

TALES FROM THE WOODS

Newsletter No. 4

April 2001

Bop till we drop

Eddie Sheldon and the Prowlers - now that's a name to conjure with, Kats and Kittens, especially Ken Major. Let's transport ourselves back into the early sixties circa 1961/1962. Eddie was quite a cool dude - black peg slacks, more often than not a four button near-drape jacket and a jet black pompadour that, indeed, wouldn't embarrass Tony Papard. Eddie and his band could be found, almost nightly, playing the pubs around Tottenham, Edmonton and the surrounding area.

Myself and mates Knobby Robinson, Hutchie, Ronnie Turner and Colin Taffe (one of these I am still in contact with - I wonder what happened to the rest?) saw Eddie and the boys play countless times at a pub near Lower Edmonton station (the name of which totally escapes me now - suggestions on a postcard please). But other places I do remember - for example Crosskeys, Lambs Institute, and Tottenham Swan to name but a few.

Freddy 'Fingers' Lee could be found playing the same establishments around the same period of time. In fact, Freddy often used to sit in, playing piano on Eddie's gigs. Oh yes! Eddie was a Rock'n'Roller through and through, yet he could be surprisingly eclectic, especially for the period, picking up on Jimmy Reed's 'Honest I Do' and Howlin' Wolf's 'You'll Be Mine' a good couple of years before the Rolling Stones and the Yardbirds hijacked the Chess/VeeJay back catalogues. Eddie, cruising Tottenham High Street in his black V8 Ford Pilot, was an everyday occurrence back in those far off days with, naturally, the window wound $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way down, arm resting on it.

Us kids got to know Eddie quite well and he often used to give us a lift home. Eddie's

girl, Sue, was a feline chick, wearing those tight pencil skirts, often set off with a silk blouse, hair swept back from her forehead in the compulsory ponytail. Eddie himself was quite a character. Often, with us kids in the back he'd do his party trick which normally meant that, whilst stopped at traffic lights he would beat his fists on the steering wheel, doing a D.J.Fontana drum roll, and bellowing a few lines of 'Hound Dog' to the startled passers by. Another party trick was somewhat more alarming - while driving along he would suddenly flick out a comb from his back pocket, adjusting the rear view mirror to comb his pompadour with Sue leaning across to steer the car with one hand, groping his crotch with the other! Oh yes, Kats and Kittens, quite a girl was Sue.

Fast forward almost forty years. A few days ago I was in Cleethorpes (oh yes) often described as the 'Jewel of the Lincolnshire Coast'. Personally, I would prefer to call it a 'Fish-stinking Suburb of Grimsby Masquerading as a Seaside Resort'. After a bracing walk along the promenade, I felt it was time for a beer. 'The Dolphin' looked enticing, a typical, snug sea-front pub. Once inside, I was greeted with a "Good evening" from the genteel, middle-aged lady behind the bar and a stoutish man perched on a bar stool. It seemed, perhaps, that I had interrupted a conversation. While waiting for my pint of Flowers to be pulled, I glanced around. Believe me, Kats and Kittens, it made the 'Buzz Bar' look busy! A couple of elderly ladies sat gossiping, oblivious to their gentleman friend, who sat, dozing off, hands resting on a walking stick plus a couple of lads playing pool - that was about it.

I exchanged small talk with the aforementioned man on the bar stool. Although his hair was thinning and grey, there was something about his persona. You know how us Rock'n'Rollers instantly

recognise each other - a slight quiff, a sort of peacock strut when he left his bar stool briefly to head towards the loo. The conversation, like the beer, flowed freely. He told me he had just retired after working in a Fish Finger factory in Grimsby for over 35 years. "Have you always lived in Grimsby?" I asked casually. "Oh no," he replied, "Like you, I'm from London."

Well, Kats, you could have knocked me over with a mallet. To cut a long story short, (and as you've probably already guessed) it was Eddie Sheldon! To say I was gob-smacked would be somewhat of an understatement. Once we got on the subject of Rock'n'Roll, the years flew from Eddie and he became animated. Once again, I was riding in the back of his V8 Ford Pilot, the years simply melting away. The Tottenham we knew, of course ceased to exist many years ago but we relived old haunts, old faces, old times. Eddie went on to recount his life, how he had met his wife Sylvia - a Doncaster girl - while he was on holiday in Blackpool back in '63. Married before the year was out, they moved to Grimsby. Well, that certainly explains why Eddie disappeared from the local scene so rapidly. Sylvia was, by all accounts, a home loving girl and did not care for Eddie playing in a Rock'n'Roll band so he gave it all up. Living quietly, working in the Fish Finger factory, in all that time Eddie has only been back to London once and that was way back in '83 to see Jerry Lee Lewis at the Hammersmith Odeon. Apart from seeing Charlie Gracie play a local Grimsby club a few years back, this seems to be the sum total of Eddie's Rock'n'Roll life since leaving North London.

Naturally the conversation turned to Sue (albeit with a little prompting from me). He gazed at me for a few seconds, gazed down at his pint and then looked kinda wistfully at me as he related the following bizarre story.

Although Eddie hasn't seen Sue since the day he left her outside the Crosskeys in Edmonton, crying in the rain on a wet, dismal autumn evening back in '63, he has exchanged Christmas cards and the odd letter with Sue's mother ever since. Well, Kats and Kittens, while we might consider Eddie's life a little mundane, at least to our exciting standards, Sue's on the other hand has been the total opposite. Certainly

eventful to say the least. After splitting with Eddie she embarked on a new life. By 1967 she found herself enrolled as a student at Chelsea College of Art. It was there that she met a boy finally able to step into Eddie's shoes. A dashing Frenchman, an idealist and politically active. By the following year they were living in Paris, close to the Sorbonne and during the Spring revolt of '68, Sue and her French lover manned the barricades.

However, what came next would make the student's revolt seem like kid's stuff for she ditched the Frenchman and took up with a German born, Marxist/Leninist political revolutionary, Gerard Schmidt - a leading light in the soon to be notorious Bader-Meinhoff gang. For the first half of the 1970s they spent many happy years together, blowing up banks and hijacking aircraft (as you do) until Sue and Gerard were blessed with a child in 1975. With Interpol closing in on the Bader-Meinhoff gang, Sue fled with her baby, leaving Europe for North Africa where she still lives to this day. With her unmarried son Sebastian, they have an Arts and Crafts shop in Marrakesh.

Well, Kats and Kittens, it was great to see Eddie again after all these years - after talking about the old times and the amazing story of his girlfriend, by the end of the evening Eddie seemed to be quite a different person from the one I saw when I first walked into the pub, sitting alone, perched on a bar stool. As I left the pub a little after closing time, he was up on his feet, dancing around with a wooden chair - a little inappropriate to a 'West Life' track but the spirit was there.

If you remember Eddie or want to converse with a lonely old Rock'n'Roller (not me!) he asked me to pass on his address to you all via the 'Tales from the Woods' newsletter so here it is;

**Eddie and Sylvia Sheldon
151 Willingham Street
Grimsby
South Humberside**

Keep rockin'.

I reproduce below a paragraph from last month's newsletter;

"Tony Papard has come up with this wonderful idea for Christmas 2001. Our very own "Gang Pantomime" which, naturally, will be Rock'n'Roll related with traditional Panto themes."

Here is the new column from Tony...

"Pox from the Papard"

OVER THE RAINBOW

(Three Steps to Rock'n'Roll Heaven) - a Panto by Tony Papard.

Well, I see Ed has me down to play Dead Elvis in some Christmas Rock'n'Roll pantomime I'm supposed to be writing a script for. I vaguely remember a discussion between us about this project when we were both rather inebriated - seemed like a good idea at the time, now I'm not so sure. Would anyone remember their lines? Could some of us hear the prompts? Who's good at running up fantastic costumes - Elvis, Big Bopper, Bill Haley and Gene Vincent outfits for example?

How about "Over the Rainbow", a panto about Rock'n'Roll Heaven based on the Wizard of Oz? Gene Vincent's version of the song could be the theme music. All wandering round in drug and alcohol induced stupors trying to keep their feet on the Yellow Brick Road, helped by the Yellow Brick Roadie and many friends of Dorothy. Then it all goes horribly wrong. They all start bitching at each other - Big Bopper and Ritchie Valens think **THEY** should have become posthumous superstars, and their agent demands they get top billing in any future air crashes. Buddy, meanwhile, tells his agent the air crash was the best career move he ever made "otherwise I'd be remembered like the Everly Brothers". Meanwhile, Elvis gets told he is to be reincarnated in his next life as the ugly member of a talentless boy band so when they

split up he won't even get to have a solo career signing autographs for fans and appearing on saucy calendars. This is his 'karma' penance for making people suffer with all those awful 1960's movies. Bill Haley is going around telling everyone the Rock'n'Roll scene is one big happy family, but how dare the Jodimers go around pretending to be the Comets when he fired them all back in the mid-'50s? Rudy Pompilli agrees and gets up a petition to get

1970's Comet, Johnny 'Bam-Bam' Lane to go and sort them out! Carl Perkins and Eddie Cochran open a Hip Gear store selling blue suede shoes, pink pegged slax and all the rest of the cool 1950's clothing but the friends of Dorothy break in at night, high on 'E', spray all the clothes with glitter dust, go mad with needles, cotton and sequins and when they finally put on the gear, it is so garish and over the top, that Roy Acuff and Minnie Pearl wander on stage thinking it's the Grand Ole Opry (Porter Wagoner had nothing on these suits). Dorothy, meanwhile, gets pissed off with the Munchkins, gets high on cocaine and ends up strangling them all. She is put in clink and Elvis serenades her with Jailhouse Rock.

The whole thing comes to an exciting climax (if you'll pardon the expression) when Larry Parnes and Joe Meek turn up claiming they started the boy band phenomenon back in the 1950s, but they didn't wait for the groups to split up before they embarked the band members on solo careers. They start slagging off Colonel Tom Parker and Elvis gets mad at them, saying the Colonel saved his career by stopping him marrying 14 year old Priscilla and taking her on a tour of

England in 1958. "Sleep with her, don't marry her. You're a superstar, not some cousin marrying hick from the backwoods". This doesn't go down well with Jerry Lee Lewis Junior, and Larry and Joe say Elvis was only a Cliff Richard impersonator anyway and couldn't be any good since he never appeared at the birthplace of Rock'n'Roll - the 21's coffee bar in Soho. As fights break out between the Brits and

KATS AND KITTENS, SO MANY SURPRISES THIS MONTH. AS PROMISED LAST ISSUE, A NEW, OCCASIONAL COLUMN FROM THE WORLD RENOWNED ROCK'N'ROLL WRITER, TONY WILKINSON

Winkles in the Mud

Surgeons claim to have replaced a man's diseased penis with one of his fingers - and it is apparently proving up to the job. Doctors in the former Soviet republic of Georgia said they cut off the 50 year old's member and replaced it by sewing on his middle finger, complete with knuckles. They claimed the 17 hour operation was a world first.

Plastic surgeon, Ivan Kusanov, who carried out the procedure, said the patient was able to urinate 12 days later via a tube inserted through the 'finger-penis'. Although he took a lot longer to recover his sex drive.

According to reports by a German press agency, the new penis is now "working perfectly well as a sex organ" a year after he went under the knife. Mr Kusanov said the patient's two girlfriends were "more than satisfied with the results". He added, "Because the knuckles were left on the finger during the operation, the man has been left with an unusual trick. He can bend his finger-penis as required".

the Yanks, Billy Fury lands a punch on Elvis and knocks him out. Then Larry Williams, Chuck Willis, LaVern Baker and Malcolm X come on stage giving clenched-fist salutes and screaming that the whites stole Rhythm'n'Blues so they're all impostors. Black Power rules!

The panto ends with a huge free-for-all as the friends of Dorothy in their brightly coloured sequined suits link arms for a Tiller Girls type finale as Alma Cogan takes centre stage and claims she was the true innovator and Queen of Rock'n'Roll, but Pearl Carr and Teddy Johnson push her off the stage and say they started it all as the curtain comes down to the strains of 'Three Steps to heaven'. Finally, Screamin' Jay Hawkins and Screamin' Lord Sutch (in full costume) jump through the closed curtains, spray worms and fire over the audience and say if this is Rock'n'Roll Heaven, they're off to Hell.

All good Christmassy fun, I'm sure you'll agree. I did think of having Patsy Cline come on singing her air crash hit 'I Fall to Pieces' but thought this might be in bad taste. Cheers!
Tony Papard

If any of you are smitten by Tony's précis of the script and want to put your names down for a role, please get in touch.



'Tales from the Woods' has decided to start a campaign for knighthoods to be awarded to our own Brit musical heroes. 'Now Dig This' has its yearly Real Rock'n'Roll awards, and quite rightly so. 10 Downing Street will be receiving the latest copy of 'Tales from the Woods'. Allegedly, our Prime Minister is known to strap on a Strat. This is how we see it at 'Tales from the Woods' HQ: if Elton John can receive a knighthood for rewriting one of his biggest mawkish hits for the benefit of the funeral of the late Princess of Wales; if Paul McCartney can receive one for being the least controversial member of the song-writing partnership (would John Lennon have been knighted if he had lived - I think not); if Cliff Richard can become a Sir for having over a hundred hit records and... eek... umm... being celibate; then we at 'Tales from the Woods' say...

"Arise Sir Lonnie Donegan"

The king of Skiffle, the founding father of the British music scene, the man who brought the Blues to a much wider audience. Without

him, would there have been the London R & B scene in the early sixties, leaving the gate open for the Rolling Stones, Alexis Korner, the Yardbirds and so forth?

"Arise Sir Ray Davis"

The erstwhile leader of the Kinks, a songwriter who wrote about local places and culture, his vision of dead-end streets. Why, he even made Waterloo Station sound romantic! In the humble opinion of 'Tales from the Woods' the only true genius of British pop music.



Whilst on the subject of local heroes, I went to see **Marty Wilde** at the Stag Theatre in Sevenoaks a couple of weeks ago. In fact, the same evening that **Glen Honeycutt** was playing the Tennessee Club over there near Cockfoster's. As Ritchie Gee insists on moving his club further and further out north-side which means a £30 taxi fare (at least) back home, I decided instead, along with a few local friends, to take a twenty minute train ride down to Sevenoaks. I'm certainly glad I did!

The Wildcats did an hour in the first half and then Marty came on and did two hours. Brilliant! The outstanding part for me was him doing 'That's All Right Mama', 'Rockhouse', his own 'Born to Rock'n'Roll' and a knockout 'Mack the Knife' and 'Endless Sleep'. Along the way he did 'Bad Boy', 'Sea of Love', a Billy Fury tribute, an Eddie Cochran tribute as well as a lot of chatter, between songs, about the old days on the road with Fury and Dickie Pride. Yes folks, a highly entertaining evening.

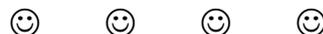


Last year you may recall there was a great deal of hullabaloo concerning the Queen Mother reaching her century. Indeed, the Daily Mail dedicated no less than five pages to her, declaring the lady to be a genius in her ability to eat a boiled egg unaided.

'Tales from the Woods' is a little concerned by the fact that another Royal would be reaching the magic 100 this year without a squeak from the media or Buck house. The Royal in question is Princess Alice. We did hear a rumour that the aforementioned lady has been in a state of compos-mentis since her last appearance on the balcony of Buckingham Palace back in 1982.

COMING NEXT MONTH
C.D. REVIEWS
BY
BRYAN CLARKE
(HARD ROCK BUNTER)
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NOW FOR THE UK'S LEADING ROCK'N'ROLL
SATIRICAL NEWSLETTER.

The next gang meet up will be Friday 6th April, at the **John Snow, Broadwick Street**, from 18:45 hours onwards. Depart for a meal at approx. 20:20. The consensus of opinion is to return to **Jimmy's**, the Greek restaurant in Frith Street, close to Ronnie Scott's. I shall book a table.



'Tales from the Woods' contacted Buckingham Palace by phone and, on enquiry, was greeted by a terse "No comment" from an aide close to the Royal family. We were, however, later contacted by a source close to Buck House and told (unofficially) that the rumour is in fact true. She is hidden away at Kensington Palace and being used for spare parts. The Queen Mother has her hip while Princess Margaret has her feet and lungs. "You see," the source confided, "there would simply be no point in celebrating. There is not much left of her to display on the balcony of Buckingham Palace!"

No quiz this month and no correct replies from last month. Back next month, all things being equal.

'Tales from the Woods' would like to apologise for the absence of the article and picture promised last month on Graham Morgan meeting Fats Domino at his home in New Orleans. Due to circumstances beyond editorial control (Graham's a very busy man and was, sadly unable to meet the deadline) this should now appear next month.



Congratulations go out to Tony Papard who celebrates a birthday on March 20th. Fans of Tony will be pleased to hear that, on a good day he, too, can still eat a boiled egg unaided.

Keith woods sends out a sincere "Thank you" to all those who attended the Selhurst railway Club gig, some of whom travelled a considerable distance to be there in such appalling weather. From the bottom of my heart, "Thanks".

Congratulations also to Rita who celebrates a birthday on April 3rd. Naturally, I'm far too much of a gentleman to reveal her age other than to say that she was born after Elvis Presley and before Robbie Williams.

And finally... (*I feel like a late night newsreader*)

One-time student firebrand and now Home Secretary, Jack 'The Kack' Straw has, in his wisdom, decided that anyone taking part in direct action e.g. protesting against genetically modified crops or against road building through green-belt land etc. can be classified as a terrorist with all the appropriate infringements of liberty. Well, I've got one thing to say to that... come the first of May, go get 'em Calum! I'll be rooting for you. Give them Hell!

'Tales from the Woods' wishes Tony Wilkinson and his family a safe trip to the U.S.A. in April. No doubt Tony will be telling us all about his adventures in some future issue of this illustrious tome.

Keith Woods

