PATTERNS IN THE CHAOS

Reflections in sawdust by

David Scott-Morgan

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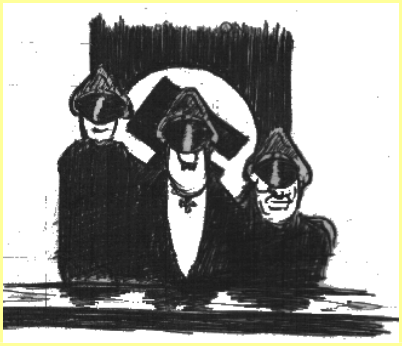
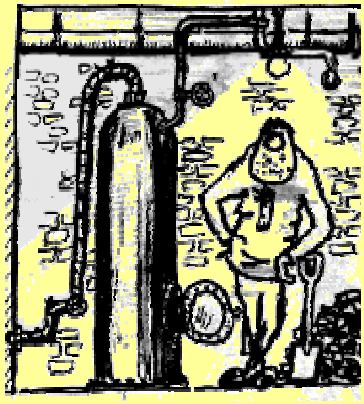
Biologue ...

...I was born at an early age

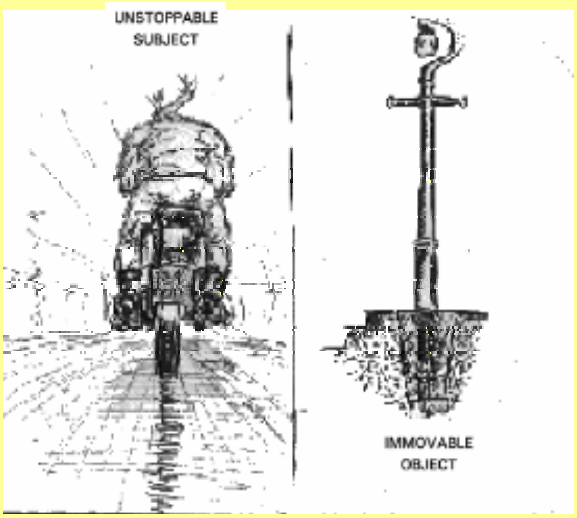


they were difficult times....

After school....



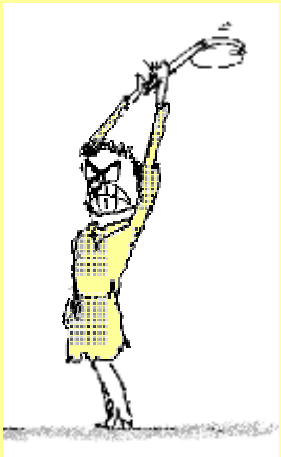
I had lots of different jobs...



Then came bikes..

...trouble with the law

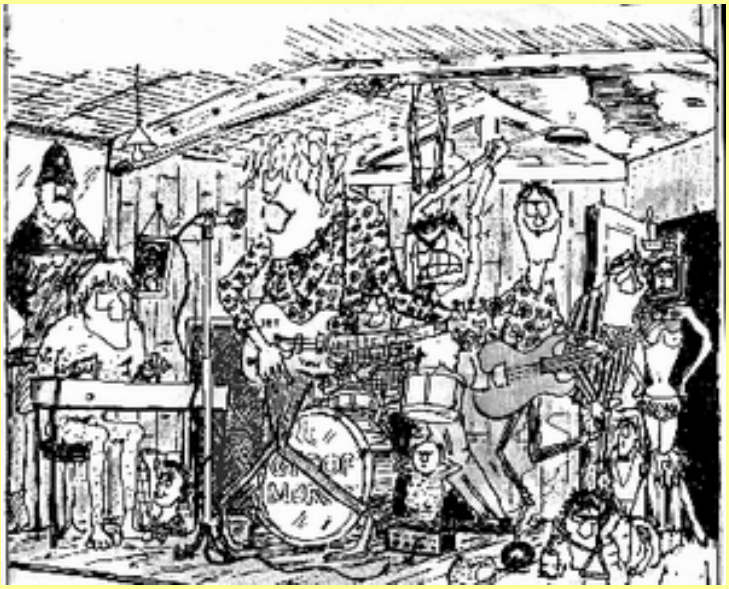
groups...



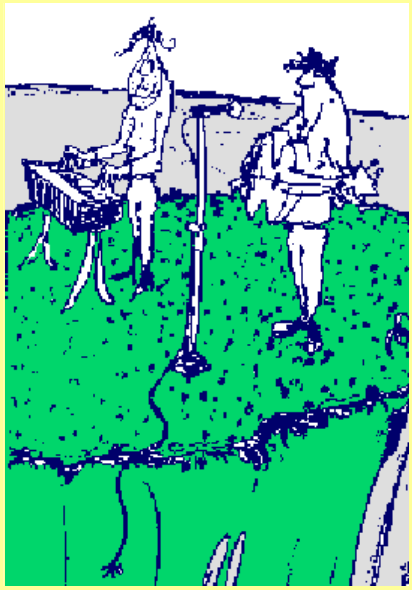
girls....

managers...

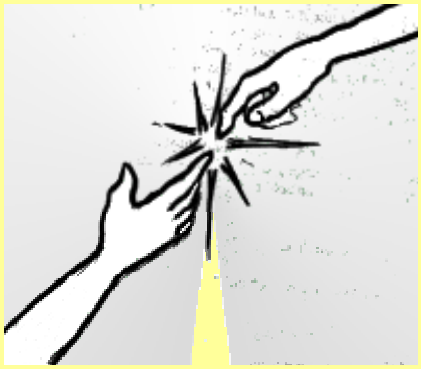
Patterns in the Chaos



...big groups



little groups...



in June 1988, God called me.

now I'm one of these...

.. as well as one of these

....so watch out!

Cartoons by Dave. Side banner graphic by Mandy

Introduction

I've heard it said that an average reading rate is three words per second. Three *things* per second is easy for me to remember because I happen to know that an aeroplane turns very nicely at three *degrees* per second. At that rate it takes just two minutes to do a complete twizzle – that is, one orbit. And two minutes - I am told - is exactly how long this 'blurb' should last. Any longer and I'm in trouble. So I won't waste any more time but get down to it…

The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress were at an Indian restaurant, the one that we frequent a mile or so from where we live. It was a special presentation and the restaurant owner had invited along Mandy and I, and my friend Karl, to meet with the Lord Mayor:
'We are not worthy!' Karl said with a gentle stoop of mock bowing and we all laughed – the Lord Mayor too. We chatted in the aisle between the tables while to one side, the Lady Mayoress was firmly ensconced at a table and engrossed in conversation with the woman seated opposite. Meanwhile her husband was on an invisible elastic lanyard, prodigiously navigating the chairs and tables to say *hello,* shake hands and then be catapulted back to our scrum position between the tables. All the time, cameras flashed and the restaurant owner strutted past beaming with pride.

'How do you like the job?' I asked, unable to avert my gaze completely off his broad chest, bedecked with shiny dangling things. 'Oh it's great fun' he said with a faint swagger and big impish smile as if being the Lord Mayor was a schoolboy prank.

Yes I can see how being the Lord Mayor is fun. There are many jobs that can only ever really be described as 'fun.' I can understand his response because I remember that being with a famous group was hard work - pressured - gruelling - but I never think of that; I just think about what immense, incredible fun it all was. What a gift it is to play with a great rock 'n' roll group - or to be Lord Mayor for that matter.

So I think it only right that I explain how I came to be in bands, and a famous one at that, and that means going right back to the year zero and the rickety dark streets of post war Birmingham, where we all came from, wide eyed with wonder at the world we found ourselves in. A world full of giants. Of Churchill and Stalin. Of Chaplin, Brando, Elvis and then – the Beatles.
Yes, Einstein may have unlocked the secret to the atom but the Beatles unlocked the door to all our unspoken and undreamed aspirations. The Beatles changed our world and now we can look back and see it in a different light, but then… we were caught up in a tide of history that swept all before it. The fab four distilled a potion so strong everybody wanted a slug of it. It was a tonic of joy and cheek, the most essential ingredients of good music.

No, I never made a career decision to be a musician; I don't think many of us did. In my case the decisions were always in the negative - Not to work anymore in the factory fettering bicycle frames with a file from eight thirty to five, or in the scrap metal yard with a spanner and a pair of pliers, ripping apart discarded motor-bikes and other mechanical implements. Music was always an escape from all that but never a strategy worth banking on or planning for. The bottom line was, I never thought I was good enough to be 'anyone' in music or anything else, and this vortex of mental hare Kari would have become a self-fulfilling prophecy were it not for the intervention of a benevolent time and fortune and, of course the great pattern-maker, my secret benefactor.

And I guess in putting together this book I have been trying to squeeze out of the twists and turns of my journey any and every bit of fun that I could find lurking there. For fun, laughter and the joy of being there are the things that ricochet through life and never lose their healing power from being remembered again.

But I have to admit that in all of this I did very little planning or scheming. I did not so much aim myself as find myself being drawn up in a giant vacuum cleaner to be set down in places I did not ask to be - often didn't even want to be. Nevertheless, there I was. Sometimes it seemed that I was just totally in the wrong place and the wrong time, but I never was. I can see that now and so I called my book 'Patterns in the Chaos' - The chaos is all mine and the patterns are all God's.

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ONE - EARLY DAYS

According to the grown-ups, I was a sickly child. Apparently I spent some months in an isolation hospital with suspected whooping cough. I have no recollection of it, only the interminable visits to doctors, and my frail physical frame being dragged into parked black vans labelled 'National Radiological Unit' - the mobile government torture chambers housing cold X-ray machines.
It was post-war Birmingham and compared with today, most of us were undernourished, dishevelled and slightly ailing in some manner. But in one respect, my family were better off than most - we were one of the only ones in our road with transport – dad had a job as travelling projectionist and had the use of the company van.
One of my earliest memories is of being in the back of that little Austin Seven van...
Suddenly the van swerves: 'Oh No,' says dad.
Mom screams: 'what's the matter?'
'We're stuck in the tram lines,' he says. I look out of the window. Yes, the little thin wheels are in line with the tram tracks.
Mom screams again. Up ahead I can see the tramlines divide from one line into two. We swerve again along one of the lines. 'Raymond, do something!'
'I can't, we're stuck. We'll have to wait until we get to the terminus,' he says with a chuckle.
'It's no laughing matter,' she says sternly but dad just laughs.
We travelled down the Pershore Road like that until the inevtable tram appeared in the distance ahead and slowly loomed larger and larger - along with the volume of mom's pleas - until finally, dad got off the lines.

It was just the same at the seaside. Dad would creep the van ever closer to the cliff edge, claiming trouble with the gears or the brakes, while the small compartment would be filled with mom's screaming interspersed with loud guffaws from dad. As always I sat in the back, a bemused spectator.

I had a Godly upbringing. Mom and dad were real Christians - the front door was always open to anybody in trouble, and hymns were sung at full throttle on Sundays! Dad would play an old pedal organ – (ah, that old organ - how I remember it being carried on a horse cart pulled by dad and granddad while I sat on top - the three miles from the leafy suburbs of Kingstanding to the big Georgian terraces of inner city Aston). That pedal organ used to be the focus of entertainment at our home. Dad played it while he and mom and whoever else was present, would brim the room full of singing. He had never been taught music, he just played by ear. When we moved from Aston to the new council Estate at Tile Cross, that organ moved with us.

Dancing Girls
Dad came home late one night to be greeted by an indignant mom wanting to know where he had been. 'Ssshhhh' he said, with a finger to his lips and a smirk on his face, 'they'll hear you.'
'They? - WHO?' demanded mom, 'I hope you haven't brought anyone here at this time of night Raymond.'
'Yes I have,' whispered dad, 'they're just outside.'
'What! Oh I do think that's too bad,' mom gasped in her tone of ultimate displeasure.
'I've bought a couple of dancing girls home for you Clara.'
Clara was dad's nickname for Mom. It was more of a private taunt, that name with its hard sound often teamed up alongside mention of 'Carayilie Street,' a Hockley slum area where Vinnie grew up as a girl. Mom had no similar ridicule to heap upon dad for the Welsh mining community of Risca, from where dad had migrated to Birmingham in search of work before the war.
'You've done WHAT!,' she exploded. 'Dancing Girls? - Well you can just take them out again and go right back out with them. You're not coming in here with any fancy pieces and that's a fact. You mark my words, they are not welcome here and neither are you if that's your gallop. So there!'
'I'll just go and get them,' said dad ignoring her and disappearing into the hall.
Dad came back reaching into a paper bag: 'here they are' he said as he carefully pulled out two hand made statuettes carved out of sheet wood, and decorously painted… Ladies in full swing with their skirts flowing against an imaginary wind as they twirled around.

The reason I can remember this story so well is because I heard it recounted so many times whenever a visitor to the house would remark about the dancing ladies hanging on the wall.
Yes those dancing girls lived on our wall and were to outlast dad, dancing for another twenty years after he had gone and never growing a day older. There above the pedal organ, they would attract the

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attention of the many visitors we had – the bread man, the milkman, the postman, the insurance man, the doctor, the vicar, and of course the omnipresent neighbour - as they sat sipping tea around the living room table. Mom would tell each how those girls came into the house late one night and how she almost threw them and dad out before he had the chance to get to the punch line.

Dad always seemed to be involved in the wackiest of enterprises.
On the occasion of the Queen's Coronation in 1953, he erected a giant marquee in the front garden. Bunting, cakes and chairs came from all the neighbours and on the day, everybody in the street was revelling at our house, number 17. I was enlisted to mime an Al Jolson song from the tiny platform inside the marquee. I guess that was my show biz debut, but all I remember was shrivelling in embarrassment at the ordeal of singing, or pretending to, in front of people.

And a year later, in 1954. At Haringay Arena in London, I remember Mom and Dad pushing me forward to join the multitude of people responding to Billy Grahams' appeal: 'Go on David' they said, nudging me to join the crowd moving forward across the football pitch to give their lives to Jesus. And me wanting to go and not wanting to go, all at the same time. Embarrassed at twelve years old even! 'Go on' they said again. And somewhat grudgingly, go I did. Maybe they understood something about the importance of being there, of just turning up even when your heart isn't in it.

But life for me took a dramatic turn when I was thirteen - dad died suddenly leaving me alone with mom. From there, any belief I had in God evaporated, and relations with mom went steadily downhill.

Dad dying just messed everything up. I was at Bordesley Green Technical School, a sort of downsized Grammar School. I can't remember quite how or why but I went from being at nearly top of the class to the very bottom after dad died. It was probably something to do with the way it happened.

It was 1956, the year Britain went to war over the Suez Canal. But all I knew was that dad had been feeling unwell for several days. He needed some medicine. So, late one night, we drove together in his van to the only place open, Boots the Chemist, in the city centre. We had parked up and were walking along the streets when dad bent down to pick up a scrap of paper... He stood motionless for a moment looking at it. I peered over his shoulder - or I think it was more under his shoulder - to see for myself. It said simply: 'Prepare to meet thy God'. Nothing else - Just like on those sandwich boards that men used to carry.
Two days later, he died. He was 42, a guy brimming with humour and practical jokes, in the prime of life. Mom was devastated. I was numb. I didn't cry, or rather I didn't cry in front of anyone else.

Later, after the funeral, I was in the house with mom - she was upstairs in the bedroom. Suddenly there was a shriek like I had never heard. I rushed upstairs to find her just standing there wailing.
"What's wrong mom?"
She didn't answer, just sobbed. On the bed lay dad's clothes. She had been going through the paraphernalia in his pockets.
"Mom, what's wrong?"
She croaked something and lifted a hand to show me a piece of paper. I recognised it immediately and said shakily: "Dad found that on New Street the night we went to get the medicine."
Nothing more was spoken about it, but as I recall now, and as I have many times realised, that scrap of paper carried upon it the most awful message, the most dreadful truth she could ever have received: Her God, who she loved dearly, had taken her man, who she loved dearly!
Nothing could have tested her faith more. I remember well the scoffings she had to endure from relatives about God, but she never lost her faith. Unlike me. Whatever grudging regard I had for mom's godliness disappeared rapidly.

It was all too much for me. I knew God had done it, but that only made it worse. It was impossible to make any sense of it. I just went to ground. Somewhere I thought: 'if I keep my head down, maybe he won't notice me!' - for surely, God must be someone who zaps his pals for no reason.

It was whole lifetime later, in June 1988, that I laid myself down before God and soon after that, mom and I began gradually to become friends, because we never really were – throughout all that time!
But I am getting ahead of myself…

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Bikes

It was the sixties, an era when a policeman would stop a speeding car by stepping out into the road and putting his hand up. That was all it took. To ignore the command of a policeman was to all intents and purposes, unthinkable. Today of course, when roads are crammed full of traffic and the authority of the law of the land open to question, the result would be one seriously flattened copper, but back then, not to stop was really not an option worth considering.
Order flowed from an unspoken, abiding regard for the powers that be, and was maintained within clear boundaries. What lay beyond those boundaries was largely unknown.

Constable Ferris was a man used to stepping out in front of speeding vehicles, to be precise, speeding motor bikes and scooters. He had also learned to be adept at skipping backwards, as sometimes the invitation to stop for a chat was beyond the capability of our feeble brakes. But despite all the provocations, Constable Ferris maintained an air of amiable, authoritative familiarity with us as he policed the quiet suburb of Marston Green. It was a patch devoid of rebellion were it not for the fact that we imported it nightly from nearby Tile Cross. A race from the chip shop at Marston Green to the bus terminus at Tile Cross was virtually mandatory for the 'gang' of which I was a member, some say a ring-leader.

The best of us, or the worst - depending on which way you looked at it, was Paul Goodall. Nobody could beat Paul. I should know, I tried often enough. I could never beat him although I drove as if without attachment to this mortal coil. I learned that the secret to winning was really to convince your opponent that you were absolutely stark raving mad, and that required demonstrations of maximum lunacy. Really, you could always depend on someone else's sanity giving you a tyres width of lead, if you could make them believe you were mad enough to kill both of you otherwise.
But although I could beat most anybody else in a race, I could never beat Paul, and never did, not once. Paul was completely mad, whereas the rest of us were merely of dubious sanity. I thought the world of him, enough to loan him my scooter, which he promptly crashed.

I saw him do so many crazy things to be first in a race, or just to cause consternation. And sometimes he would pull a stunt just for no reason at all, just because! -
There were four or five of us, biking down a grass track in Chelmsley Woods - not racing, just ambling along. Paul came past me and then, when he was just ahead, he turned around to look at me while a silly grin broke out all over his face. He just sat there, staring square at me, with one outstretched hand gripping the empty pillion seat behind him. We went along like that, Paul not looking where he was going. Up ahead a T-junction loomed with a nasty prickly hedge beyond and I started to shout and point to him…

But he never batted an eyelid. He sat there looking back at me until him and his bike collided with the barrier of bushes, branches and nettles. He went through it to the field the other side while his bike was impaled sideways on the thicket. We pulled him back through the hole he'd punched. He was sporting cuts and bruises, and still that silly grin. He knew the hedge was there, he did it just for a laugh!

One time I remember we were both up together before the beak (I can't remember what for). We were standing side by side right in front of the bench. The proceedings were at that bit where they are about to pass sentence and the magistrate leaned over and said: 'Are there any previous convictions?'
The voice of a clerk came from behind us: 'Yes your honour, for Mr. Morgan there is …. blah blah blah..,' – an enormous catalogue of embarrassing infractions – speeding, driving without lights, without care, without a licence….'
I stood there listening to this litany of disgrace and the only ray of sunshine in my mind was the thought of Paul's record, and how that at least, would put mine into the shade, but big time.
The Clerk droned on to the end of my list, shuffled some papers and then said:
'And for Mr.Goodall, no previous convictions your honour!'
I gasped and looked around at Paul. But he just stood grinning in his mischievous way. They had lost all his records but remembered all mine!

Then one night Paul appeared on my doorstep looking very bedraggled and shivering with cold:
'Can I come in?' he whimpered.
'Yes of course, what's up?'
'I'm freezing' he said. He didn't have his bike – he'd been disqualified from driving.
'What on earth have you been doing to get so cold?'
'I've been lying on the railway line up by Marston Green.'

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'What?'
Mom brought us both a cup of tea.

He lowered his voice so that she couldn't hear and went on to tell me how he'd decided to end it all. 'I'd been lying on the tracks for nearly an hour wondering why no trains were coming down the main London to Birmingham line, and then I remembered – It's the day of the National rail strike!'
He smiled that mischievous grin of his telling me about this and I honestly wasn't sure if the whole thing was just a big practical joke. I didn't really take him seriously.

But a short while later, on 7 March 1962, Paul Goodall gassed himself. They found him in his parent's front room. A note said it was because a girl had finished with him.
The route out of town to the big A47 trunk road led past Paul's house. I can't remember where we were going that day, just the commotion outside his house making us stop and ask someone: 'What's happened?'
Paul's funeral was the first I ever recall going to (I didn't go to dad's, I couldn't face it). There were eight car-loads of mourners plying a snails-pace to the short service at Yardley Crematorium. Paul's coffin rode up front in a grey Daimler and I couldn't help but think he would have been insulted by the speed. It hit me hard, him dying like that. I felt as if death had come to spar with me again, and leave me once more, punch-drunk with the pointlessness of it all. Paul had been indestructible. In another epoch he might have won medals for some audacious dash before a machine-gun nest. But in this epoch - my epoch, his jovial nonchalance for all things mortal was sealed forever in that wooden box placed squarely in front of us that day.

Somebody said how it was losing his licence that had taken away his reason for living. It was true, Paul lived for kicks and the thrill of doing battle with the moving scissors of vehicles and obstacles. Yet it was none of those deadly foes that brought him down, but a girl he barely knew. Her and the devil of rejection.

Girls & Groups
Yes, girls had appeared into our teenage concerns and where once the talk would be about the many crashes we had, soon it gravitated to include the opposite sex. For me, bikes and girls slowly cross-faded to become groups and girls.

It was 1961, the year Yuri Gagarin became the world's first spaceman. A friend named Roger bought a guitar, and so I bought a guitar too. It was so difficult to play, I almost gave up. Then I saw a book in a shop: 'Play in a day' it announced on the cover. Bert Weedon sold millions of copies of that little book to people like me. It had diagrams of a guitar fret-board with numbered dots showing which finger to put on which string. Of course it should have been titled 'Play in a lifetime,' but never mind, it was a great help. Still it took me ages before I was able to change chords fast enough to play a song.

The cross-over to music took awhile, but finally became complete for me one frosty night in January 1963. We were all sat around the Formica-covered table at a city centre café, sipping cups of tea while our bikes were parked up outside. Suddenly the juke box exploded into my reality with a sound like I had never heard: It was the Beatles singing 'Please please me.' The chords at the end went round and around in my head, I was entranced. I thought it was beautiful. The brute magic of it captured me as it did most everybody else.

A pal named Mick Andrews sang with a group that rehearsed at St Giles' church in Tile Cross and soon he pressed me into service on rhythm guitar. We fumbled around in varying degrees of ineptitude as 'The Moonrakers' and then metamorphosed into 'The Jaguars' before disappearing altogether. It was shortly afterwards that I joined a proper group – one that actually got paid to play!
At last, the big time! It was July 1963 and I was one of Jeff Silvas's four 'Strangers.'

But there was one slight problem – I couldn't really play! I had real difficulty keeping time. My left hand was okay at chords, but my right hand was lousy at rhythm, no more that a stuttering sail jerking in approximation to the beat. To compound matters, I found it impossible to play with a plectrum, and resorted to strumming with my fingers so as to avoid the embarrassment of having my pick zoom across the dance-hall, catapulted by my strings with a strident, heralding twang.
All of this I tried to keep secret of course, while I watched other musicians with envy and shame. I was the 'rhythm' guitarist, and this gross misrepresentation of fact went largely un-reported. All the same, I felt a fraud. I thought 'someone is sure to notice I'm not really very good at this!'

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(Even now, Mandy and I have a standing joke that my strumming should carry a health warning - if anyone is dancing to it, they are in danger of dislocating something if I miss a beat!)
But I have long lost any insecurity about being a musician, I know that music is something inside that just finds the best way it can of getting out.

I resolved to do what I could, and soon discovered that one thing I could do was write songs:
Chords really interested me and the Beatles were putting them together in novel, exciting ways. One day I came upon a new collection of chords myself. I hummed a tune around them, made up some sickly embarrassing words - and hey presto, I had written a song! It was called 'I do'. I didn't really think it was any good, but other people picked up on it. I was encouraged and wrote more, and tried not to worry too much about my faltering guitar style.

Academy.
Then one day our singer - Jeff Silvas - left the group and we contemplated how to carry on without him as 'The Strangers'. Bill Miller, the lead guitarist, took over most of the singing, but looked to me to get stuck in too. The call to stand in front of a microphone and warble was a challenge I both feared and prized at the same time. So I practised for hours while I was on my own - driving. Inside the echo-ey cab of my van, I would sing songs over and over until I had honed enough of the squeaks and rattles out of my flimsy resonations to dare bring them before somebody else. Even then, when I got in front of the microphone, it often sounded dreadful, and I had to go back to the drawing board behind the steering wheel of my van…
I spent a long time in the cab of that van – I used to date a girl who lived in the countryside, south of Stratford-on-Avon, and it took about an hour to drive there. That was two hours of singing practise per night. It was in that cab, bellowing out over the racket of the engine, that I discovered the techniques I needed in order to conceal the fact I had no inbred singing ability. I knew that whatever I was to acquire had to be imparted by method, not nature.
You have to understand that being in a group at that time was really about learning how to mimic - My hero was John Lennon and I practised until I could impersonate his style of singing to a tee. Not anyone's tee, just my tee. I got immense pleasure from rasping out his lines to myself.

Along with singing, I would practise 'speaking' – yes speaking. Something had made me aware of how bad my speech was – maybe it was being around my girl-friends family, with their slightly Shakespearean country English. Maybe it was serving afternoon teas to the toffs who stopped at the impromptu café they ran in the garden of their farmhouse. But somewhere along the line it dawned on me that the slovenly Brummie dialect I had harvested from birth needed a translator to be understood anywhere outside of a Birmingham factory or pub.
There was a feeling amongst my workmates down at Colmore Depot motor stores that you were a traitor to your class if you spoke anything approaching the Queens English, but I came to the conclusion that good speech had to do simply with how well you wanted other people to understand what you were trying to say. So little by little, I tried to improve the way I spoke, ignoring the jibes of workmates and peers who would label anyone pretending to correct pronunciation as a 'ponce.'

Yes I ran my own academy of elocution and singing lessons in that Morris J2 van. I was my own instructor, my own audience. I booed or cheered, I organised the lessons, I set the exams and I marked the papers.

I was a 'Stranger' on rhythm guitar for a total of two years before the reality of my paltry guitar skills got the better of me. It seemed no amount of practice could turn me into a proper musician. I left the group and made a decision: I would become a proper storeman for the Colmore Depot company instead. At least that was something attainable. I still played with a group and wrote some songs, but it ceased to be a priority.

I started to turn up on time for work, a miracle that did not go un-noticed. Then I began redesigning the stores filing system, and organising the racks carrying the spare parts. I was doing really well at it, the management were humming my praises, right up until one day in January 1966.
A call came through for me on the little sales office telephone:
'Who?'
'My name is Danny King' the voice repeated.
'Oh Hello, yes, of course I've heard of you'
'And you are the Dave Morgan who wrote this song – the one called "it's an ill wind that blows"?'
'Er yes I am. How did you get to hear that?'

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'I have just been listening to a tape of it down at Johnny Hayne's studio and I want to tell you: I don't care if you're short, ugly, bald or covered in spots – I want you in my group! Come down the Cedar Club tonight and we'll talk some more about it, okay?'
'Oh, er thanks, yeah, right… Okay then, I'll see yer at the Cedar tonight.'
That was the end of my career in the stores of Colmore Depot.
I lost the job for consistently turning up late after joining Danny King's 'Mayfair Set'.

Alf
One day mom dropped a bombshell on me: She was considering getting married again!
Alf Print had been her friend since before the war, even before she met Raymond. He had come from a fairly well to do family who, for reasons I never did quite fathom, had disowned and disinherited him as a young man. By 1962 he was down on his luck and living at the Salvation Army Hostel in the centre of Birmingham, a residency that always seemed to be on the verge of summary termination: I remember one occasion when mom interceded on his behalf to keep them from throwing him out. Alf was one of the people in mom's orbit of care but when she announced that she intended to marry him I felt as if that old steamroller was revving up again to roll over me and do me in. Mom seemed convinced that it was God's will for her to marry Alf. I was horrified and indignant.

'Does that mean my name will change to David Print?' I barked at her.

She didn't know the answer. Enquiries were made into protocol and legalities and it transpired that I would remain a Morgan. It was just as well. That would probably have been the very last straw.

But all the objections of her family, and all my protestations, came to nought, and in the summer of 1962 mom became Mrs.Print at the little church up the road where she went to worship every Sunday.

Three months after mom married Alf, the Cuban missile crisis flared up and for a while I existed like everyone else, as a zombie going through the motions – get up, catch a bus, go to work, come home, all the while expecting the enormous bang that would announce the end of the world. Then as quick as it had flared up it was gone. We were at work, on tenterhooks, wondering what would happen when the Americans intercepted the Soviet ships in the Atlantic when suddenly someone was running around shouting: 'It's over - the Russian ships have turned around! They're going back home. Khrushchev's backed down!'

During this time Mom's brother Joe also came to live with us in our council house at Tile Cross. Uncle Joe was a fugitive from other relatives who had tired of him.
Both Alf and Joe suffered with their 'nerves' as mom called it – a euphemism for 'mental health problems', itself a sop to political correctness that belies stark reality like bleach masks the smell of a drain. Whereas Joe's affliction would manifest as inertia and depression, Alf's would surface in fits of violent rage. Then at other times, he would have the temperament and disposition of an inoffensive child. You never quite knew what could cause a flare-up, but often it was directed at Mom. He would pass through the house like an enraged bull destroying things, often things of special significance like dad's photographs or letters, and afterwards he would cry like a baby for forgiveness.

It was in one of these eruptions that Alf smashed the TV to pieces with an axe. My friend Mick Andrews bought us round a replacement, a second-hand one from the TV shop where he worked. I remember Mick saying to Alf: 'You keep smashing them up and I'll keep bringing them. You'll be knee-deep in tellies!'

Then in July 1964, Alf died suddenly, releasing the household from its state of simmering stress and mom from her pledge to God. She had kept Alf off the streets and given him a home. Now all she had to do was look after Joe.

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Dad working his projector at a work's canteen film show circa 1950.

Tile Cross

Tile Cross was the name of the new estate built in the early 50's on green fields to the east of Birmingham - It featured six-storey and three-story flats along with terraced houses made of concrete, like ours shown here. The estate was part of Birmingham's post-war slum-clearance project. Here mom is on the doorstep of our house in Briddsland Road, Tile Cross (wherever did the name 'Briddsland' come from?? The mind boggles when speculating how the chaps in Birmingham City Council invented names for their roads).

A womans work is never done.... Mom in the kitchen.
Right: a new bike.

Mini-Cooper on the drive at Tile Cross.

Mom and Joe at Brill, Buckinghamshire.

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TWO - ELO (& UNCLE JOE)

Yes my uncle Joe alternated between being the court jester of the house, supplying song, dance and seaside postcard jokes, while other times taking on the attributes of a zombie: silent, unresponsive, shuffling past like one of the undead in a B movie.
Everyone scoffed at Joe, and I was at the front of the queue. Joe was the 'bag man' who would go around picking up waste paper from the street, who would drop everything to help somebody only to be rewarded with insults. He was plagued all his life by mental problems and disowned by the rest of the family; he was an outcast to all except his sister Vinnie. Nobody wanted Joe around, me included. Mom was his only pal.
Much to my chagrin, Joe lived with us in our two-bed roomed council house in Tile Cross. For years, Joe and I slept in the same bedroom, a grudging arrangement as far as I was concerned. When I complained I was told by mom that Joe 'has nowhere else to go, I have to look after him.'

And that's what she did, she looked after him come hell and high water.

Now it amuses me to recollect the connection that Joe had with a cheeky unassuming teenager who just a few short years later, would climb to the roof of our world and create a music group that became a household name.
I guess it's true that many of you will be reading this because you remember the group ELO - The 'Electric Light Orchestra'. Yes, they were a great group!
I got to join them in 1981 and wow, that was a good job to get - especially as I was on the dole at the time!

Jeff
But I'd known Jeff Lynne, the driving force behind ELO, for more than fifteen years before that.
I first bumped into him at a church hall in Shard End, Birmingham in December 1963 – I was playing there with 'Jeff Silvas and the Four Strangers' and he came up in the break to ask if he could have a go on my guitar (I don't think he owned one then). I stood watching him strumming the chords to a Dave Clark Five song that was in the charts, never thinking for a moment that this kid would turn out to be a major force in world music and have an influence on my life, along with zillions of others, stretching far into the future. At the time, I never knew his name.

It was more than a year later, in 1965, when I was in 'The Chantelles' that he appeared one day in answer to our ad for a guitarist. I recognised him straight away as the guy who had strummed on my guitar before. Jeff Lynne duly became The Chantelles lead guitarist, a dubious honour seeing as the group was little more than work in progress - I seem to recall we spent more time rehearsing in the drummer's garage than playing gigs. We used to practice these, as I thought, rather good three-part harmonies. One time, when we were playing a gig somewhere, I remember singing and thinking 'these harmonies sound a bit sparse', and looking around, saw Jeff stood back from his mic, as if he'd forgotten he was supposed to sing. I caught his eye and motioned for him to join in but he shook his head. I confronted him afterwards but he said 'I don't want to sing – singing is for wimps! – I just want to play the guitar.'
Jeff wouldn't sing with The Chantelles but I knew he could sing, and so, much later, it came to pass..

The bass player of The Nightriders called me up one day to ask if I knew of a lead guitarist who could also sing. - I gave him Jeff's number, and then immediately phoned him up to alert him:
'Jeff, I just gave the Nightriders your number cos they're looking for someone to play guitar' (The Nightriders were a highly respected local band – Roy Wood had not long left them).
'Oh thanks Dave' Jeff said.
'And Jeff…'
'Yeah?.
'You can sing, right?'
'Yeah,' he said catching the hidden message with a muted giggle.

Jeff joined the Nightriders, who soon changed their name to the 'Idle Race'.
'The Idle Race! - Why do you call yourselves by that silly name?' my mom once asked him.
Jeff fell silent for a second or two, and then said 'I can't be bothered to answer that!'
Mom seemed quite convinced we were all wasting our time.
'Time hallows only that which he himself hath made' she would repeat as a dire warning to us all.

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Jeff lived about two miles from me - I was on Tile Cross Estate and he was on Shard End Estate - and so we used to pop in on each other, and we were often on the phone when a new Beatle record came out, fawning over it usually. On one occasion I went around to play him a new song I'd just written and we got talking about having a record out, the ultimate dream. But in my heart that prospect really belonged in fantasyland, and I said something negative like: 'I don't suppose that anyone out there will ever get to hear my stuff.'
I remember Jeff shot back immediately with: 'Well they're gonna hear me whether they like it or not!' How true that statement was. How idle words have the power to condemn, or direct, according to the spirit.

The Move
Then in 1966 a tremor shook the Birmingham music scene, propelled by the vision of local singer Carl Wayne: If you've ever seen the film 'The Dam Busters' you will recall how Squadron Leader Guy Gibson picked out the cream of pilots from all the other RAF squadrons (upsetting quite a few people in the process), in order to create his elite team of airmen. That's what Carl Wayne did – he went around the Birmingham music scene like a head hunter checking off the best talent around, and then made his play. Finally the raid was on and the dam broke - Months of secrecy were ended and Carl unveiled the new super group from Birmingham - 'The Move'.
From Mike Sheridan's Nightriders he took Roy Wood (at the time, Jeff Lynne described Roy as the best guitarist he'd ever seen). From The Avengers, he took drummer Bev Bevan, from Danny King, guitarist Trevor Burton, while from his own band - the Vikings – he kept bass-player Ace Kefford. This 'Move' reverberated through the Brumbeat groups affecting many others down the line. For some it meant a disastrous loss, while for others, me included, it represented an opportunity to climb another rung up the ladder. The next rung for me was a job with Danny King. For Jeff Lynne it was a job with the Nightriders.

'The Move' were indeed Birmingham's star group and went on to have many hit songs, all written by Roy, but after a few years on the road tensions between them caused first Ace Kefford, and then Trevor Burton to leave. But that's another story. - I figured in some of those dramas and I'll speak about that later, but for now lets get back to the ELO family tree: It was during this period that I became friends with Carl Wayne, and Jeff became a pal of Roy Wood.

Jeff came around one day in 1970 clutching a tape he was really excited about. It was a recording he'd made with Roy Wood called '10538 overture' (he'd teamed up with Roy as part of 'The Move' earlier that year). He said that him and Roy were thinking of forming a new group called the Electric Light Orchestra. 'The what?' I said, unsure if I'd heard him right or if it was leading up to another one of his jokes.
The convention of group names had already been smashed wide open: The 'Beatles' had led that insurrection. No longer was the star's name followed dutifully two paces behind by the group's name. Identity had become a point of artistic expression in itself, but the name that Jeff had proffered was stretching it a bit the other way! An orchestra – aren't they full of law-abiding musicians who read the dots and wear suits and ties and stuff?

Just about the next thing I heard coming down the grapevine was that 'The Move' had metamorphosed into the new group with that strange name Jeff had told me about – The Electric Light Orchestra. Strangely, Roy left after about six months and everyone expected the Electric Light to switch off fast without his luminence on board, but it didn't. Jeff had bitten hard on the dream, enough to hang on while the setbacks shook him.
While Jeff kept his nose to the grindstone, I bobbed up and down like flotsam on the ebb and flow of fortune. I was in and out of various groups, and in between times in the group known as 'Her Majesty's Social Security' (in case that actually refers to a real act, let me point out that it means I was on the dole).
At one point I was a labourer on a building site but that magically turned into a job playing bass guitar in a night-club residency. That job gave me enough money to take a private pilots licence course but a couple of years later, I was back scraping the barrel. In order to keep off the dole, I found myself working as a metal worker for a friend of mine named Steve.

The year was 1976 and Steve was making ornamental brass models of Stevensons' Rocket, which were somewhat strangely in demand. He had a tumble-down workshop in a part of the city that was honeycombed with old Victorian factories, bomb-sites, and slums in the process of being cleared. It was a filthy place with a brick floor and long heavy wooden benches upon which I would fetter and polish brass castings. A radio blared out constantly and one day a song came on that caught my

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attention immediately - 'that was Living Thing by the Electric Light Orchestra' - the announcer said afterwards.
It made my day. My mate Jeff, on the radio with a great pop song!
I loved it and I knew he'd cracked it. Jeff, with his ideas of forging a marriage between rock 'n' roll and classical music, had eclipsed the success of all the Birmingham groups before him, and sailed off the edge of our blinkered world, eventually to become a household name in America and beyond. Essentially, like the space station on the cover of his 'Out of the Blue' album, he had escaped the gravity of our petty factional limitations, and was orbiting above, weightlessly unassailable.
For a few years I lost track of Jeff as he toured around.

Meanwhile the flotsam rose and fell on the tide, and amazingly, in 1979, I discovered I was the writer of a hit song myself. 'Hiroshima', a song that took me all of fifteen minutes to write in my moms house ten years before, had become a 'sleeper' hit in Germany, staying in the lower end of the charts for almost a year!
No sooner had I cashed the first cheque than I was off to America. It was in Los Angeles in 1980, as a guest of Richard Tandy that I met up with Jeff again. He had a chalet at a hotel in Beverly Hills and one night we went to the 'club' – I mean THE club, the Polo Lounge - the poshest do in town. I remember they wouldn't let Jeff in because he wasn't wearing a jacket. 'We can loan you one sir' the concierge said, and duly rummaged around the cloakroom to emerge with a jacket about twenty sizes too big for him – 'This must've belonged to Orson Welles' Jeff said as we walked in together, giggling. We sat around a table drinking beers and I told him as best I could how good his music sounded from the bottom rung of the ladder, where I'd perchanced to hear it from the working class vista we both knew so well. He was in the middle of recording the music for the film Xanadu at the time, and while I was out there, I got to help out on the demo for the song 'All over the world.' It was just exhilarating, watching the process of making a record at that level. Jeff and Richard worked so hard at it, going over the song time and again, making small changes, patiently listening for that time when it sits right and doesn't make you lose equilibrium – you know, fall off your stool.

But back home in Birmingham I was astonished by the vibes I picked up from other musicians regarding Jeff's achievements. Many seemed scathing, dismissive or cynical, saying he'd sold out, stolen ideas, was just lucky to be in the right place at the right time, all that kind of stuff. There was one I remember – a drummer, who saw it differently. 'Jeff has shown us all the way, he's really done the business, the best of luck to him' he said to me one night in the Elbow Room night club. The others seemed gripped in a 'Conspiracy Theory' mindset that saw everything as the artefact of some alternative reality - where ELO's success had been engineered by big business – or the CIA – or aliens – anyone!
One guitarist got particularly upset when I told him proudly that I'd helped out on Jeff's demo in LA: 'Did he pay you a session fee?' he barked, incensed with the socialist venom of the downtrodden which was the popular mood of the time.

But I'm being unfair. The fact was, I had known Jeff from way back, and I'd heard him say audacious, ridiculous things which later gained the substance of fact. They didn't know that like I did. I knew he had dreamed big and not let go, while others, me included, had dreamed a little and let go a lot.

It was 1981 when Jeff asked me to join his by now, mega-successful group. When I recount to people now just how that came about I often say that he asked me to join and I said 'I'll think about it - and how much are you going to pay me?' to poke fun at the fact I said the quickest 'Yes' possible. The fact is, I was a real fan of Jeff's music – I loved it and felt I understood it. It was hard work rehearsing but it was never hard work supporting Jeff playing that music because it had already built a home in my heart. Playing it was just stoking a fire before a familiar hearth.

The fool on the hill
A song begins as just a little idea. A fragile thing, like a new-born baby. You have to be careful who you show it to, who you allow to hold it - at least until it's grown up some! In the guise of well-wishers, people can speak words over your child which can help propel it toward it's destiny or else condemn it to sickness and an early death.
I don't know who Paul McCartney had in mind when he wrote 'The fool on the Hill':
'Day after day, alone on a hill, the man with the foolish grin is keeping perfectly still..'
It's a song about a loner, an outcast, someone who, disregarded by all, sits alone quietly looking, noticing.
'the fool on the hill sees the sun going down and the eyes in his head see the world spinning round…'
But as far as I'm concerned, he wrote it for my Uncle Joe. Not that Paul McCartney ever met my Uncle

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Joe you understand, but just because it describes him so perfectly.
'And nobody wants to know him, they can see that he's just a fool'
Nobody wanted to know Joe but mom.

You might be wondering what on earth my Uncle has to do with ELO – it's a fair question. If there are no patterns to be found in the chaos, if we are really adrift on the winds of purposeless chance, there isn't any connection at all.
The fact is, Joe used to work at a factory in Tile Cross called 'EPE', and for a time, Jeff Lynne happened to work there too – I think he was an apprentice. Anyway, Joe used to give Jeff a lift to and from the 'EPE' everyday in his car. Mom was never happy with people taking advantage of Joe and I remember well her confronting him about it: 'I hope he's going to pay your petrol money for going out of your way everyday,' Joe replied firmly that Jeff had promised him 'When I make my first million Joe, I'll see yer all right.' I suppose it's the sort of remark that's just forgotten – but I believe that God heard it and he didn't forget, because you see the fact is, Jeff did make his million, and Joe was all right.
Oh - Jeff didn't come riding down Briddsland Road with a cheque made out to Joe. - The connection wasn't that visible, and it doesn't need to be. Jeff gave me a job with his group, I bought my mom's house. Mom looked after Joe - right up until the day he died.

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THREE - BIRMINGHAM BLUES

The City of Birmingham in the mid sixties was a landscape alternating between the scars of German bombs and the grimy Victorian edifices that marked its industrial heritage. Nestling in its underbelly, just outside the heart of the city centre, was the Cedar Club. It had all the attributes of an Al Capone speakeasy: A dingy frontage looking every bit from the outside like a brothel lit by candles, with windows emanating a muted reddy hue around gaps in the curtains.
I walked up and knocked nervously on the door. It responded instantly, swinging open to reveal a Goliath-type figure replete with black tuxedo, bow tie and a countenance of practised menace.
'Hello. Er… I'm here to see Danny King.' I said.
'Yeah, and you are…?'
'Dave Morgan.'
Without a word, the door swung shut. I hovered on the pavement for a few minutes while spivs with scantily clad girls shuffled past me to be granted immediate recognition and entry into the dark interior. Eventually the door opened again for me:
'Okay' said Goliath, motioning me in through the portal, to the inner sanctum of playboy Valhalla.
It was my first trip into the world of 'night clubs' – a world of drinking and laughter, noisy revelry, easy women and late nights followed by staying in bed until midday…

I don't know quite how I got the job playing guitar with Danny King, he didn't 'audition' me at all. Maybe it was because he liked my songs. Or maybe it was because he found out I owned a Jaguar motor car.. Just an old Mark 7 you understand, but yes, it was a Jaguar. (It had been given to me by the man who collided with my J2 van. He had no insurance and no money to pay for the repairs).

I was with Danny King for eight months and we played the Cedar regularly. Soon it was me who could knock the door and be instantly recognised and ushered inside by the ubiquitous Goliaths. It was the 'in' place to be - you could bump into anyone and everyone at the Cedar: Stars and would-be stars, managers, roadies, groupies - they would all be there, mingled in with the freeloaders, pimps and hustlers.

Ten days after joining Danny King, I became the proud owner of yet another Jaguar motor car. The Mark 9 model promised to be a much swisher steed befitting the gangster class I was now rubbing shoulders with. But first it had to be fixed up. I had bought it as a 'write-off' from an insurance company (for £30). It had crash damage to the rear, which had bent the chassis so bad that the rear doors wouldn't open. A friend of mine helped me repair it. He cannibalised the panels from the old Mark 7 to spruce up the bodywork and then shackled the chassis to a lug set in concrete and drove the Jag forward at high energy again and again until, Hey presto: he had stretched it enough to be able to open and close the back doors!

We used to drive in that Jag to Alex's pie stand, outside Snow Hill station in Birmingham, and munch our steak and kidney pies sat in the sumptuous leather seats. It was luxury, the pie went on the little walnut drop-down tables built into the dashboard and seat backs, while the plastic cup full of hot tea sat in the chromium well provided. Just what the makers of Jaguar cars had in mind when they designed it – a couple of dead beats having a take-away meal at Alex's and covering the inside with pastry droppings. Alex's pie stand, like the Cedar club, was a place where, if you stayed long enough, you would be sure to meet every 'face' in town. Sooner or later they would turn up, on their way back home from gigs in the middle of the night.

Germany
Danny King's group sort of fell apart when the organist got arrested at a gig one night… There was something about stolen equipment being found in his inventory. Anyway, shortly after the dust had settled from that fracas I joined a group called 'Blaises,' an attempt at putting together a local super-group by manager Arthur Smith. The local scene however, was soon mercifully released from 'Blaises' as they were extracted out of it and sent to Germany for a month. After all, the Beatles had shown that a stint in Germany was the way to mega-success…

Our group transport was an old ambulance recently retired from service. It was more like a baby charabanc with windows along the side, big comfy seats, and a sleepy soft suspension that imbibed an undulating motion as it trundled along, making it feel like you were travelling on a motorised water bed.
On the ferry crossing from Dover to Calais the Captain of the ship – a stern looking Danish man - took exception to the Ambulance sign still displayed in a lighted vent in the roof of the cab. He gave us a

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tin of white paint and ordered us in broken English to paint it over before he would let us off his ship. He must have dropped out a word about our unsociable presence to the Gendarmes at Calais because they promptly impounded us, and our ambulance - locking us inside a giant shed for several hours before repatriating us back to England on the same ship.
We spent the night in our ambulance on the car park of Dover docks and the next morning booked passage on a ferry to Ostend. We hoped the Belgians would be more obliging to us than the French had been, and they were – they let us in without mass arrest, imprisonment or even the suggestion of garrotting anyone.

Our invasion of Europe finally secure, we set course in a somewhat humbled fashion for Germany, undulating our way across the motorway system through the day and night to arrive at Hannover very early one morning. We found the club where we were booked to play – the Savoy - and looked at it in horror. It was a dump, an old converted cinema, with gaily coloured posters pinned to battered, shabby walls of peeling stucco. We peered through the grey dawn at the scene before us and, in our slightly comatosed, half-asleep condition, made daft jokes about it. Raucous laughter ricocheted through the ambulance as, surveying the state of buildings adjoining the club, one of the group pointed to a desolate outhouse with bars at the windows and said: 'Hey look, there's the hotel where we're staying at.'
Some time later a cleaner came and let us into the club. We were shown to our quarters – they were the adjoining outhouse we had all been laughing at.

We played at the Savoy in Hannover for three weeks, five spots per night, sleeping and living in the concrete bowels of our 'hotel' which had a star rating lower than Colditz. The organ player broke his leg, the singer caught crabs and the drummer had his leg bitten into by a German girl after an enormous fight broke out in the ambulance as we were taking some girls home one night.

After Hannover, we moved to Brunswick for a week – or Braunschweig as it was rendered in the native tongue. We played on a stage that was about three foot wide and fifty foot long - All stood in a line sandwiched against the wall, like suspects in a police line-up.
Across the other side of the club, behind the bar, stood the proprietor: An enormous portly German with a playful, slightly psychopathic manner. He developed a penchant for conducting us from where he stood across the room, employing a system of easily understood hand gesticulations interspersed with a show of his ample knuckles and his best expression of menace. That was the way he would tell us to turn down.
Using this orchestral semaphore system, one night he gradually lowered the volume of 'Blaises' until we were turned completely off! - the drummer was tapping gently on the sides of his drum, the singer was just whispering and the only other sound to be heard in the club was our plectrums strumming across dead strings. All our eyes were glued to the owner as he beamed child-like, head raised to the ceiling like a music lover lost in rapture. Then suddenly he recomposed himself into a glare of Wagnerian anger, his jaw sticking out and his face contorting into a raging passion as his hands rose up from the bar-top motioning us to increase the volume... Bit by bit, with hands and fists, he had us get louder.. and louder, and louder, and louder, and even louder still! - Until the noise in the little club was excruciating, and we were thrashing our instruments like drunken dervishes while he stood like a warrior king on a hillside, his arms punching the air in a rage of victorious ecstasy. Yes he was quite a character.

'Blaises' came back from Germany and later went to Turkey before folding in the late spring of 1967. But more about that later…

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Ugly's

'What?' mom said horrified, when I told her I was going to join a group called the 'Uglys.'
Singer Steve Gibbons called up out of the blue one day to ask would I be interested in joining him and his group with the zany name of 'Uglys.' I went to see them play at the Hen and Chickens in Langley. Yes, they were a tad unusual - and not the slightest bit ugly. Steve performed every song with a voluminous show of theatrical gestures, acting out the lyrics in a deliberate melodrama, something I had not seen done before. For one song he came on with an enormous long brass instrument – at least I think it was an instrument - at any rate he blew down it and with his characteristic show of pomp and circumstance, made appropriate noises to the song 'And the Squire blew his horn' - one of the 'Ugly's' records. All this was quite a novelty to me at the time.
Jim Holden, the drummer, came up to me in the break and spoke as if my becoming an 'Ugly' was a done thing: 'I'm glad you'll be joining us Dave. We can talk about things we have in common – like the war for instance!' – a reference to the fact that both him and me were older than the rest of the group.

The 'Uglys' were a one-off. Steve was, and still is, a most colourful and charismatic performer with a wonderful voice and a way of expressing himself visually that then, and now, is a treat to behold. I always thought he had 'star' written all over him, but Steve was to make only one incursion into the British hit parade, in the late 70's, with the Chuck Berry song 'Tulane.' Such is rock 'n' roll.

Richard

The 59 Club was a sleazy subterranean cellar in the centre of Birmingham, a setting no doubt inspired by the success of the 'Cavern' club in Liverpool. I went in there one night and immediately noticed the young guy playing the huge semi-acoustic guitar on stage with the group. It wasn't just the guitar that caught my attention, unusual as it was. It was the chords he was playing – I had never seen anything like it! His hand was stretched across the fret board, contorted into voluptuous strange shapes that were definitely not out of my Bert Weedon guitar book. That was the first time I met Richard Tandy, the guitarist with the group 'The Chantelles.'
'What were those chords you were playing?' I asked him after being introduced.
I got to know Richard after that and soon became aware that when it came to dedication to music, he was in another league to me. When he was out of work, he would sit at home day after day playing the piano, practising scales and maybe learning a Bob Dylan song. (He loved Dylan's stuff, as I did). But I was astonished at his patience.
I quickly discovered that Richard could add something worthwhile to any song I could invent. He is a great 'busker' – able to pick up the thread of a song and produce an accompaniment off the top of his head, whether on guitar or keyboard. Nowadays, busking seems to have become something of a lost art (if it is an art), but back then we were forever busking. I would take a new song around to him and it would fall together without hardly any rehearsing. We would record it on Richard's B&O recorder in the front room of his mom's house. Yes, if I'm ever asked 'who is the best musician you've ever played with' I'd have to say it is Richard.

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Carl Wayne
The pie stand had closed early for some reason. We looked out of steamed up car windows at its deserted facade in despair.

'Oh no, I'm starving. What're we gonna do?' someone said.
'Let's go to the Cedar Club for a chip butty' suggested Charlie.
'The Cedar club? Don't be daft. You can't get a chip butty at a night club!'

'Yes you can,' chuckled Charlie. 'Just watch me.'
So that's what we did. We drove down to the Cedar and installed ourselves at one of the tables opposite the stage, in the dimly lit gulley that passed for a restaurant, and watched with glee as Carl Wayne ordered chip butties for us all. The waiter smirked politely, scribbled something on his pad and disappeared inside the kitchen. We pulled faces and giggled expectantly and after a short while the waiter re-emerged with a tray from which he began to serve us with exaggerated decorum and broken English: 'There you are sir,… Enjoy your meal..' - Giant doorstep pieces of bread cut into sandwich blocks spread thick with butter and in between, chips. Glorious.
Yes chip butties at the Cedar Club became part of the folk lore. That and the obligatory race through deserted night streets. It was the thing to do for some reason. The last one to get there was… well the last one to get there, what more need I say? 'There' might be someone's house, or a club, or some venue of perceived importance to lads who perceived only glory as really important. Glory with a bit of outrage and silliness thrown in.

Yes it was the age of being gloriously and outrageously silly. Charlie had a different take on glory to me though, and one of the more outrageous things he used to do was to smash up a television set on stage: I thought having a Beatle haircut was revolutionary, but destroying a television set? Surely there must be a law against that? – Isn't it sacrilege or something?
The way Charlie did it was akin to a religious experience. I know, I was part of the congregation at the Belfry – a posh hotel in the Sutton Coldfield countryside. Carl Wayne was on stage with his recently formed super-group, the 'Move'. The music had evaporated into a long solo with Roy Wood studiously thrashing his Fender and Trevor Burton standing like an angry sphinx, lasing the audience with his steely glare while at stage front, Carl was fixed into a mean pose and lost in apparent meditation. All the time lights were flashing (yes, that was a new thing too, before the name 'strobing' was ever invented) and at the back, Bev Bevan industriously flailed away at his drumkit. I do believe I saw the slightest flicker of a grin pass Bev's face as a roaddie shuffled by holding a table followed by another roaddie - Upsy, the chief roaddie no less – grasping a Television set. The table was placed ceremoniously at stage front and the tele placed on top. An altar and a sacrifice...
The crowd gasped - Carl Wayne had picked up an axe from somewhere and was circling around the table like a lion stalking a downed gazelle, going around and around, first one way and then the other for what seemed like ages until…
Suddenly he exploded. Wallop. The wooden cabinet split apart. More blows. Bang. The tube went with a tinkly popping sound… Charlie was lost in manic rage. He smashed the axe down again and again while the crowd, me included, stood transfixed in the symbology of it all - a public execution by a crazed axe-man! Finally the ritual was complete and the roaddies returned to retrieve the pieces of the TV set. I think the Move finished the song but I don't really remember. Maybe I was being treated for shock or something? I just remember thinking afterward 'How very strange. What does it all mean?'

Well of course, it meant that the 'Move' were bent upon moving up and out of Birmingham; the Midlands; anywhere remotely provincial, and stepping up into the centre stage of our universe – London, the capital of the music world. With the help of their new manager, media locust Tony Secunda, Charlie had set the Move on to a trajectory that would make them a household name. It was a fact that unfolded before our Brummie eyes.

And in between these goings on, we recorded loads of my songs, mainly at my mom's house. Charlie was an honoured visitor, one of the few amongst my musician pals to gain moms unreserved approval. She'd make sure the table cloth was clean when Charlie was coming to visit, and he always paid her special attentions too. We never spent a long time on the recordings. It was never a job, always something like: 'I'd like to play that song to somebody Dave. Let me have a tape of it.' And me replying: 'Oh, I don't have a decent demo of it yet.' And Charlie would say: 'Right, I'll pop around at so-and-so time and we'll record it.' That was the way it happened. I would be frantic with care about every syllable and crotchet but Charlie would just turn up and sing my song, and in three minutes it would all be over. Mom would make a cup of tea and be fussing all over him while I was scribbling the

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name of the song on a tape box, with a note that Carl had sung it.

Life in the Brum beat era was like one long fairground ride. The lights dazzled, the music blared and the carousel kept spinning while all of us with something to sing or write were sucked up into its vortex of beautiful promise.

Something

True to their promise, the Move became a hit group in 1967 when their song 'Night of Fear' sped into the British charts. It happened while I was in Spain with 'The Uglys'. - It was the only time I ever got asked to play lead guitar, and that was only because Willy Hammond (the lead guitarist) had told us that his mom wouldn't let him go to Spain with us.
The following year, Carl Wayne – 'Charlie' - started taking serious interest in my songs and soon became a regular visitor at my home in Tile Cross. My mom thought the world of him, for years she would save all the newspaper articles about him.
Charlie and I became pals and we used to play chess at his house until the early hours. We went through phases where he would win every game, and then I would win every game. But it was always one more game for the 'decider' until we were too tired to carry on.

I had been trying to compose an entertaining song with a nice simple tune and I came up with 'That Certain Something'. Unusually for me, it wasn't written for anyone or anything in particular, it was just about the flow of life; - the search for that certain something that you can't describe, but like Steve McQueen said in the horror movie 'The Blob' – 'you'll know it when you see it!'

I played it to Charlie on guitar and he picked up on it straight away, shortening the title to 'Something'. Then in the summer of '68, Charlie told me he was going to do it with the Move. They recorded it with a string arrangement (a new departure for them) and by November, it was a toss-up which would be the A side for the new single release – my song 'Something' or Roy Wood's 'Blackberry Way.'

On 13 November, Charlie and I were in London, at the offices of 'Galaxy' - Don Arden's management company. Don Arden was the Move's manager (Tony Secunda was manager when they became famous, but now we are a little further downstream). Don was a short stubby man who seemed to revel in promoting his legendary renown as a gangster – you could call him 'The Don' and he wouldn't get offended. The godfather angle was probably good for business!
He took me by the arm and led me to the window overlooking Denmark Street. The oft-quoted story of him hanging somebody out of a window until they swore to sign a contract, wafted before my minds eye, but he just wanted to talk where we couldn't be overheard:
'David, I wanna ask you something: You know the Move really need a hit with this next record. Which of the two songs is in your opinion, the most commercial track? - which one is likely to make the most money?'
What a question! I thought hard for a moment while he stared at me. Of course I wanted my song to be on the A side…. but something told me the accurate answer to the question was Roy's song.

I don't know if Don took notice of my advice but the fact is a few weeks later 'Blackberry Way' was climbing up the charts, and by the following February, it was at number one. My song was on the B side and that was good for me also, at least financially. The publisher gave me an advance of £500 for it, a small fortune at the time. I remember I banked it and then withdrew the lot in cash so that I could go and open a new account closer to where I lived. Coming out of the bank I dropped the lot in the street. It was like a scene from 'The Gold of the Sierra Madre': I was on my hands and knees in the road, eyes bulging with avarice, competing with the wind for dominion over the rebellious green tablets trying to make their escape down the Washwood Heath Road.

The Move recorded one further song of mine: 'This Time Tomorrow' but before that was to happen, other dramas came into focus:

Trevor Burton and drummer Bev Bevan got into an argument one night while they were on stage in Germany. According to how Charlie related it to me, Trevor threw his bass guitar at Bev. Now Bev is quite a muscular bloke, and when he stood up and grabbed the nearest weapon to hand – his side drum which Upsy, the roadie, had nailed to the stage to stop it moving, he picked it up with such venom that the stage planking came up too. He then proceeded to project the whole rig with due vigour at Trevor. The crowd thought it was all part of the act and they cheered and whooped with delight…
Meanwhile as the two disappeared off stage, chasing each other with various items of furniture,

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Charlie and Roy were left to continue the song alone, and when the curtain fell that night, that was the end of the Move with Trevor Burton in it.
I was aghast with shock when Charlie told me about it, but his next statement floored me even more: 'My choice is for you to join the Move to take Trevor's place. But keep it under your hat for now, when all the contractual stuff is sorted out with Trevor, I'll let you know more.'
And a couple of weeks later, as 'Blackberry Way' was climbing the last rungs of the top ten ladder, Charlie did formally ask me to join the Move on bass guitar.
It was a great opportunity and I told him I would think about it. And think about it I did.

I had been with Steve Gibbons in the 'Uglys' for eighteen months and I liked playing with the Ugs. To complicate matters, my mate Richard Tandy had just joined on piano and Steve had told me that there was even talk of Trevor Burton now joining us (!!) and of the group being re-formed and going for the big time in a completely new direction.
But in the end the thing that made up my mind was the powerful forces I saw in spin around The Move. Maybe it came from having the Don as manager. It was the flavour of it, the aroma; - the cool ambience of cut-throat power that would ride rough shod over anything. It was being in a pressure-cooker stoked by values I wanted to avoid. And as the saying goes: 'If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.' Or in my case, don't go in the kitchen in the first place.
Yes I felt I belonged more in Steve's easy-going world than in the little I had seen of the world that the Move inhabited. I suspected also that my songs were better suited to the 'Uglys' style and decided to take my chances with them. So, I turned down the offer of a job in the famous 'Move'.
Interestingly, before I was asked, Jeff Lynne was asked the same question (Roy wanted him in the group, Charlie wanted me!). Jeff turned it down because he too wanted to stay with the group he was with – the Idle Race.

The upshot of all this is that Trevor Burton did indeed join the 'Uglys' - as the lead guitarist. Willy Hammond got sacked to accommodate him, and under Trevor's input and influence, Steve had agreed that the group would have a new manager, Tony Secunda. I winced when the news came in. I had escaped the net of Don Arden only to be caught in the snare of Tony Secunda, himself a legend with his aggressive confrontational style (He once devised an advertising campaign which implied that the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, was having an affair. The ensuing legal battle cost The Move all the royalties to a top ten hit). But by now I couldn't back out. The job with the Move had gone to someone else (Rick Price). When you've made your bed you've got to lie in it.

Being sacked from the Uglys was the best thing that ever happened to Willy Hammond. He went off and joined the Air Force and this led to a distinguished career in the foreign office, with many adventures of international gravity, the substance of things that set the exploits of the entertainment business into dim insignificance.

The new group with new direction, new ethos and new manager, needed a new name. Needless to say with Tony Secunda involved, it had to hit you square between the eyes, and if it could be inflammatory too, so much the better. The new banner was unfurled and I found myself in the group named 'Balls' - the most aptly named group I have ever been in. It was a disaster from the word go.

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The Dish

The Birmingham group scene had ways to deter anyone from taking themselves too seriously. It was all to do with the way you presented yourself, or were presented by others. An 'unearned' or artificially enhanced notoriety could result in you being labelled as 'flash,' which was akin to having a notice board strung around your neck warning that you carried a communicable disease. Yes, the Flash Squad was ever on the prowl to bring you back down to earth...

In particular, anything produced by the publicity men – posters, pictures or promotional stuff – could be quickly translated into the fodder of jokes and put-downs. The more splendid the accolade, the more caustic was the ridicule to be heaped upon whoever was its hapless beneficiary. I suppose it was the way we all kept each other in check, although nobody ever said it was a rule, nevertheless a rule it was. Anyone perceived to be pompous or remotely pretentious was fair game to be tarred and feathered.

In the mid sixties there was a group called the 'Walker Brothers' – two good looking American guys who, before they broke into the big time, had a third member, a Brit named Jim O'Neill. Jim came from Birmingham and being a rather good looking chap himself, was chosen to complete the perfect triangle of brotherly talent. Now the press - the newspapers and magazines of the day – clawed avidly for photographs of these three handsome 'Walker Brothers' and their faces beamed at us frequently from popular publications. It was a magazine – actually the teen magazine 'Fabulous' - that was to reshape, reinvent, indeed rename Jim, when it published a full-page spread of the heavenly trio with the caption below obsequiously labelling him as: '…the DISHY Jimmy O'Neill.'

It was a point of sedition that was not to be lost on the watchful organs of the Flash Squad...

Some time later Jim left the Walker Brothers and moved back to Birmingham to become a long-standing member of the Uglys.

So when I got to join the group in July 1967, singer Steve Gibbons introduced bass player Jim to me simply as: 'The Dish.' When I enquired further - 'what does that mean, The Dish?' - I was greeted with a cavalcade of chuckles and guffaws from the group and even the 'Dish' would only proffer me a wry smile by way of explanation. It had become his name. But eventually, I got to learn the story of the lineage and nativity of the noble house of Dish, birthed as it was by the copy-writer of a girlie-mag.

I soon got to meet Jim's sister Kathy, and as far as I was concerned she was a lot dishier than brother Jim. I went out with Kathy O'Neill for several years and we are still friends now. Kathy would herself sometimes address Jim by his adopted name, albeit as a soldier would use a bayonet, calling him 'the Dish' to administer the coup de grace at some suitable juncture of family disunion.

I wrote many songs for Kathy but the one I always remember her by is 'Mary Colinto.' The song became a sort of local hit, being played by many Birmingham groups, including the 'Ugly's' who made a record of it which was all set for release in early 1969 before the group disbanded to form 'Balls.'

Swedish Baroness

And then there was Gabrielle, the Swedish baroness, exiled from her inheritance to live amongst the commoners of Birmingham – in the suburb of Rednal in fact, where she worked as a seamstress and made all the clothes for the Ugly's. Ah, how she entertained us with her Nordic accent and fine sweeping movements of her slender frame as she modelled her psychedelic garments and wove her dream of one day being repatriated to the beautiful snow-capped mountain redoubt, the castle and the family heirloom, all hers by right and you'd better not doubt it, stolen from her by wickedness and subterfuge. And later, much later, how we learned incredulously that she was neither Swedish nor baroness, and this fact along with her true accent (which turned out to be as common as ours) were laid upon us like the sodden plot of some bar-room play. Yes Gabrielle was one of the characters who made the sixties what they were for us, a voyage of pure discovery on the good ship Whimsy.

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Balls

Balls lasted for one whole month. For me it did anyway. The group was formerly inaugurated on Monday February 3 1969. It was a heady time all round. Just two days before I had been offered the job of playing bass guitar with The Move. On that day they were Number 4 in the UK singles charts with 'Blackberry Way', with my song 'Something ' on the B side. Carl Wayne wanted me to join his group and he didn't like the idea of me going off with Trevor and Tony Secunda. He had even arranged a flat at Streetly (a very posh area North of Birmingham) where I could shack up and write songs in peace.

Meanwhile, Tony Secunda, manager of the new creation 'Balls', had arranged for his new group to be salted away in the countryside of the New Forest. He had a pal named Tiny. (Yes, you've guessed it - Tiny was huge!) He ran the pub in the village of Fordingbridge, Hampshire, right in the middle of the New Forest. Just a short drive out of the village, Tiny had found a bungalow where Secunda's new group could be uninterrupted as they pursued their quest for pop stardom in fine English style, as country bumkins.

I had made the decision to stay with Steve Gibbons and so I moved down to Fordingbridge. It was a special place - New Forest Donkeys came roaming in the kitchen of the little wooden bungalow that was our humble habitation and flagons of country cider were a standing order on shopping day.

I drove back to Birmingham one Sunday in late February and called Carl. He announced to me that he wanted to record a song of mine called 'One Month in Tuesday' (which went by the affectionate nom de plume 'Corky' on account of the fact it began: 'Corky wrote today…'). I called Trevor to tell him this - for me, good news. He was hopping mad about it, suggesting that Charlie was up to no good. I spoke to Charlie again and a little later he called me back to tell me he had called Tony Secunda, and there was no problem at all about him recording one of my songs. Secunda was strangely and uncharacteristically ambivalent it seemed…

When I returned to Fordingbridge on Monday, I learned that Trevor had left abruptly for London after the phone call the day before. He re-appeared with Denny Laine late on Tuesday the 25th and the two of them didn't have very much to say but I remember they did play all night at a very loud volume. Just why Denny Laine had come along, seemed to have sinister overtones to me, and the next day, I spoke to Steve Gibbons about it. He didn't know why he'd come either and was bothered about it himself. It seemed to portend a change of line-up… We both decided we needed to speak to Trevor about but when we did, he flatly denied that any change in the group was afoot: 'Absolutely not' Trevor said, shaking his head. 'Denny is just sitting in with us because his thing has fallen through in London.' He was quite emphatic about it. Steve and I were re-assured.

The new super group lurched on for another week. Rehearsals were, I guess I would describe them as undisciplined. The music was almost exclusively interminable 12 bar blasts that went on for hours, the archetypal rock n roll groove. I didn't much like the groove and I didn't much like the politics – increasingly there was a pervading atmosphere of intrigue around the place. Then on Tuesday 4 March, Trevor and Steve Gibbons took me to one side. Trevor said to me: 'This band aint happening!' I felt a certain relief to hear that. At last somebody had put it into words. He continued: '…and er… We have decided that er… you, - that is you and er… Richard… well.., you don't fit!'

That was it. I looked at Steve. He wore a grimace of resigned displeasure, like somebody who had signed up for the parachute regiment and now wished he hadn't. But it was too late.

I could sense it had been ordained from on high by the master tactician himself – Tony Secunda, together with Trevor and Denny, with Steve's agreement tacked on.

I baled out immediately and I think Richard left the next day.

Keith Smart also left the group around this time, although I am not sure precisely when. I do remember being surprised to hear that he, like us, was back in Birmingham. Keith had been Trevor's closest pal. What can you say? That's rock n roll.

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Jeff Silvas and the Four Strangers 1963-64

Photographs by the manager, Ralph Hitchcock.

It was the age when groups wore matching uniforms. Ours were posh red tuxedo's with a dash of silver on the lapels. Front man Jeff wore white. From left: Bill Miller, John Panteney, Jeff Silvas, myself. The fourth Stranger - bass player Ray Hammond - is out of shot to the right.

Left, playing at the Meadway pub. Above, a session shooting publicity photos in a field near Marston Green.

Jeff Silvas and the Four Strangers at an unknown gig (could be Solihull Civic Hall?)

4 Strangers - Final version of the group circa 1965, posing for the camera: drummer Alan, myself, Ray Hammond and Bill Miller.

Chantelles 1965

I took this shot of The Chantelles stopping for a cuppa at the Motorway services on the way to play an audition at the Marquee in London. From left: John 'Pank' Panteney (drums), John Fincham (bass), Ray Hammond (bass No.2 - yes we had two bass guitarists!), Pete Gilbert (van driver and roaddie) and Jeff Lynne.

Blaises 1967.

Playing at the NCO club, Incirlick Air Base, Turkey. The drummer is Keith Smart.

Double exposure 18 March 1967

An open-air show at Incirlick which was televised across the base.

Danny King & Trevor Burton 1966.
admiring Trevor's new purchase - a Ford Zephyr

Above Bass player Bob Doyle and me on stage with Blaises.

Corky and daughter Deniz visit Tile Cross, Aug 68.

The Cedar Club 1968: Trevor Burton, Richard Tandy, myself and Carl Wayne.

Pic taken in Charlie's back garden for a Birmingham Mail write-up on Charlie's new song publishing company - 'Penny Music'. Richard and I were to be the flagship 'writers' for this venture.

The Uglys 1967-68.
Below playing at 'The Station' in Selly Oak. From left: Willy Hammond, Steve Gibbons, Jim Holden, myself. At right is an earlier version of the Ugs with me on rythmn guitar.

Gibbons and drummer Jim Holden.

Mary Colinto - Jim's sister Kathy O'Neill.
... the title of a song I wrote in 1968 which became a sort of local hit, played by many Birmingham groups. It was recorded by the Ugly's for the CBS label but not released due to the group disbanding to form Balls.

Torremolinos, Spain, 1967.

Steve, Willy and myself lounging on the patio of the Kings Head pub. We are there for a business meeting with manager John Singer, 1968.

Ugly's 1969. A pic of the last Uglys' line up before evolving into Balls and becoming extinct. At the back: Richard Tandy, myself, Steve Gibbons. At front: Willy Hammond and Keith Smart.

'Blackberry Way' hits number one in Feb 69. The B side is my song 'Something'

Charlie - Carl Wayne playing the piano at my moms house, circa 1969.

Richard strums a guitar in the back of my Mini-Cooper circa 1972.

1969 - In the car park of the old BBC studios in Edgbaston, Birmingham. Carl, Trevor and Richard

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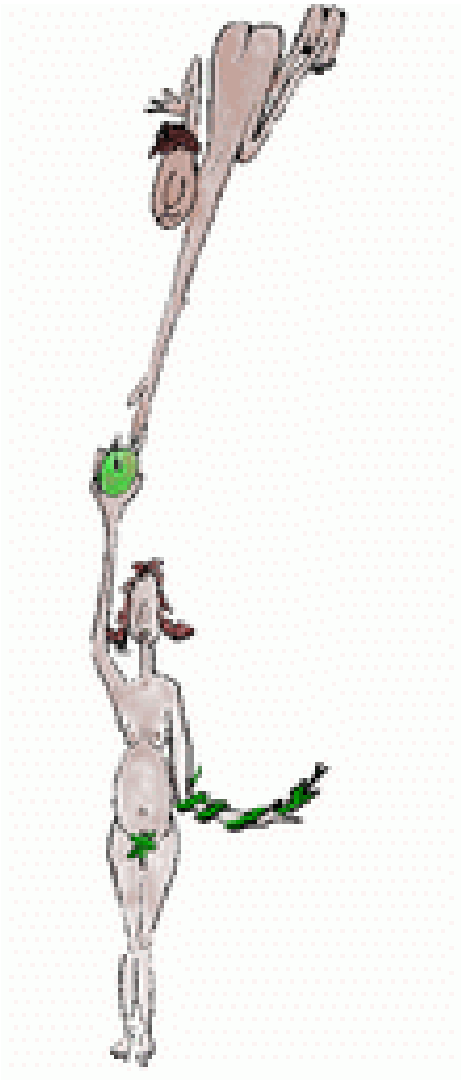

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