties with Adam Faith. After his untimely death this valuable instrument sat on an armchair in the sun in his mother's front room until it was deemed unplayable and pretty much unsaleable. (I was once told that Eddie Cochran's iconic Gretsch 'Chet Atkins' suffered the same fate after his sad demise. But it's rumoured that special constable Dave Dee, of Dozy, Beaky, Mick and Titch fame who was on duty at the time learned to play on it when it was awaiting repatriation from the police station but, since it's now behind glass in the Rock 'n' Roll hall of fame that seems a little far-fetched .

Chas Hodges definitely started with a Hofner bass which he inadvertently knocked the head off and fixed back on with a hammer and nails! He eventually wisely invested in a more durable Fender

Throughout my years in the Kinks from 1984, Dave Davies was using a Telecaster Elite and evidently the model with Lace Sensor pickups. Experts like Colin Burns tell me this was very different to a regular Telecaster. These days he is using a Gibson Nighthawk which is similar in shape to a Les Paul but has a very different pick up configuration.....

He had an identical Tele Elite as a backup but would only ever change guitar if he broke a string or went out of tune....I know Dave had other guitars in the early days like the Harmony when the Kinks started but I never sat behind these. Otherwise there was a plethora of Les Pauls, the odd Strat and eventually a Gretsch Country Gentleman, or could it have been a Tennessean?

There seem to be two more or less parallel stories about the acquisition of Dave's Gibson 'Flying V'. His Harmony Meteor was either broken by the airline the Kinks flew in on, or stolen in America. Either way, Dave needed to replace it with another. In those days as it happened most people I knew only had one main guitar. The Kinks guys went to a 'Mom and Pop' music shop which didn't have anything Dave fancied. Eventually he spotted a guitar in a case on top of a high shelf which the shop owners had probably forgotten about - and thought they'd never get rid of. Inside was a brand new Flying Vee which Dave bought on sight. I wasn't there and never saw its original finish but do know it was eventually sanded down to natural wood. I'm pretty sure Dave also had a Guild Starfire, and an Epiphone Casino but I suspect these may have been hidden away in the guitar room at Konk Studios.

Dave had various guitars during my Kinks tenure and the whole story about the Flying Vee may not be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but. However, to

quote first William Shakespeare then Keith Moon, “never let the truth get in the way of a good story”.

Raymond Douglas Davies used an old Gibson Melody Maker for most of the set but also used a Gibson Victory (Gibson’s answer to the Fender Stratocaster with three single coil pickups) and of course the Dobro with its metal body and a resonator inside. Otherwise, Ray used an Ovation acoustic and would swap that for a sunburst Gibson Les Paul for the end section of Lola: L-O-L-A; Lola .

It's not until a couple of years ago that I played with someone with a Fender 12 string and found it to be an exceedingly comfortable experience. I played in The Cavern with a West-Coast American band called The Malibooz and enjoyed it immensely. The band’s de facto leader was one John Zambetti and the other guys had been in ‘Spirit’ with Randy California. We’d played together when we were all making satisfyingly big waves in America at the very end of the sixties, Of course I’d played on records where they used 12 strings for effect, but none which actually contributed the zing and body the Fender XII did.

Quite some time earlier, with Chris Curtis gone, I’d made an album with the Searchers, whose early records always featured a highly distinctive Rickenbacker 12 string. This was in what used to be Pye Recording Studios now known as PRT - Precision, Records and Tapes. And having arrived early and checked out my drums I looked around all the rest of the gear for the band’s ubiquitous Rickenbacker 12 String, There wasn’t one. I asked whether they were using one and they said they didn’t anymore. Talk about throwing the baby out with the bathwater!

While I'm on the subject The Rickenbacker 12 is strung ‘backwards’ so it’s like no other. The thicker string is set above the thinner one. This makes a difference to the sound.

Don McLean had lots of acoustic guitars and banjos, Martins and the like (and I suspect he had a Dobro somewhere) and even a fiberglass shelled Ovation like Ray’s. But I don't ever recall him using a solid-bodied guitar. I went to the Ovation factory in Hartford, Connecticut once on drum business and discovered the guy who came up with the concept began by making attack helicopters or at least their rotors before moving to what was potentially the loudest acoustic guitar I've ever sat behind, This ‘attack’ word has always flummoxed me. Do they have Defence helicopters too? This is one of music’s conundrums like why is there only one monopolies commission and how do you switch off the lights on a Volvo?

I once owned a red 'Roger' guitar which was shaped much like a Les Paul. It was built in Berlin, Germany in the fifties by a chap called Roger Rosmeisl who moved to America and went on to fame (and hopefully fortune) in America by designing and building Rickenbackers, and ultimately hollow-bodied Fenders. I once heard a fascinating story about Rickenbackers from my partner in Drumstore who knew these things. They had a unique model with 'slanting' frets and neither Rickenbacker nor Roger Rosmeisl saw fit to register the idea. However, an enterprising opportunist in the UK did and thereafter Rickenbacker had to pay a royalty to the guy on every guitar sold. Carpe diem!

There was another guitar I must have sat behind which I don't think I've ever written about before. A certain famous guitarist had a certain American guitar (say a Gretsch small bodied one) which was in a certain London guitar shop for a refurb. One of my pals wandered in with a not insurmountable problem with his own Gretsch which needed attention. It turned out the shop, call it Guitar Gity for argument's sake, couldn't mend it on the spot and advised him he'd need to leave it with them for a couple of days. My pal said he needed it for a gig that night and perhaps they could lend him something. They looked around the shop and told him that they had a Gretsch like his which belonged to possibly the world's most famous guitarist at the time who hadn't got around to telling his roadie to pick up yet. The people in the shop felt the owner of the guitar wouldn't mind him borrowing it, providing he got it back in a day or two - and that was that.

The guitar became known as 'the missing Gretsch'!

John Verity had a penchant for exotic Gibsons and Fenders with the odd Yamaha and Hayman thrown in when he endorsed them.

Ray Minhinnett had this same love for Gibsons and Fenders and had a couple of highly collectible guitars from each company which, if he's still got them, must be valuable. I seem to remember one of those two had a Firebird or was it possibly an Explorer, or even a reverse Thunderbird?

Like me, John Grimaldi was a Hayman endorser with a double neck 6/12 guitar, one of which he sometimes forgets to turn off when using the other. It therefore continued to ring in sympathy - sort of like bagpipes. Unfortunately, I don't remember us ever looking for that particular sound!

Mickey Steed had a bass which I'd sat behind and forgotten about. It's a Peavey nicknamed 'Ryanair' which he takes to gigs outside the UK (like Peenemunde

where we went with Chip Hawkes one weekend). If Steedy needs to fly to work, he doesn't care too much about this instrument getting broken by the airline. This is of course because he paid very little for it - £68.01 to be precise. It was bought from Cash Convertors via Ebay. To cut the story short, having christened it after an equally cheap and cheerful airline, Steedy actually discovered this cheap-as-chips bass played and sounded great, at least as good as his other much more expensive basses. As I said, he'd been to the old East Germany with Chip Hawkes and now he found himself on the horns of a dilemma and looking eagerly for another, even less expensive bass.

I did meet the famous 'Lucille' once when Argent was doing a gig in a college gym in Dayton, Ohio in 1970. I stood back as we came off-stage after our set to let BB King through who was holding Lucille (a Gibson 335 or perhaps a 355?) securely to his chest with both arms wrapped around her as protection. BB flashed me a grateful smile for letting him through and said the immortal words: "Sounds good man".

Up until the very latest version of the RGB band, I don't believe I ever sat behind a 'lefty' guitarist. I was working with The Roulettes for several months in France when Jimi Hendrix arrived here in 1966 to find fame and fortune. So I never got a chance to play with the 'Experience'. Unfortunately, no one was likely to get the gig without auditioning so I didn't get to experience them. Aynsley Dunbar and a host of other eager drummers did audition and of course we know Mitch Mitchell won the coin toss and got the gig. But, be careful what you wish for because having had several serious conversations on the subject with Mitch, the gig with Jimi ended in tears for just about everybody.

So that preamble was actually plot-laying about the fact I never ever played behind somebody 'sinister' (as we well-educated Catholic kids learned in our Latin classes). This left-handedness was evidently the devil's work which could of course be beaten out of us by nuns and Jesuits - if they really put their minds to it. Although since I wasn't left-handed, simply what non-catholics call a "left-footer" - that never happened to me, I was getting seven kinds beaten out of me for lots of other appalling transgressions like not wearing my school cap on the top deck of the trolleybus (for obvious macho reasons) as I was on my way past Tottenham High School for Girls!

Roland Jones from 'RGB and Friends' has had a couple of lefty Stratocasters and a right handed one too also strung upside down. So was well on the way to filling his Fender marketing quota and was playing into their hands with three of their

strats on the go, But to give him his due, one of them was tuned down to give 'that' sound. I don't know how many genuine left handed instruments Roly has owned, although I'm aware if you're going to be left-handed you're better off being a left handed drummer like Ringo because even though Ritchie didn't do it, it's a doddle to turn the right handed kit around to mirror image

Copr. RJ Henrit
March 2021

DAVE'S COVER QUEST

This month we have a challenge. The featured song is a recording by **Robin Sarstedt**. It's another one that seems to be impossible to find. So, if anyone manages to track it down, it would be a great one to share.

No.37(A) Something's Goin' On by Robin Sarstedt



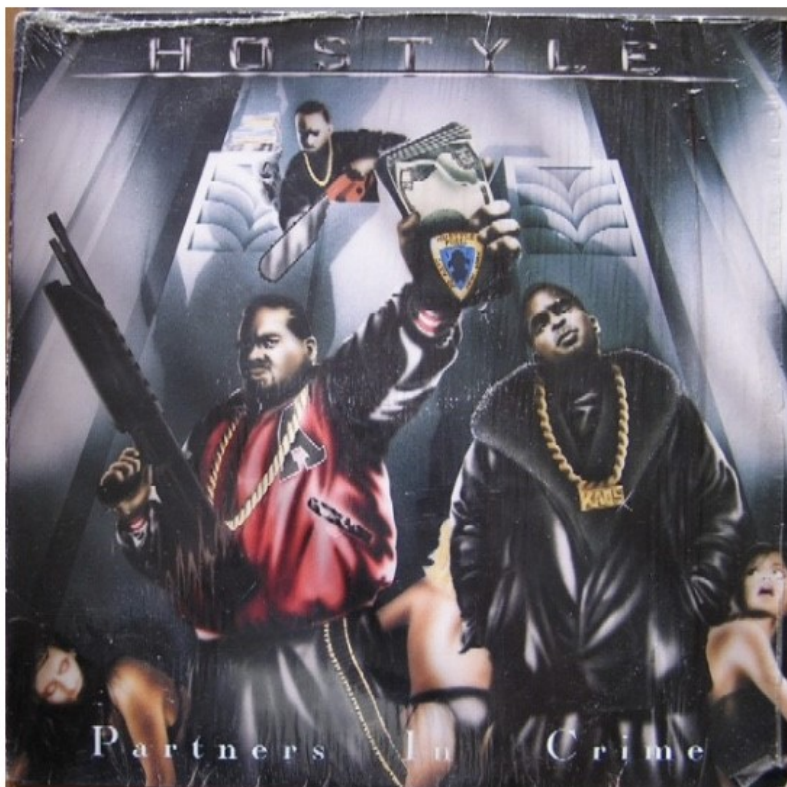
Born in India to parents who were British Civil Servants, Clive 'Robin' Sarstedt is best known for his big hit **My Resistance is Low**, a cover of the **Hoagy Carmichael** song, which reached No.3 in the UK charts in 1976. Two years later

he released **Something's Goin' On**, written by Russ Ballard. Sadly, the single has proved to be very elusive, even You Tube didn't turn anything up.

Robin followed in the footsteps of his two older brothers. **Richard Sarstedt** had a No.1 UK hit with **Well I Ask You**, under the name **Eden Kane**, and **Peter Sarstedt**, who passed away in 2017, is remembered for his 1969 No.1 hit **Where Do You Go To (My Lovely)**, a song that I personally never cared for.

Back to Robin. Is it the same song that Frida recorded? Possibly. The title is shorter, but two years later in 1988, a group called **Hostyle** released a Hip Hop / Rap song called **Something's Goin' On**, and I did manage to find that one, and it is indeed the same song that Frida recorded.

No.37(B) Something's Goin' On by Hostyle



Hostyle were a Hip Hop / Rap band and their rendition of **Something's Goin' On** featured on their album **Partners in Crime**.

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=DNpc2ZmpgUw>