

TALES FROM THE WOODS

Newsletter No. 6

June 2001

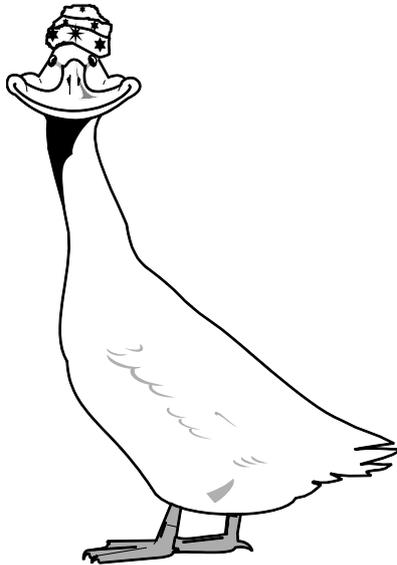
There's a Guy in the Funny Papers We All Know.

The Legend of the Great Goosetti The mystical goose

Just a few days ago Kats, whilst I was wandering aimlessly in old London Town I passed McDonald's. On that site in those old glory days of the Music Hall stood the Holborn Empire. I stood a while gazing, wiping the odd tear from my cheek as I recalled my sweet old Romany grandmother who many of you may know trod the boards.

An old trouper who did a double act with her faithful mystical goose, billed as 'Gypsy Mabel Cable and the Great Goosetti'. Up and down the land they played the halls and what a striking couple they were. The Great Goosetti, proud and aloof, never seen without his glittering jewel encrusted turquoise turban.

Oh yes, the Great Goosetti may be long dead but to this day he is spoken of in hushed and reverential tones within those hallowed walls of the stage, the theatrical newspaper standing defiantly against change near old London Bridge, in bars and dressing rooms of every variety theatre in the land. They remember, those who were touched no matter how briefly by the magic of the mystical goose, such were his astounding feats. Gypsy Mabel Cable would gently tap twice upon the head of Goosetti to induce a trance in which he would slowly levitate. Oh, how the audience would gasp with awe and astonishment as Goosetti levitated up to 12 feet above the stage. Silently, slowly and dramatically he would pass above the orchestra pit, above the heads of the



breathtaken audience, above the circle and the balcony the Great Goosetti would float before returning to the stage, landing gracefully beside Gypsy Mabel's feet. Ecstatic applause would erupt as Gypsy Mabel tapped Goosetti gently upon the head, instantly awoken out of the trance. The orchestra would strike up loudly, fighting a losing battle with the cheering crowd. "Bravo Goosetti! Bravo Goosetti!" up on their feet shouting at the top of their voices "Bravo Goosetti! Bravo Goosetti!". A cacophony of sound from the audience as Gypsy Mabel led Goosetti into their famous sand dance routine. For the first and only time during the course of the performance would Goosetti allow his veneer of seriousness to drop. The aloofness and professional superiority would evaporate and, with his head turned towards the audience he would let a smile stretch across his face, his eyes radiating that old showbiz charm as the orchestra would build into a frenzy. The conductor waving his baton like a demented windmill, Goosetti would take off his jewel encrusted turquoise turban, wave it above his head, his legs pumping like pistons as he and Gypsy Mabel danced around the stage.

Oh yes, Kats and Kittens, Goosetti was a true professional. How he loved the smell of the crowd and the roar of the greasepaint. Soon though, all this frivolity would cease, lights dim, and a hush would descend. A stage hand would carry a high chair centre-stage. Jewel encrusted turquoise turban placed firmly back on his head, Goosetti would climb on the chair and Gypsy Mabel would place a blindfold carefully over his eyes. For his final astonishing act of the evening he would call out the following Saturday football results;

Woking 4 - Arsenal 0
Accrington Stanley 7 - Manchester United 0

Oh how the packed auditorium would gasp as each result, which he rarely, if ever, got wrong was called out in his best BBC Home Service voice.

Alas, like all great artistes Goosetti was prone to erratic outbursts of temperament, Prima Donna backstage tantrums. Oh yes Gypsy Mabel and Goosetti, like all great double acts you could name, they had their differences. Don and Phil, Laurel and Hardy, Dale and Johnson, Gypsy Mabel Cable and the Great Goosetti were no different.

A perfect example of this was when the pair were booked for a summer season at Blackpool Tower. A long, arduous series of nightly shows - nerves frayed, tempers flared. One evening, towards the end of the season, Goosetti doing his levitating routine, no different from countless other evenings, Goosetti passed slowly, dramatically over the heads of the audience. Gypsy Mabel froze in horror as she watched Goosetti not returning to the stage but kicking open the swinging doors at the back of the auditorium with his left leg, levitating past the box office and out into the street and onto a passing tram to spend the entire night in a tram shed at Fleetwood.

1st April 1922 - almost 79 years ago to the day - virtually the only time in their 40 year career when Gypsy Mabel Cable and the Great Goosetti were not top of the bill. "Not top of the bill?" I hear you cry. No impresario, no agent, no one would dare suggest such a thing to Goosetti. It would cause his monocle to fall from his left eye, reduce even the biggest and best in the business to quivering jelly. But that fateful warm spring evening would prove to be the one and only night where a name would appear on the billboard above Goosetti's. For that name, Kats and Kittens, would be the great Russian ballet dancer Nijinsky. Gypsy Mabel Cable fraught with nerves, the Great Goosetti cool, calm and collected as ever as they dined at their favourite Moroccan restaurant in Notting Hill Gate. Goosetti's favourite dish of tagine of lamb with prunes and sautéed almonds was served, followed by Geffa (sweet couscous). Naturally not a word was passed between them while they dined. Goosetti had barely finished his last glass of Riesling before the

horse-drawn cab drew to a halt outside. Goosetti insisted upon horse-drawn cabs through to the end of their career in the late 1950s. He found motorised cabs very unbecoming to someone of his standing. Even by Goosetti's standards, he was unusually subdued during the ride from Notting Hill to the Holborn Empire, mentioning briefly to Gypsy Mabel, "Felt a little queasy, the pâté de fois gras was simply not up to standard". Gypsy Mabel Cable stood in passive silence as they waited in the wings, nervously caressing her crystal ball (which she rarely used, it was just a prop). Goosetti looked up at her, his face furrowed with a deep worrying frown. She read his mind. The Great Goosetti was ill. She knew as well as he that whatever the cost the show must go on. Waiting patiently as a young comedian billed as the Cheeky Chappie, Max Miller ran through his routine. As he ran off stage he smiled and winked at Goosetti which he naturally chose to ignore. "Common little man" he muttered under his breath. A roar of approval from the packed theatre as Gypsy Mabel Cable and the Great Goosetti were announced. Tonight Goosetti used his better judgement and chose not to levitate above the audience, keeping instead to the stage area.

Every newspaper and showbiz journal in the land were represented that evening at the famous Holborn Empire as the great Russian ballet dancer Nijinsky made his debut immediately after Gypsy Mabel Cable and the Great Goosetti left the stage. The audience tense with expectation as the house lights dimmed. A seriously pained expression hovered on the face of the conductor as he led his orchestra into the opening bars of Tchaikovsky's theme. For the first time outside his native Russia the dancer would be performing Prince Siegfried, the male lead from Swan Lake. Suddenly, Nijinsky appeared, sprung to the tips of his toes with arms outstretched when his toes slid from beneath him on goose diarrhoea and he lost his balance, skidding across the stage before crashing head first into the orchestra pit from where the air turned blue. Picking himself up helped by two very strong cello players he was pushed unceremoniously back on the stage. Even on such a momentous occasion Goosetti did not fail to leave his mark.

So Kats and Kittens, the decades passed - the roaring Twenties gave way to the depressive Thirties through to the war-torn Forties and into the rocking Fifties. A decade dominated by the rise of that new fangled invention television. Sadly the golden age of Music Hall was lost for ever, unceremoniously bulldozed or turned into cinemas and bingo halls. The Great Goosetti, no longer the agile goose he once was, his brow furrowed with age, his beak once firm and proud now frayed and limp.

They played their last performance on a cold foggy night, announcing their retirement from the stage of Clarke's Hall of Varieties on the old Mile End Road. You could surely have heard a pin dropped as Goosetti, tears streaming from his eyes, trembling Gypsy Mabel silent at his side walked from the stage for the last time. "Surely this couldn't be true!" screamed the headlines of the Daily Herald the following day; "A British Institution!" cried the Sketch. "Like the ravens deserting the Tower" huffed and puffed the Daily Telegraph.

Alas, it would prove to be true. Gypsy Mabel retired to open a haberdashery shop in Fair Isle. After donating his jewel encrusted turquoise turban to the Musée des Artistes at Montmartre, Paris, Goosetti was to spend the remainder of his days in a theatrical nursing home in Eastbourne.

Goosetti had offers of course to appear as a guest on television shows. He naturally declined - only once could he be persuaded and that was to appear as Mother Goose alongside Jess Conrad at the Winter Gardens, Eastbourne. an event never to be repeated however, as Goosetti did not feel comfortable in drag. Gypsy Mabel Cable, loyal to the end, bought herself a tricycle with a basket attached. Come every summer weekend, she would catch the ferry to Aberdeen and cycle the 680 miles to the genteel south-east coastal town of Eastbourne, to spend a few happy hours reminiscing, recalling times, places and faces

from their past.

Indeed, throughout those early years of the Sixties a common sight to behold would be Gypsy Mabel, her crystal ball perched upon her head, Goosetti sitting quietly in the basket, a functional woolly bobble hat replacing the jewel encrusted turquoise turban, cycling along Eastbourne promenade.

The end came quietly and without pain. Just simply sitting in his favourite chair in front of the television watching Marlene Dietrich singing 'Where have all the flowers gone?' on the Royal Command Performance, he slipped quietly away.

Oh how they came in their thousands, flocking to the little seaside town of Eastbourne for the funeral. Not since Edith Piaf was laid to rest, blocking the streets of Paris, had a scene such as this been witnessed. A grief stricken Gypsy Mabel Cable at the grave side barely able to stand, flanked on both sides by two handsome young men in sailor suits,

at one time having to be physically restrained from throwing herself on the lowered coffin.

Gypsy Mabel returned to Fair Isle. Without Goosetti she simply lost the will to carry on. Soon she was gone too. One cold winter's evening a peat fire burned brightly in the Puffin Inn and, pint of Guinness in hand, like Goosetti she slipped quietly away.



Billy Lee Riley

Boston Arms, Tufnell Park, Sunday April 8th

Following on from a couple of dates in Holland, the Sun legend nipped over to London for this appearance. Originally scheduled for Camden Workers Club, the

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WRITE TO;

Keith Woods

'Tales from the Woods' HQ

Victoria A.S.C.

Falcon Lane, Battersea, London

SW11 2LG

late switch in venue plus minimal publicity led to a smaller crowd than expected. The **Tennessee Trio** opened up proceedings with a lively set including *'Burning The Wind'* and *'Honky Tonk Hardwood Floor'*. Next up were **Number Nine** putting their stamp on a handful of tunes such as *'Lonesome Town'* and a reworking of *'Ruby, Don't Take Your Love To Town'*, before being joined by the star of the show.

Belying his years, **Riley**, sporting a bright red jacket and black shirt, bounded on stage and tore into his debut single *'Rock With Me Baby'*. An excellent *'Trouble Bound'* followed, featuring a fine bass solo and then it was into the formidable *'Flying Saucers Rock'n'Roll'*. A false start to *'Lawdy Miss Clawdy'* was rectified and Riley injected some harmonica licks before launching into *'Good Rockin' Tonight'*. *'Pearly Lee'* suffered from a lack of backing vocals, but there was more good harp blowing on *'Shade Tree Blues'*, the title track of his last CD. Renditions of *'That's All Right'*, *'I've Got The Water Boiling Baby'* and *'Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On'* completed an excellent rockin' show.

Brought back for an encore, our rockabilly hero obliged by ripping through *'Red Hot'* plus a reprise of *'Flyin' Saucers'*. At the age of 67, Billy Lee Riley can still put on a stunning performance and is well worth seeking out on his occasional forays to these shores. The number of musicians in the audience - Dave Peabody, Mike Sanchez, Steve Hooker, Rob Glazebrook, George Sueref, Thomas LaVelle etc. - testify to the fact.

Shaky Lee W



“McDermott Marbles”

(Keith tells me there was some encouraging feedback after my last article, so here we go once more.)

Now, for the first time, it can be told. Joe started the Rock'n'Roll thing back in 1951. No, not Joe Turner - Joe Stalin. It was all a Communist plot to undermine the morals of the West and promote revolution amongst the younger generation - and it was all planned in the Kremlin. That other Joe, senator McCarthy, saw it all coming and did

his best to stop it - the Commies were everywhere - in Hollywood, in the trades unions, even in the U.S. government. Newly discovered KGB files reveal the true story.

Back in Moscow in 1951 Stalin summoned a trusted high-ranking KGB officer into his presence. The officer's name was Boris Hallenovsky and he was in charge of several Commissars in the Ministry of Culture and Propaganda. To cut a long story short, Boris and his Commissars were sent on a top secret mission to the USA, where they changed their names to Bill Haley and his Comets - the rest is history as they say (or the rest is bunk as Henry Ford would have said). Poor old Boris, he wasn't exactly a teenage sex symbol, so the Kremlin make-up team (who spent hours covering up the pock marks on Uncle Joe's face, touching up his 'tache and greying hair) got to work on Boris before he left for the States and gave him a cute little kiss-curl right in the middle of his forehead to send the Western girls wild with desire. It worked- Boris/Bill became an overnight sensation. However, the expected revolution never came about - instead of the Red Flag being raised over the White House all Boris/Bill achieved were a few ripped cinema seats in the Odeon, Doncaster and a near riot at Waterloo station when his kiss-curl was just too much excitement for a country like Britain just off the ration books.

Uncle Joe died in March 1953 before his protégé hit the U.S. charts with *'Rock Around The Clock'* but Stalin's successors soon realised that Rock'n'Roll, far from promoting revolution, had exactly the opposite effect. It was the new opiate of the people. The Commies realised that if it kept youth off the barricades in the West it could have the same effect in the East.

To deflect attention from their fiendish plot to undermine the West, the Commies had to pretend Rock'n'Roll was a decadent Western invention but secretly it swept the world behind the Iron Curtain and was used to keep the people happy in their poverty whilst their rulers lived the luxurious life of Riley. We heard little in the West of massive Rock'n'Roll hits such as the million selling *'Ten Thousand Years Of Life For Chairman Mao Rock'* and *'Every Rockin' Daddy-O Praises The Communes' Vegetables'* in Red China or the smash number one hit in Albania entitled *'Raise High The Blood Red*

Banner Of Comrade Enver Hoxha And The Albanian Party Of Labour Boogie'. Such catchy tunes had them boppin' in the streets of Beijing and Tirana.

Today, Outer Mongolia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are hotbeds of rockabilly. Everyone in Mongolia's capital city, Ulan Bator, is doing the *'Ubangi Stomp'*. In P'yongyang, North Korea's capital, they forget the famines sweeping the country as they bop to *'Great Leader Kim Il-Sung Shake'* and *'Dear Leader Kim Jong-Il Jive'*. One of their top Rock'n'Roll singer/pianists escaped to South Korea, headed across the Pacific and ended up in Seattle, changing his name to Thomas LaVelle. Back in the good old DPRK they are not worried; before he departed this world Kim Il-Sung had an idea - they call it the Great Juche Idea. There is even a bloody great monument to it in the centre of P'yongyang. Basically, the Great Juche Idea is one of self reliance i.e. we may not be able to feed our own people but we can produce more home-grown rockabilly singers than anybody and great songs like the *'Jivin' Juche Jump'*.

And don't believe that nonsense about Karaoke being a Japanese invention; it is the latest fiendish Commie plot, this time hatched in P'yongyang to undermine Western civilisation. Whilst we in the West can't walk into a bar without hearing some drunken, out-of-tune, off-key lager louts and lasses singing *'My Way'* or *'I Will Survive'*, back in P'yongyang and Ulan Bator they are boppin' to real live 1950s style rockabilly and Rock'n'Roll. Ken Major is organising a trip there next year and Keith Woods is providing free rail travel to all who want to go via the Trans-Siberian Railway. All you need do is change your name by deed poll to Woods (women can keep their married names) and make out you are part of Keith's immediate family. So don't delay - book now for the trip of a lifetime and discover the Mean Mad Mothers of Mongolia (number one rockabilly band in Ulan Bator at the moment) and Kim's Korean Ass-Kickers, one of the meanest bands on the P'yongyang Rock'n'Roll circuit.

Many other 'rogue states' use Rock'n'Roll to keep the people happy and divert their energies from revolution. So in Baghdad we have the Hell's Angels-type band Saddam's Satanic Shakers, whilst Libya has the Great People's Jamahariya Jive weekender every

year, at which Gaddafi always performs in person numbers like *'Bomb Israel Boogie'* and the haunting *'I'm The Greatest Arab Leader Since Nasser'* doo-wop, backed by his very own Bedouin doo-wop group The Green Flags.

So now you see why Dubya so badly needs his National Missile Defence System, to nuke all these rockin' bands in the rogue states so the people will rise up, overthrow their dictators and institute a democratic voting system like the one which elected President Bush. George's brother Jed has a load of second-hand Florida voting machines which will ensure victory for Dubya's preferred candidates with a bit of tampering and also some butterfly ballot papers to confuse the most astute pensioners in Baghdad into voting to make Iraq the 51st state of the USA.

Tony "Happy Pappy" Papard.



The Night I Had Dinner With Lonnie Donegan

By Annette Puzey

First of all, a bit of information to set the scene. Juanita and I had been friends for some time. I knew her father was Lonnie Donegan and I knew he was famous but it wasn't until I was older that I realised how famous. Juanita was a lovely girl - an only child who lived with her mum in a modest house in Garlinge, Kent. Juanita was a bubbly girl, very neat and tidy and a perfectionist (I know that now). She was also completely extrovert, noisy and always laughing. She invited me to her home several times where I met her mum who was also lovely and made me very welcome. This was probably about 1980 and her mum was then divorced from Lonnie. She still had a beehive hairdo, which was a bit outdated for that time I think.

Juanita could sing and she had a fantastic voice, strong and confident. One day at her house I remember Juanita, hairbrush in hand, singing *'Hey baby I'm the telephone man'*. She performed the song with great style and I thought

she was fantastic. I wonder what she's doing now? She also played the record 'Juanita' for me, written and sung by her father.

Anyway, the night I had dinner with Lonnie Donegan. Juanita and her mum were talking, some weeks before the event, that Lonnie, Juanita's dad, was coming to England. He was performing with Joe Brown at Herne Bay. Juanita was invited to have dinner with her father and see the show afterwards and she could bring a friend - I was to be that friend. I remember them saying that he would probably bring his new wife who was not much older than Juanita. They also talked about maintenance payments that seemed to be lacking for Juanita and her mum. "Don't dress too smart otherwise he may think we don't need his money. Annette, you dress as you want" her mum said. That night Juanita was made to dress in a school uniform and she was immaculate with not a hair out of place, tie neat and shoes polished. As I said Juanita was a perfectionist. I think she was a little nervous to be seeing her dad as she had not seen him for some time.

How we got to Herne Bay I can't quite remember but it was possibly in a white van with lots of equipment in the back. I don't think Lonnie himself came to collect us but we met him in Herne Bay and had dinner in the hotel where he was staying. I remember that we had fish at a table by the window and we could see across the promenade. There was no one else in the dining room, just the three of us. Lonnie did ask me if I wanted wine with my dinner thinking I was older than my 13 years. I was tall for my age and could easily be mistaken for 17 or 18.

He asked me what I was doing at school and what did I want to do when I was older? What were my favourite subjects and did I have any hobbies? We talked about Sunday shopping and he said that in the States you can shop any time of the day or night, any day of the week but here in England you couldn't even buy a pint of milk on a Sunday. America sounded fantastic and I dreamed of him inviting me over with Juanita for holiday. I can't remember Juanita saying much although I think she got in a few well rehearsed spiels about not having much money for clothes and days out etc.

When we got to the theatre it was full and we sat at a small table near the exit with a woman but I am not sure who that was. I can only remember a little about the show as this was nearly 20 years ago (whoops, giving my age away there). I do

recall Lonnie performing a number of songs during his set which included 'Rock Island Line', 'Frankie And Johnny', 'Seven Golden Daffodils' and 'The Party's Over'. I also remember him being joined by Joe Brown on fiddle during a couple of numbers, one of which was 'The Battle Of New Orleans'. Joe returned to the stage during the encore on mandolin to jam with Lonnie on a medley of his big skiffle hits which included 'Cumberland Gap' and 'Don't You Rock Me Daddy'o'. Lonnie kept popping back to see how we were and, during the evening, I think he announced that his daughter and her friend were in the audience.

After the show, it was getting late and we needed to get home as we had school the next day. Lonnie said he would ask Joe if he could take us home so we stood backstage waiting to be escorted home. I saw Joe Brown and I think he said something like "Don't worry girls, we'll get you home." Joe threw his car keys to some chap and said, "Take the car and drop these girls home, would you?". We got in Joe Brown's car, a Saab I think, and I got home soon after midnight. Mum and dad were by the window awaiting news of my adventure.

That's it really, I don't remember much more: Lonnie Donegan was very nice, very chatty and made you feel very relaxed. I saw him on the Jools Holland show at Christmas time with Van Morrison and he doesn't seem to have changed much.

Annette Puzey

Editor's footnote:

The unidentified woman you sat with, could it have been Joe Brown's late wife who sadly passed away a few years ago? She was a one-time member of the Vernon Girls and appeared each week on 'Oh Boy' and later 'Boy Meets Girl' – Rock'n'Roll shows on independent television that ran from 1958 through to 1960 and were recorded live. Incidentally, Marty Wilde married another Vernon Girl, Joyce, and they have been happily married for over 43 years. Also I would be interested to know if you recall another girl who would have been around the same age as Juanita and yourself, Joe Brown's daughter Sam Brown, who has blossomed into one of the great soul singers of the present day. Just a thought, thanks.

Keith Woods



Dr Dale's Casebook

(As you may recall, in a previous edition of 'Tales from the Woods' a promise was made never to reveal the details of letters sent in confidence to Dr Dale. However, the following letter was not marked confidential)

Dear Dr Dale,

I have been a good Roman Catholic most of my life. Much of it has been spent in drag, pulling punters, because I was on the game for years. However, I always made the sign of the cross and thanked God for all my clients every time I passed a Church. I also went to confession regularly, so I was always absolved of my sins (well, all except for one occasion maybe, when the priest in the confessional asked for my phone number).

About a year ago, I had a dramatic religious experience, much like Paul on the road to Damascus. I had an instant conversion to Judaism when I met a nice rich man who lives in Golders Green and could look after me for the rest of my life. Although I am now in my sixties, I also decided to change my sex, so I'm now officially Gloria Rhonda, a good Jewish woman. Shalom and mazeltov!

However something happened the other week that greatly distressed me. Anxious for an old friend to see the new feminine me, I was humiliated when walking with him in the street. Some schoolboys started pointing at me, laughing and screaming, "You're a man, you're not a real woman!" I can't help having five o'clock shadow and a navvy's build.

Someone told me I was a silly old queen and I must be going doo-lally in my old age. How can I look more feminine? Do you have any tips, doctor? Would a blue rinse and a perm help? (A friend of mine always gets called Madame in shops or even on the phone, yet he dresses as a man - it is so unfair. I could scratch his eyes out!) Also, all this kosher food is making me ill. If I see another salt-beef bagel I'll scream. Can you recommend a nice diet for a good Jewish girl?

I persuaded my new Jewish hubby to change his will in my favour and I'm desperate for the shekels, so I tried to make an appointment for him with that nice Dr Shipman, but unfortunately he has been struck off. Can you recommend another doctor who does euthanasia?

Gloria Rhonda

Dr Dale replies:

Dear Gloria,

Doctor Dale's Cultural Column

Guaranteed light-hearted reading - Tony Wilkinson's Encyclopaedia of Rock'n'Roll (50 volumes). Facts guaranteed to be correct - no arguments OK?

I have read your sad letter with intrigue. If it is of any comfort to you, these problems are extremely common - in fact, much like everyday complaints such as piles, honeymoon cystitis or foot and mouth.

As a responsible professional person I would certainly be reluctant to practise euthanasia on your poor hubby. Anyhow, as an old tart you probably couldn't afford my fees, i.e. dinner for two in Chinatown plus a trip to Mr CD.

You talk about your boring kosher food and how you wish to finish off your man. Well, in my professional capacity, I can guarantee to kill two birds with one stone. Naturally you will have heard of the formidable gourmets of this magazine - Egon Major and Delia Peters. They recommend an erstwhile establishment in Great Yarmouth by the name of The Waverley. A week of fry-ups is guaranteed to make you successful in your mission.

With regard to your last query, if you have survived this guesthouse and fancy a piece of glam, cover yourself up totally, veil et tout, and board a bus at Golders Green. You'll be amazed with the reception.

Your good Doctor Charles Dale.



The great Doctor Dale himself

Reply to a confidential letter from "Desperately Seeking"

Dear Sir,

I realise you are unable to bear taking castor oil and that syrup of figs does not upset you sufficiently. Therefore, I would suggest you take my infallible remedy of 'Dr Dale's Prune and Custard Juice', available at all chemists with subscription available from my good self at just £10.

Doctor Charles Dale



C.D. REVIEWS

HI THERE, KATS AND KITTENS. IT'S BOPPIN' BRYAN (A.K.A. HARD ROCK BUNTER, A.K.A. BRYAN CLARK) WITH A LOOK AT SOME RECENT ROCKIN' CD RELEASES THAT YOU SHOULD HAVE IN YOUR COLLECTION IF YOU DON'T HAVE THEM ALREADY. READ ON.....

Incredible but true! This past April Lonnie Donegan, King of Skiffle and one of the all time greats of British popular music, turned 70 years of age. He began his career as a banjo player in Chris Barber's Band and then, after branching out on his own, developed and oversaw the skiffle craze of the mid-to late 1950s, became something of an all-round entertainer in the Sixties (indeed my earliest recollection of seeing Donegan on TV was dressed in a striped blazer and white hat tap-



dancing while endorsing Smiths crisps and the new wonder flavour - salt and vinegar), and to now has become an all-time legend in British folk and blues. To commemorate this birthday, Sequel Records have issued a series of CDs under the main heading 'Lonnie 2000': each of these takes the form of an originally issued album with extra tracks (rare and in some cases unreleased), relating to the time period when the album was recorded - or maybe just a touch after. But anyway, lets briefly look at each CD and see what goodies are on offer.

Showcase... Plus – NEMCD 342

First released as a 10-inch album (Pye-Nixa NPT 19012) in the autumn of '56, **Showcase** is probably the most popular Donegan album of all with his stunning version of the traditional 'Frankie and Johnny' as its centrepiece. The pluses are 18 bonus tracks, four of which appeared as the **Backstairs Session** EP on Nixa in '55. Another four made up the **Skiffle Session** EP a year later. Also there's a few A and B sides from this time including 'Lost John/Stewball' and 'Bring A Little Water, Sylvie/Dead Or Alive', plus a version of 'Rock Island Line' cut in '56 that remained un-

issued until its appearance on the **Golden Hour** album in 1971. Finally there are two previously un-issued cuts, the instrumental 'Harmonica Blues' from '55 and a first attempt at 'Rocks In My Bed' from the following year.

Lonnie... Plus – NEMCD 343

By the time **Lonnie** (another 10-inch album) was released in the summer of '58 (as Pye-Nixa NSPT 84000) lead guitar duties in Donegan's group had switched from the superb Denny Wright (who worked with Johnny Duncan in '57 and '58 and went on to become a respected jazz player), to the adept Jimmy Currie, a former Tony Crombie Rocket who had actually joined Lonnie's outfit in the spring of 1957. Jimmy can be seen alongside Lonnie performing 'Jack'o'Diamonds' and 'Grand Coulee Dam' in the '58 exploitation flick **Six Five Special**. The album itself contains many fine performances, particularly the slower, meaner re-cut of 'Rocks In My Bed', 'The Sunshine Of His Love', 'Ain't You Glad You Got Religion' and 'Lonesome Traveller' which also appeared on a single (Nixa N15158). The 15 bonus tracks once again include a few A and B sides from various singles released through the course of '58, plus some material that appeared on an EP in the interesting form of two traditional Irish ballads – 'Kevin Barry' and 'My Lagan Love'. A third unreleased Irish song, 'My Only Son Was Killed In Dublin' is also included. There are five more unreleased items in this set; three of them are contrasting versions of the Woody Guthrie classic 'Hard Travellin'; there's a nice version of Leadbelly's 'Shorty George' plus the jazzy 'Baby Don't You Know That's Love'.

Lonnie Rides Again... Plus – NEMCD 344

Towards the end of 1958 Les Bennett (formerly with the Les Hobeaux Skiffle Group – in fact he can fleetingly be seen along with the young Brian Gregg on bass in the movie **The Golden Disc**), replaced Jimmy Currie as lead guitarist in the band. Also by '59 the original skiffle craze was well and truly over although for a little while longer the band was still referred to as a skiffle group. By 1960, with hits such as 'Lively' and 'My Old Man's A Dustman', Lonnie had almost fully embraced the role of all-round entertainer (as his successful ATV series of the time **Puttin' On The Donegan** had confirmed), so **Lonnie Rides Again**, released in the autumn of '59, could be seen to contain the last of the skiffle-style Donegan, an album of folk favourites dressed up in Lonnie's unique style. The album includes two long time favourites of mine, 'Jimmy Brown The Newsboy' and the great 'Fancy Talkin' Tinker'. Also here is an excellent version of 'House Of The Rising Sun', every bit as

atmospheric in its way as the later, more commercially successful version by the Animals. There are 13 bonus tracks on this collection in a variety of styles. Two songs from 1959, 'Chesapeake Bay' and 'Ace In The Hole' are straight-ahead trad-jazz rave ups. Donegan is backed on these by Ian Menzies and the Clyde Valley Stompers. In March 1960, Lonnie was whisked off to the States to record a session under the supervision of Jerry Lieber and Mike Stoller. Of the five songs recorded, four were released on the **Yankee Doodle Donegan** EP (NEP 24127) later that year. The fifth, a re-cut of 'Take This Hammer', was released only in America. There are three unreleased sides which (probably) date from 1961. These are 'Red Berets', 'Keep On The Sunny Side' and an excellent feature for Les Bennett, 'Tiger Rag'.

Sing Hallelujah... Plus – NEMCD 345

As mentioned before, by the early Sixties Lonnie Donegan had been nationally accepted as an all-round entertainer having graduated from Skiffle King. Much of his recorded work reflected this change, but for some time he had been choosing gospel standards to record as well as the folk-blues classics from (predominantly) Leadbelly and Woody Guthrie. Donegan had wanted to record a complete album of gospel classics and, in 1962, he got his wish and **Sing Hallelujah**, with vocal group the Kestrels and the Mike Sammes Singers in support, resulted. Also Les Bennett had left Lonnie's group in '62 and Denny Wright was reunited with Donegan for this one album, as part of the backing group. The pick of the songs from the original album, for me, are 'Joshua Fit The Battle', the mellow reading of 'We Shall Walk Through The Valley' and my particular favourite, 'This Train'. 'New Burying Ground', first recorded in 1955 for the **Backstairs Session** EP is given a sparkling update. Of the 13 bonus songs, six are available on the previous two volumes for some reason (the single 'Pick A Bale Of Cotton' would have been a sensible inclusion, I would have thought). A seventh, 'Bound For Zion' will turn up on Donegan's last 'original' album but more of that in a tick. Most of the remainder are big, brassy, gospelly A and B sides but also included is 'Glory' taken from the live EP recorded at Conway Hall in January '57 and one of the truly great performances in the Donegan canon.

The Folk Album... Plus – NEMCD 346

By 1965 the British pop scene had changed beyond all recognition. Lonnie Donegan's hit

streak concluded in '62 with a Leadbelly classic (just as it had begun with 'Rock Island Line' six years earlier), 'Pick A Bale Of Cotton'. At the same time, the Beatles burned into the national conscience with 'Love Me Do' and over the next three years they notched up a consecutive run of No. 1 hits, uninterrupted until 1967 in fact. Through this period up to September 1965, Lonnie Donegan had made a series of singles in a range of styles, but they weren't selling. Beat groups ruled the roost, spearheaded by the Mop Tops and the Stones. Lonnie, retaining his successful TV series and performing live shows to packed audiences, was yesterday's man. Nonetheless, a new album of folk songs was issued, in hopes of pushing Lonnie toward the rapidly expanding young folk market, who were tuning in to such people as Bob Dylan and Donovan. Sadly it wasn't successful. Actually, the album's overall sound owed more to country than folk: indeed, some of the tracks were recorded in Nashville with such as Pete Drake, Floyd Cramer and Charlie McCoy backing up our hero and 'Interstate 40' and 'After Taxes' are two particularly good performances. The 14 bonus songs on this release contain the most interesting material of the recordings that ended up on single releases... well, mainly. Three songs were released on a 1985 album **Rare And Unissued Gems**, issued by Bear Family. The best of these by far is 'Leaving Blues' recorded in 1966 - a real slow, low-down piece which is marred a bit by an intruding organist. The rest of the bonus songs form the best of the A and B sides from '63 to '65, except for 1961's magnificent 'Seven Golden Daffodils', a criminally underrated item. A version of Bobby Bear's '500 Miles Away From Home' appeared in November '63. 'Lemon Tree' was released in September of that year while a version of Rusty and Doug Kershaw's 'Louisiana Man' announced itself in July 1965. All fine records but no takers. Pity.

Last word

Lonnie Donegan remained with Pye until 1966 when, over the next 15 years or so, he made a series of albums for various labels with **Putting On The Style** released on Chrysalis in 1978 being the most interesting by far. Produced by Adam Faith, it boasted in impressive array of star guests in the backing band including Elton John and Rory Gallagher, and its reissue on CD is way overdue. Through the Eighties he recorded little. Now based in America, he chose to make occasional visits to these shores, often appearing at country festivals, sometimes appearing as a guest on TV shows. Always a much loved performer, his 'legendary' status grew and, in 1999, he released a fine album for RCA/BMG, **Mule Skinner Blues**, with van Morrison guesting on two tracks. Also in June of that year he wowed the acoustic tent at Glastonbury with a well-received set. Most

recently, he has released an album **The Skiffle Sessions - Live In Belfast** again with Van Morrison and his old boss, Chris Barber, in support. As well as that, these five great CDs just discussed have been issued and, in the planning stages, is a **Complete Singles A & Bs** (currently out, by the way, is a two CD set, **Very Best Of** on Sequel NEE 325). So, Lonnie Donegan's name is being kept before the public via a wealth of great stuff being made available once again.

Happy belated birthday Lonnie!

**The Golden Age Of American Rock'n'Roll
Volume 9 - Ace CD CHD800**

From the good folks at Ace comes the latest collection in this excellent series and, as with the previous eight volumes, there's something for everybody here. Good, stomping R & B, some doo-wop gems, plus some (now) classic Rock'n'Roll that went largely unheard in Britain at the time (unless it may have been featured on Gus Goodwin's 'Rockabilly Party' show on Radio Luxembourg). **Ronnie Self's** '*Bop-A-Lena*' (issued in Blighty in '58 on Phillips, though only on shellac rather than microgroove), is a case in point. Our Ron tears his larynx to shreds on this subliminal masterpiece, but there were practically no takers until the rockabilly boom of the early Seventies kind of rediscovered Self and his classic recordings for Columbia and, a year earlier, for ABC-Paramount ('*Pretty Bad Blues*'). '*Bop-A-Lena*' (co-written by a young Mel Tillis), is a red hot two minutes worth by a man who went on to be successful songwriter in the country field (probably his best-known composition being '*I'm Sorry*' as recorded by Brenda Lee), but who sadly died, aged 47, in 1981.

More great Rock'n'Roll comes from **Freddy 'Boom Boom' Cannon** with the first record to be released on EMI's Stateside label in '62 '*Palisades Park*', performed so well on his recent UK tour, plus '*Lonely Weekends*', the song that introduced Charlie Rich to a British audience thanks to a release on London in 1960. Also issued on London that year was **Paul Chaplain and the Emerald's** fabulous, garagey rendering of '*Shortnin' Bread*' (covered in the UK by the Viscounts).

From the King label comes **Boyd Bennett and his Rockets** with '*Seventeen*' from '55 (covered in the UK by Frankie Vaughan and Don Lang - many years later ol' Jerry Lee would cut a nice version for the 'Rocket' album). I believe **Clint Miller's** '*Bertha Lou*' was issued on the 'Black Slacks And Bobby Sox' LP on HMV over here in '58 - was it released as a single? Anyway I love this every bit

as much as the more famous Johnny Faire version on London - a nice guitar sound on Miller's cut.

Matt Lucas has been married seven times and has had problems with booze and drugs. In 1963 this very level-headed guy recorded a super version of Hank Snow's '*I'm Movin' On*' for Smash, backed up by, among others, Narvel Felts. **Wanda Jackson's** '*Let's Have A Party*' (released in the UK on Capitol in 60), is a perennial favourite and instrumental fans can dig **Johnny and the Hurricanes'** debut release on London from '59, '*Crossfire*'. New Orleans fans can thrill to **Joe Barry's** '*I'm A Fool To Care*'. Released over here on Mercury in '61, Joe became a convincing Fats Domino sound-alike in the same way Ral Donner copied Elvis. Also from the Crescent City comes **Jessie Hill's** much loved and much covered '*Ooh Poo Pah Doo*' (released over here on London), and Joe Jones's '*You Talk Too Much*' (on Columbia).

For the rhythm and blues fraternity included are **Buster Brown's** classic '*Fanny Mae*' (issued almost secretly over here on Melodix in '60), **Doctor Feelgood** (a.k.a. Piano Red) **and the Interns'** '*Doctor Feelgood*', covered by Johnny Kidd and the Pirates in 1964, two years after the rocking G.P.'s version, and '*Just Got To Know*' by **Jimmy McCracklin**, issued on Art-Tone in the States and on Top Rank over here in '62. **Little Willie John's** '*Fever*' needs little introduction; many items from the King label's R & B catalogue were issued on Parlophone in the second half of the Fifties and the early Sixties and '*Fever*' was no exception.

Doo-wop is represented by **Dion and the Belmonts'** debut smash '*I Wonder Why*', the **Six Teens'** '*A Casual Look*', the **Majors'** '*A Wonderful Dream*' and the **Velvets'** '*Tonight (Could Be The Night)*', all released on the prestigious London label. More great doo-wop sounds come from the **Stereos** with '*I Really Love You*', **Shep and the Limelites** with '*Daddy's Home*' (rather surprisingly covered much later by Sir Cliff), '*Coney Island Baby*' by the **Excellents**, the Frankie Lymon styled '*No No No*' by the **Chanters**, the truly bizarre '*Rang Tang Ding Dong*' by the **Cellos**, '*So Tough*' by the original **Casuals**, '*Queen Of My Heart*' by **Rene and Ray**, and '*Baby Oh Baby*' by the **Shells**.

Of special mention is '*Out Of Sight, Out Of Mind*', recorded for Capitol in '56 by the **5 Keys**, a favourite group certainly of this reviewer and possibly of Elvis Presley, who sang the opening two lines of '*Out Of Sight*' at the (in)famous Million Dollar Quartet session. I was fortunate enough to have seen the original lead singer Rudy West with a new set of Keys in the UK twice - in 1992 and in 1997. Sadly he died not too long ago and the

sides he cut with the original line-up for Capitol in the mid-Fifties will stand as a wonderful musical legacy.

And that's yer lot! 30 excellent tracks, a great cross section of styles and one CD you must get hold of. Roll on Volume 10!

**She's Gone! The Liberty Years - Buddy Knox
- Connoisseur COLL 101**

Some years ago Sequel issued a two CD set covering Buddy Knox's (and collaborator Jimmy Bowen's) entire recorded output for the Roulette label between 1957 and 1959. As far as I know this collection is still available but here's a fine new release from Connoisseur featuring all 23 songs recorded by Buddy for the Liberty label between 1960 and 1964. This tenure yielded some initial commercial success; the first single, a version of the Clover's *'Lovey Dovey'*, reached number 25 in the American charts, while the follow-up, a breezy take on the 5 Keys' *'Ling Ting Tong'* made it to number 65. Thereafter, there was to be no more chart success with Liberty but many great sides came from this period. *'She's Gone'*, a decent up-tempo rocker, had a degree of success in the UK chart when released as a Liberty single, reaching (I think) number 41. More great sides include a version of Joe South's *'Hitchhike Back To Georgia'*, 1964's *'Thanks A Lot'* (recorded a year later by Brenda Lee), and also from '64 the excellent *'Good Lovin'* and *'All Time Loser'* - both songs new to these ears. Spiffing! Buddy also revisits his early hits with faithful recreations of *'Party Doll'*, *'Rock Your Little Baby To Sleep'*, *'Hula Love'* and *'Somebody Touched Me'*. Nice version of *'Slippin' And Slidin'* too. If you already own the Sequel CD by this Tex-Mex legend, you must get this new release that will sit nicely alongside.

**As Good As It Gets - British Rock'n'Roll -
Various Artists - Disky D0999892 (2 CD set)**

The latest batch of 'As Good As It Gets' releases from Disky include this stunning collection which would delight all the Kats and Kittens who love Rock'n'Roll from this side of the big pond. The 64-track collection spans the period 1956 to 1964 and contains many interesting rarities. The **Deep River Boys**, formerly a popular gospel vocal group in the States, settled in Europe in the mid-Fifties and, in '56, ventured to England to record covers of Bill Haley's *'Rock Around The Clock'* (or *'Dixieland Round The Clock'* to judge by the sound), and Haley's *'Rock A Beatin' Boogie'*

(though the arrangement owes more to the Treniers' original recording for HMV). Some early Brit rockers were seasoned jazz pro's who fancied a shot at the big time. Drummer **Tony Crombie** formed his band the **Rockets** in mid-56 (apparently after witnessing the Bill Haley film *'Rock Around The Clock'* at a London cinema) and over the next year or so they cut a slew of fine rockers for Columbia and my favourite of the sides included in this collection has to be *'Rock And Roller Coaster'*, a fine, driving track in the Haley style.

'Six Five Special' stalwart **Don Lang** weighs in with the record hop favourite *'Red Planet Rock'* and also *'Rock Around The Cookhouse'*, *'See You Friday'*, *'Rock, Rock, Rock'* and an interesting 1960 tribute *'They Call Him Cliff'* (or Sir!). **Ray Ellington** (of Goon Show fame) tells us about *'That Rockin'n'Rollin' Man'*, **Jim Dale** (later of course to become a successful comedy actor) has a go at Roy Hamilton's *'Don't Let Go'* and we hear his top five hit from '57 *'Be My Girl'*.

As the material on this two CD set was leased from EMI, you can't possibly leave out **Johnny Kidd** and **Vince Taylor** in putting it together and, sure enough, you get *'Please Don't Touch'* and *'Shakin' All Over'* plus *'Brand-New Cadillac'* as well as Taylor's covers of *'Right Behind You Baby'* and *'I Like Love'*, first cut by Ray Smith and Roy Orbison respectively. **Dickie Pride** and **Dave Sampson** were two great talents who deserved wider recognition and Dickie lets fly with his classic version of *'Slippin' And Slidin'* and the frantic *'Frantic'*. Dickie left us early, of course, but Dave Sampson is still around doing occasional shows and we hear Cliff Richards' protégé croon his way through *'It's Lonesome'* and *'If You Need Me'*.

Nice to hear **Terry Wayne's** 1957 covers of Carl Perkins' *'Matchbox'* and *'Your True Love'*. The **Five Chesternuts** included Shadows-to-be Hank Marvin and Bruce Welch and their ultra rare Columbia single from '58 *'Teenage Love/Jean Dorothy'* is here for your enjoyment (and no doubt curiosity too). A little later Hank and Bruce joined forces with Cliff Richard and in 1959 recorded a single as the **Drifters**, again for Columbia, *'Feeling Fine/Saturday Dance'*. At the turn of 1960 they became the **Shadows**, to avoid confusion with the American group of the same name (Drifters), and recorded the excellent *'Bongo Blues'*, first heard on Cliff's Espresso Bongo EP. We also hear a young **Adam Faith** on his first solo single - a cover of J.L.L.'s *'High School Confidential'*, issued on HMV and one side of his only Top Rank single, a creditable version of Crash Craddock's *'Ah! Poor Little Baby'*.

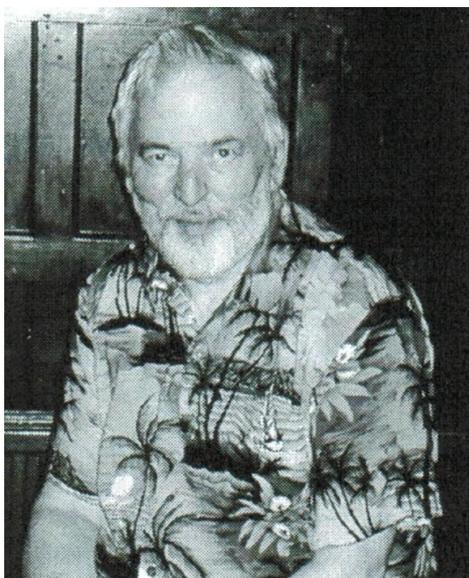
Other artistes on this fine compilation include **Jimmy Crawford**, **Dean Webb**, **Janice Peters** (with an interesting cover of Ruth Brown's *'This*

Little Girl's Gone Rockin'), **Cliff Bennett, Bobby Angelo and the Tuxedos** (the minor hit *'Baby Sittin'*), **Mike Sagar, Paul Raven** (10 years before he changed his name to Gary Glitter) and **Shane Fenton** (also 10 years before he changed his name to Alvin Stardust). It's a must if you want a package that contains the very best work of the first wave of British rockers.



EDDIE SHELDON SPEAKS

'Tales from the Woods' presents an exclusive interview with Eddie Sheldon, the north London Rock'n'Roll legend, conducted in his favourite watering hole, the Dolphin at Cleethorpes, over a few pints of bitter. But before we begin, Eddie wants to say a few words concerning the amazing reaction to the lead feature in the April edition of 'Tales from the Woods'.



Eddie in one of his quieter moments

Eddie Sheldon: Yeah it's been fantastic; so many letters, postcards and well-wishers. I had literally dozens. I am getting round to writing to the people who have been so kind so if you haven't had a letter yet, please be patient - it's on its way. And... err... can I say thank you to a guy called Willie Jeffreys, who has invited me to Hemsby. Unfortunately I can't make May because Sylvia and I are going away that weekend but I'll definitely be there for October. Sounds great! I am looking forward to it (*laughs*). I tell you, I can't wait to put on my Rock'n'Roll shoes again. (*Shakes his head*). I still can't believe it, here I am 64 years of age, my rockin' and rollin' days so, so far behind me and yet here I am, fighting the urge to do it again, thanks to your article in the newsletter.

Keith Woods: Don't fight it Eddie, if you want to do it - do it! So anyway Eddie, let's start at the

beginning. Where and when were you born?

Eddie Sheldon: I was born in Plaistow - East London boy me! 17th June 1937. So I'll be 64 soon. My poor old dad worked in the docks most of his life. When I was a small kid during the war we got bombed out, so we moved to north London, first to Wood Green then after a while to Edmonton. That's where I grew up, on the Edmonton - Tottenham borders. I stayed there until I met Sylvia and moved up here.

Keith Woods: So Eddie, were you interested in music as a kid growing up - you know, in the pre-Rock'n'Roll days?

Eddie Sheldon: Not really - no more, no less than any other kid at that time. We had a piano in the house, most people did back in those days. Any excuse for a singsong - old songs, music hall songs. Both my old mum and dad played the 'ole Joanna'. Mostly mum, dad used to like to sing (*laughs*). Old dad used to kid himself that he had a good voice. Not really though.

Keith Woods: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Eddie Sheldon: Nope - only child Keith. Looking back I was spoilt rotten really.

Keith Woods: Are your parents still alive?

Eddie Sheldon: No Keith, my poor old dad died soon after he retired from the docks. They moved to Clacton when he retired. Didn't last long after that. My dear old mum went to pieces after that and only lasted a few years before she was gone too. As a matter of fact they moved to Clacton not long after I moved down here. That's why I've never been back to London. Well, apart from that one occasion to see old Jerry Lee. See Keith, I had nothing to go back for.

Keith Woods: Well Eddie, this is the question 'Tales from the Woods' readers will want to know. When did you first get into Rock'n'Roll and do you remember where you were at the time?

Eddie Sheldon: (*laughs*) Yeah, I remember just like it was yesterday. I was doing bloody national service at the time you know. Conscripted, you had to do it, no option. I heard Bill Haley on the radio, 'Rock Around the Clock'. I thought "What the hell is this?" It knocked me sideways. I was hooked immediately, it altered me overnight. First with Bill Haley, then Elvis came along. I couldn't get enough of it. On leave I went out and bought a little record player, spent all my army wages, such as it was (*laughs*), on records. Quite a shock for my poor old mum and dad. They couldn't understand what had got into me. Nowadays we would say it was like a drug or something, I couldn't get it out of my head Keith. I couldn't wait to get out of the army so I could wear the clothes and get a job with some money to spend. But it all seemed a long way off to me, an impatient kid, full of energy. It seemed like to me that I would never get out, especially with the Suez crisis going on at the time. I thought that at any minute I was going to get shipped out to the Middle East and get my brains blown out. It was touch and go at the time you know. We were all on standby, ready to be

shipped out. I can hear my poor old dad's words now - "Here we bloody go again!" Like I said, I was an only child and they were worried sick. Remember Keith, they were the poor bastards who had to go through it twice. Poor old dad lost an older brother during the first one and a nephew in the second. So it goes on, more or less the same with mum's family members. Thank God it all blew over as quick as it had started.

Keith Woods: Eddie, how did you get started singing?

Eddie Sheldon: When I finally did get out of the army. Like I said, I couldn't wait to get out - grew my hair, greased it thick with Brylcreem, the clothes, cars. Pretty wild! I was so pleased to be out on Civvy Street. I was earning pretty good money working on the building. Worked in a timber yard for a while and on the barges on the River Lea. I saw these blokes on the television, '6-5-Special', 'Oh Boy'. I knew I could sing okay. Back in the army I was singing all the time. I quite impressed them so I thought I could do it, at least as well as some of them. It sort of came about by accident really. I went to a pub... err... Black Horse Road - I think it was the Standard.

Keith Woods: (*interrupts*) Yes, the Standard.

Eddie Sheldon: There was this skiffle group playing called the 'Lea Valley Skiffle Group'. I asked them if I could do a number and they agreed so I ended up doing four. They were quite impressed so before I knew it the 'Lea Valley Skiffle Group' became the 'Prowlers'.

Keith Woods: So when would this be?

Eddie Sheldon: Well, I'd been out of the army about nine months so around the Spring of 1958.

Keith Woods: So who were the 'Prowlers' and were they the same guys you carried throughout your Rock'n'Roll days?

Eddie Sheldon: Well almost. The lead guitarist was Lenny Betts, Tony Walsh on drums, for a short while Kevin... err... can't remember his last name now, but he wasn't with us all that long. Lenny Betts' kid brother joined us on bass. We called him Kid Betts - he was only about 16 or something. And Dave Smith on rhythm. He was quite useful because he could knock out some good stuff on the 'Joanna', if we were lucky enough to have a piano in the pubs we played.

Keith Woods: As I stated in my article about you in the April edition of 'Tales from the Woods', Freddie Fingers Lee used to sit in on your gigs and played the same venues as you at the time. You obviously knew him quite well.

Eddie Sheldon: Oh yeah (*laughs*) he was a pretty crazy guy.

Keith Woods: Did you know that Freddie is still working the Rock'n'Roll circuit?

Eddie Sheldon: I didn't until you told me the last time we were in here (*laughs*).

Keith Woods: Eddie, where and when did you meet Sue?

Eddie falls silent for a few seconds, sips his pint, drums his fists on the table in that D.J.Fontana drum roll fashion, just like he did on the steering wheel of his V8 Pilot back in those old days that I remembered as a kid before laughing aloud.

Eddie Sheldon: Just after my 23rd birthday, June 24th, 1960. We were playing the 'Royal Oak' at Waltham Cross. Sue lived just around the corner - a little Waltham Cross gal. She was 19 and I flirted with her like crazy from the stage and she knew it. She kept smiling at me. Afterwards I pulled her and that was it for the next three and a quarter years. We were barely apart.

Keith Woods: Eddie, I must ask you this. In my article I wrote that your car, your V8 Pilot, was black but a 'Tales from the Woods' reader who remembers seeing you back in those days, says it

was dark purple.

Eddie Sheldon: Your reader's right - it was dark purple. (*Eddie looks surprised before adding*) Someone actually remembers that so well?

Keith Woods: Yes, obviously they do. But I thought it was black. Time plays tricks on the memory. Also another thing I must ask. You used to include blues type stuff - Jimmie Reed, Howling Wolf - how did you get into that? Hardly anybody was doing it at that time?

Eddie Sheldon: That was because of my lead guitarist Lenny Betts. He was a blues fan. He saw **Big Bill Broonzy** play in London when I was still in the army. He saw Muddy Waters play the first time he ever

came over, when he played 'Chris Barber's Jazz Club' in 1958. Lenny had this amazing collection of blues records - I listened to them and I was hooked.

At this moment I have to switch off my portable tape recorder as two very young girls in their mid-teens, who had arrived in the pub a short while before, noticed Eddie talking into the mike and tape deck. They came across wanting to know what was going on in this tiny seafront pub, on a dismal midweek evening in Cleethorpes. One a pretty long blonde-haired girl in tight jeans and skinny rib top, exposing her pierced midriff, her dark-haired friend dressed in a similar manner, both spending a day at the seaside from their homes in Scunthorpe. Eddie, naturally playing up his celebrity status, proudly told the girls he was being interviewed by yours truly, the editor of the UK's leading Rock'n'Roll satirical in-house magazine. In no time, Eddie was up on his feet, arms round the girls despite his near 64 years, a twinkle in his eye, singing 'Sweet Little Sixteen', much to the amusement of the Dolphin's handful of customers. The girls were laughing, throwing

Doctor Dale's Financial Column

Buy Bank of Bunter,
Tales of Woods, Joliffe's
Jellies & Cakes, Dale's
Piping.

Avoid Johnson's
Hamburgers, Papard's
Communist Unit Trust,
Vidler's Y-fronts and
McNeil's Car Boot Sales.

Hold Willy J.

their heads back as Eddie, still singing, walked them around the bar. Any thought of Eddie returning to the interview was soon dismissed. I sat back with a big smile on my face as Eddie crooned to the girls. 'Two Little Reasons' is the number - an oldie but goodie - changing the lyrics here and there to suit references to himself which the girls found most hilarious. The genteel middle-aged landlady of the Dolphin perched on a stool behind the bar providing the shooby-dooby-do back-up vocals for Eddie, swaying gently from side to side. A small group of very elderly ladies began to titter amongst themselves as they joined in the fun by hand jiving. Even their ancient gentleman friend, who had been dozing on and off all evening with his hand resting on his walking stick, awoke glancing around with a slightly bewildered expression on his drawn, craggy face before falling asleep again. For me it was truly a magical moment, and Eddie was clearly enjoying himself. It was as though the 35 years Eddie had spent in the Grimsby fish finger factory had never existed. Eddie was, for a few minutes, being the Rock'n'Roll star he had always dreamt of being. Eventually, with the impromptu performance over, Eddie returned to our table. The genteel middle-aged landlady brought across two more pints of bitter, sitting down to join us for a short while, introducing herself to me as Ruth. Much to my amazement she began to relate a story that she was herself in show business for a number of years as a member of the Tiller Girls. Indeed throughout the 1950s and early 1960s playing the variety theatres throughout the land. Yes Kats and Kittens, it was so difficult to relate to the fact that the soft-spoken, genteel lady once had her legs up in every town in the UK. I switched the tape back on but promptly had to switch it back off again as by now I was getting pissed. I could neither find my notes or remember what I was going to ask Eddie. Eventually I regained my composure and the interview continued.

Keith Woods: Eddie, did you ever hear from any of the guys that were in the 'Prowlers' after you left north London?

Eddie Sheldon: No Keith, I didn't.

Keith Woods: Did you ever regret leaving Sue crying in the rain outside the 'Cross Keys' that night way back in 1963?

Eddie Sheldon: (chuckles) I can't answer that Keith. My wife will read the interview.

Keith Woods: Eddie, did you get to see any of the Rock'n'Roll tours back then?

Eddie Sheldon: Yes I did. I never got to see Bill Haley back in '57 because I was stuck in the bloody army. I missed Jerry Lee, the tour got cut short of course, because of that child bride crap, so I had to wait another 25 years to see him, like I told you, in London 1983. But I did get to see Buddy Holly at the Palais. Yeah, I'm pretty proud

of that and I saw Gene Vincent and Eddie Cochran at the Finsbury Park Empire. Bobby Darin, Duane Eddy and Clyde McPhatter also at Finsbury Park. (Eddie laughs out loud) I saw Cliff Richard there as well in his black shirt and white tie days, red jacket I think. Oh yes, sure, quite a few. Marty Wilde...

At this point I interrupt to tell Eddie that I too was at one of the Vincent and Cochran gigs at Finsbury Park and we compare notes. Eddie, obviously a big fan of both, remembers the gig surprisingly clearly. I show him a copy of Willie H Beard's 'Eddie Cochran Connection' which by chance I had with me.

Keith Woods: So Eddie, do you have any regrets about giving it all up when you did?

Eddie Sheldon: (short pause) What do you think? Of course I do.

Keith Woods: Well Eddie, what are your plans for the future now that you have retired from the job in the fish finger factory?

Eddie Sheldon: (laughs) Like I said earlier, I am fighting the urge.

Keith Woods: Judging by your performance in here tonight, why fight

it? You've still got it in you, it's all still there Eddie.

Eddie Sheldon: Thank you.

Keith Woods: Now Eddie, I've got something to tell you which might surprise you. I'm going to start at the very beginning. Back in the very early 1990s, I had a young student from Morocco staying at my home in Bromley for a while. He is now a film director and he commutes between his home in Casablanca to his base in Paris. His name is Fouad. He has been an ardent follower of 'Tales from the Woods' since it started. He was so impressed with the article in the April edition about yourself and Sue that he has been to Marrakech to seek out Sue, who he found without too much difficulty, living with her son Sebastian at their arts and crafts shop. Eddie, Sue remembers you with great fondness and at this very moment, Fouad is desperately trying to raise money to make a film about you and Sue's life.

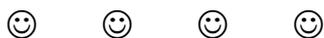
At this point Eddie became extremely emotional and we had to conclude the interview.

Footnote: 'Tales from the Woods' urgently requires to know what happened to the various members of the 'Prowlers' after Eddie's departure in the autumn of 1963. So if any of you out there in 'TFTW' land have any information or, indeed, know or knew any of those people, I would be truly grateful if you could phone or fax or write to me. So once more for the record 'Eddie Sheldon and the Prowlers' consisted of;

	Eddie Sheldon	vocals
	Lenny Betts	lead guitar
	Kid Betts	bass guitar
Dave Smith	rhythm guitar	(sometimes piano)
	Tony Walsh	drums

☺ ☺ ☺ ☺

Boy, has 'Tales from the Woods' got some goodies coming up for you lucky Kats and Kittens who subscribe to the fastest growing in-house magazine in the world. A run-down on the recent Stateside trip, including in-depth reviews of Fats Domino, Wilson Pickett and the Hackberry Ramblers at the New Orleans Heritage Festival. All you will want to know about the Hemsby Rock'n'Roll Weekender that took place between May 11th and 13th. Reviews provided by 'TFTW' chief reviewer, Hardrock Bunter (a.k.a. Bryan Clark), and yours truly. Sanford Clarke, Al Casey, Jack Scott, Janice Martin, the Calvanes. You'd better believe it Kats, read all about it over the next couple of issues. I bet at this very moment your eyes are bulging, mouth watering, as you read this at the breakfast table, tucking into your rockin' toast and marmalade.



While on the subject of Hemsby if, like me, you thought the Camber Sands R & B Weekender last November was a fantastic turnout of gang members, what about this Hemsby? Just about almost everybody. Welcome to the fold John 'Soulboy' Joliffe, Nick Colban, Dart Carson (who, like Eddie Sheldon has dusted off his Rock'n'Roll shoes and is getting ready to strap on a Fender to shake the hell out of those boards again), and Dave Woodland also, I think, making his first Hemsby.

So who was missing? Certainly the most notable would be 'TFTW's erstwhile regular contributor - he of 'Pox/Placebos from the Papard' and 'McDermott Marbles' fame - Tony Papard no less. So where were you Tony? No excuses now, you should have been there for three very good reasons:

- 1) it was a knock-out Hemsby,

- 2) the aforementioned gang turnout was the biggest ever and
- 3) by far the best reason was to be on the receiving end of so many compliments concerning your monthly column in this esteemed periodical.

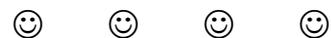
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I wish to extend a big thank you to all those kind words from so many of you. Well, it truly makes it all worthwhile to know that so many folks enjoy it. Indeed, I was quite overwhelmed. It would, of course, not be possible without the people who are willing to give up their time to make it so successful. I raise my glass to Tony Papard, Bryan Clark, Tony Wilkinson, Lee Wilkinson, Charles Dale, Annette Puzey, Graham Morgan, John Howard and to those that have offered their

services for future issues like John 'Soulboy' Joliffe, Denis Cooper, Calum Russell, Paul Freeman, and to my good friend 'H' without whom it would not be possible. From the bottom of my heart I say a big "Thank you".



Amongst all the laughter unfortunately there has to be sadness. John Stafford passed away last November but his presence at Hemsby will ever loom large in our collective memories. Also the terrible tragedy that has befallen the family of Barry Dixon just simply cannot be put into words.



Whilst out Stateside, we were once again subjected to wonderful hospitality and giant tender steaks from our good friends Glen and Nell Croker of Lake Charles, Louisiana. Glen Croker of course is, as many of you know, the lead guitarist of the Hackberry

Ramblers, the oldest surviving band in the United States, which was formed an incredible 68 years ago, and still contains two of its original members. Glen is just a boy as he has only been in the band for just over 40 years. On behalf of all of us, may I say thank you for putting up with us.

Prior to the appearance of the Hackberry Ramblers at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, Glen and Nell were involved in a nasty car accident. Luckily, apart from cuts and bruises, they came out of it relatively unscathed. Despite this, they played a barnstorming set at the festival the following day. Simply wonderful, just like it was the first time we ever saw the band on that first ever trip Stateside back in 1994 when Ken, Lee and myself, jumped up and down, ankle deep in mud, pouring with rain, screaming our lungs out along the lines of, "This is what we have travelled 5000 miles to see!"

Since that time, Glen has not just been a musical hero. Along with his wife Nell, we've become good friends. Once again then, a big thank you.

Approx 35 minutes from Lake Charles and we are in Jennings, our second visit to the sleepy Louisiana town, where once again the mayor took time out from his busy schedule to spend an hour in our company, giving us a guided tour of the wonderful art-deco theatre/cinema. Last time we visited, it was under considerable renovation. This time I am pleased to say it is up and working as a full-time theatre with regular productions. 'Tales from the Woods' wishes to extend its admiration for the way that new life has been given to Jennings' downtown area. Whilst in Jennings we were able to meet up with another old friend, Phil (Sea of Love) Phillips and his son Rabbi, who is carrying on the musical tradition by being a musician as is Phil's daughter. We were kindly given a CD that amply illustrates her talents. I'll be telling you all about this in a later edition of 'Tales from the Woods'.

We spent a happy hour or so with Phil and Rabbi in the local McDonald's over endless cups of coffee, talking about all things musical and generally putting the world to rights. However, we were all deeply disturbed to hear Phil tell us about a certain organisation (whose name I refuse to print,

but I am sure you will all know who these despicable scumbags are), that had marched through Jennings just two weeks prior to our visit. What can you say, except we are certainly pleased not to have been there to witness it. Hopefully one day, like everywhere else in the world, these people will cease to exist. In the meantime, our children can teach us well.

Thanks Phil and Rabbi for taking time out to meet up with us. Be in touch and in the meantime, keep rockin'.



'Tales from the Woods' Quiz

Repeated below is the question from last month.

Question: When Linda Gail Lewis played the Buzz Bar (second time for Swingin' Down South promotions), Linda played a James Carr number, written by Dan Penn. What was it?

The answer is '**Dark end of the street**'. The three lucky winners to receive an exclusive bottle of wine from the 'Tales from the Woods' wine cellar are;

Harvey Warren of Freshwater Bay, Isle of Wight

Philippa Ciemencedu of Nice, France

Jan Icke Hakken of Reykjavik, Iceland

Congratulations to the three lucky winners. The 'Tales from the Woods' quiz is taking a break for a few months. It will be back!



And finally, what a telling picture that was recently published in most national newspapers of the pretty, petite young girl holding a flower, staring into the eyes of the riot police (complete with riot helmets, shields and long batons), while helicopters circled above. No, not Tiananmen Square, but Oxford Circus, London. Protesters herded dangerously together for five hours which our brave boys in blue claim to be tactics of containment, acting upon the orders of Home Secretary, Jack 'the kack' Straw. Isn't it amazing

that our police, forever whingeing about being under-manned and under-financed, can suddenly turn out in their hundreds when the authority of global parasites is being questioned?

No doubt 'Tales from the Woods' loyal subscribers can, in their small way, show our disapproval by delivering a brick through the window at your local McDonald's, while passing to and from your local hostelry.



Before we leave the subject, have you noticed how quiet Jack the kack's opposite number, the Wicked Witch of Witteringham, Anne Widdecombe, (you know her - Friar Tuck without the bald patch) has been on the run up to the general election. Has she been gagged? Or perhaps she doesn't need to open her mouth with William Haig, leader of the Conservative Party (and Flat Earth Society) doing the job for her every time he opens his mouth, by putting his foot in it.

See you next issue. Remember you're only young twice.

Keith Woods

Errata

Kats, you no doubt noticed that in the May edition there were a number of minor mistakes, for which I offer my apologies. The reason is simple. With a holiday in Cyprus, Stateside trip and Hemsby, time was really tight. Not surprisingly a rush such as this caused a few gremlin attacks. Incidentally, the above reasons and my somewhat incompatible shifts on my return, have conspired to delay the production of the June edition. I like to have the newsletter out at least two weeks prior to the advertised month - on this occasion it will have to be approximately two weeks into the actual month. As compensation folks, as you have no doubt noticed, the June edition of the wonderful 'Tales from the Woods' is a bumper edition. So there you have it - the list of corrections for the May edition is as follows:

CD reviews by Boppin' Bryan (a.k.a. Hardrock Bunter, a.k.a. Bryan Clark)

Moon Mulligan should read Moon **Mullican**

Wynane Harris should read **Wynoine** Harris

Jimmy Lee Prow's song should read 'You Tell Her I **Stutter**'

(All on King Rockabilly - Various - Ace CD

CHD777)

Dale Hawkins' song should read 'Money **Honey**'

(Fools Paradise - Dale Hawkins - Beveric BRCD001)

'Tales from the Woods' time capsule No. 1 Cuddles.

The Eagle pub used to stand off Tottenham High Street, just inside **Chestnut Road**, not Lansdowne Road.

Finally, Club Norvik should read Club **Noreik**.
Keith Woods



Acknowledgements

Editor - Keith Woods

Lonnie Donegan birthday tribute and CD reviews - Bryan Clark

The night I had dinner with Lonnie Donegan - Annette Puzey

Billy Lee Riley review - Lee Wilkinson

Doctor Dale's Casebook - Dr Charles Dale

McDermott Marbles - Tony Papard

The Legend of the Great Goosetti and Eddie Sheldon interview - Keith Woods

Graphics and anything else - 'H'



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