

The Sound of Fury Fan Club

Newsletter

Issue 12: April - June 2022



Hi there,

We wish you all a very Happy Easter and hope you are all well.

April of-course is the month we can celebrate the birth of Billy. He would've blown out 82 candles this year! Our fantastic series on Billy's connections and influences continues, this time featuring the great Johnnie Ray and very sadly we say goodbye to Lee Everett Alkin. A lady who certainly lived life to the full and had a long term relationship with Billy in the 1960's. We also have a review of the fantastic R&R show 'JukeBox & Bobbysox' as well as a lovely thank you email from Brent Lodge Wildlife hospital.

If you do want to get in touch with us - [email soundoffurysecretary@gmail.com](mailto:soundoffurysecretary@gmail.com) or write to The Sound of Fury Fan Club, P.O. Box 157, Frodsham, WA6 1BY

Reminder, that unfortunately due to rising print, postage and bank charges, we have to increase the annual cost of the newsletters. This will increase to £10 with effect from June this year. Payments made via cheque will also incur an additional £0.40 per cheque. All cheques should be made payable to 'Sound of Fury'.

You can now pay us via bank transfer, which will eliminate the charges for cheque payments. Please write or email for more details. If you no longer wish to receive printed copies in the post and would like to receive FREE newsletters via email, please contact us to let us know. You can write to the P O Box address or email: soundoffurysecretary@gmail.com

Peter Williams-Especially For You Vol 8-Playing on my Heartstrings.

Peter has come up with another guitar instrumental album in the above series, and on this one there are three songs which Billy Fury fans will associate with Billy. *Sheila* is of course the Tommy Roe hit version as Billy's was very different and is not well known. *Don't Worry* is a hybrid of the Marty Robbins original and Billy's version-the guitar notes being used are based on Billy's vocal, whilst the final track, *I'll Be Your Sweetheart* is apparently based on an older version that Peter remembers; being totally different to Billy's 1974 rock version. If like me you have liked Peter's previous albums then this will hit the spot nicely. It's ideal for relaxing to anywhere-anytime; or for playing during drive-time. For Peter, melody is the thing! His fine two-on-one CD tribute album, 'Remembering Billy' is still available and great to have, together with many from his back catalogue.

Chris Eley

Cheques payable to: Peter Williams

Post to this address: 5 Stone Hill, Two Mile Ash, Milton Keynes, MK8 8DH

All CDs priced at £10.99 Postage FREE.

Tel: 01908 568854 Mobile: 07789 991819

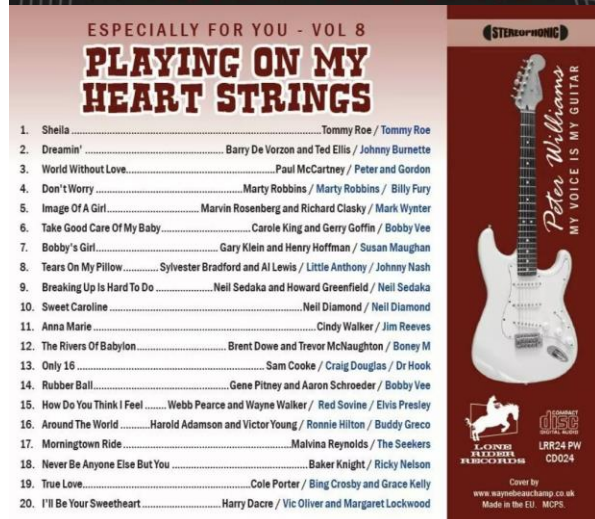
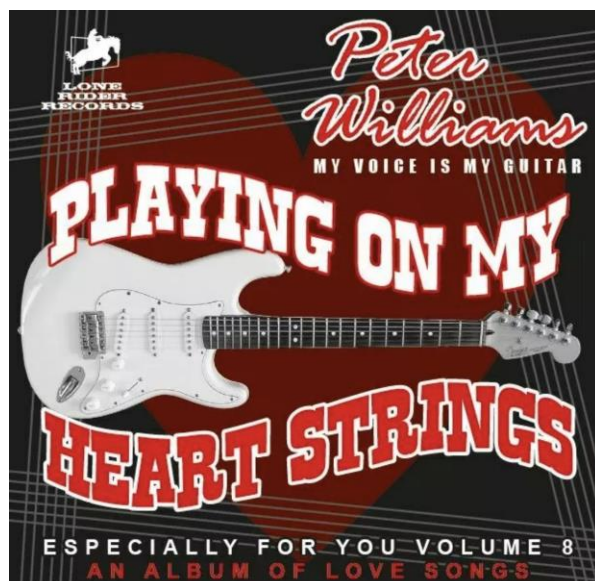
PayPal payme  il address:

peterwilliams19@btconnect.com

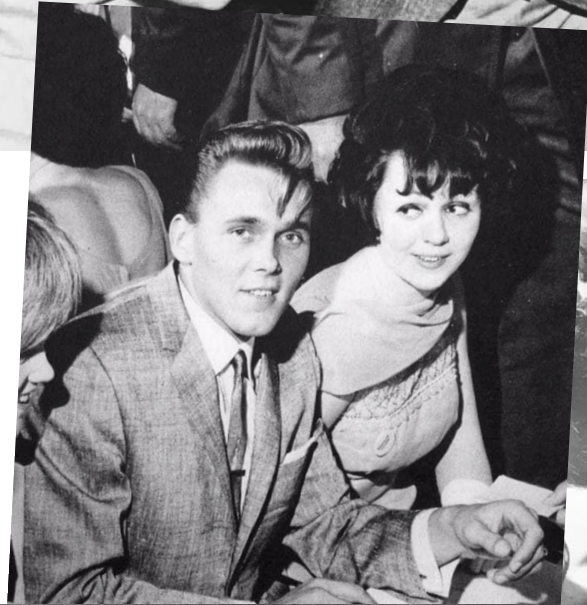
Website: <https://www.peterwilliamsguitar.co.uk>

You Tube: <http://www.youtube.com/pawguitar>

or on [pwil5216](https://www.peterwilliams19.co.uk)



Billy's Birthday Party, April 1963



A THANK YOU EMAIL FROM BRENT LODGE WILDLIFE HOSPITAL

Dear Wendy and the Sound Of Fury,

I hope this email finds you well?

On behalf of Brent Lodge Wildlife Hospital, I am writing to thank you for the very generous £100 cheque you sent to us with your lovely letter that I have received this morning. This is most kind of you and your fans to do this for us.

We anticipated that when the colder winter season is over we would have admitted over 350 hedgehogs as well as hundreds of other seasonal wildlife casualties over this winter so kind donations such as yours really do help us with purchasing a healthy stock of food, cleaning supplies and bedding is needed to see us through the winter months.

Only this very morning we've received our first spring babies, two baby bunnies. With the milder weather, we're expecting more early babies than normal meaning the hospital will be a very busy place while we admit the new spring babies and process the winter hedgehogs for a spring release when they've reached a healthy weight for release back into the wild.

Thank you again for your kind support, it really does help make such a difference.

Kindest regards,

Robert
Robert Knight
General Manager
Brent Lodge Wildlife Hospital
Caring for wildlife for over 45 years
01243 641672

<http://www.brentlodge.org>

<https://www.facebook.com/brent.lodge.wildlife>

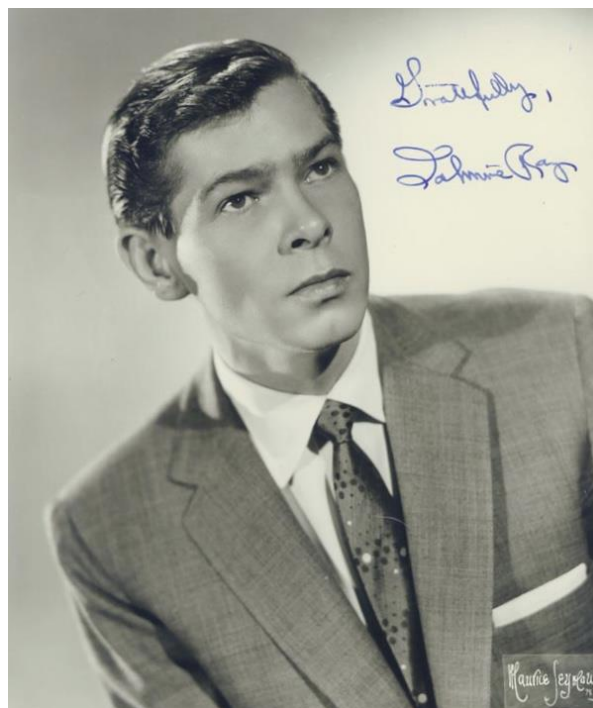




THE BILLY FURY CONNECTION-COVERS AND INFLUENCES

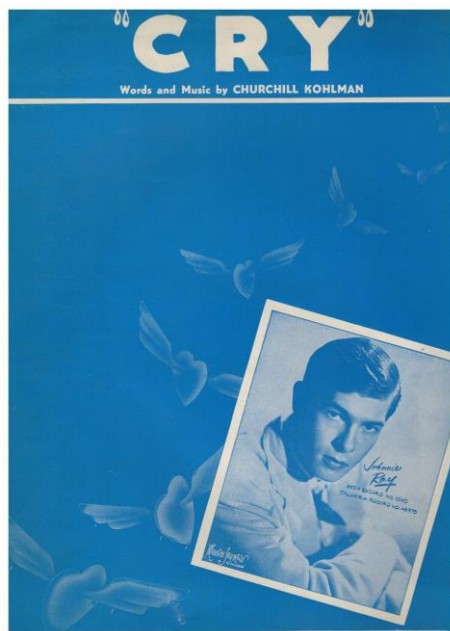
Part 4. Johnnie Ray (John Alvin Ray-January 10th 1927-February 24th 1990)

There is little doubt but that Ray was one of the most significant of a number of musical figures to impact in a major way on Britain's Billy Fury; on a par with Ray Charles and not far short of Elvis. The connection not only included the mutual recording of three songs (covers by Billy) but more especially the vocal style and on-stage movements; the latter certainly from post-1959/60 onwards with the discarding by Billy of the guitar as an Elvis style stage prop, and as evidenced by a number of performance photos from the early sixties period. The exaggerated arm and hand movements, the hunching of shoulders, the suggestion of vulnerability and lying on the stage (Ray would fall or collapse), the almost visible cloak of sheer pathos, all guaranteed that Ray would be adored by the women; and by assimilating all of this through Elvis and other performers both black and white, Billy Fury ensured that the effect on his audience was the same.



The vocal delivery of *The Nabob of Sob*, *The Prince of Wails*, *Mr Emotion* (take your pick), was highly distinctive, dramatic, original, emotional and electrically charged as Fury's would become. Billy would draw the line at actually crying on-stage but in so many ways the two performers were alike. Arguably none of Billy's UK contemporaries had the type of vocal qualities displayed by Ray, which originated from his love of and connection with so called Race Music; combined with the standard popular music from the time, but in a more raw and uninhibited way than was usual for a white performer (most were performing with big bands and had to toe the line in terms of performance behaviour)-not so Johnnie Ray. Discovered in 1949 while working in *The Flame Show Bar* in Detroit with its then unusual mix of black and white clientele, is where Johnnie later said he learned to sing and where he began to pen songs such as *Whiskey and Gin*. Ray's first recordings were made on the Okeh label, largely because of his following locally among the black population. He was to write many other songs including *The Little White Cloud That Cried*, a chart hit when coupled with the song which would establish him and become his anthem-*Cry*.

Intended by its writer to be a typical country song, Ray's dramatic treatment of *Cry* was seemingly not welcomed by the writer-who nevertheless must have been pleased when the royalties rolled in! The two-sided record hit No. 1 in the USA and stayed there for eleven weeks, selling two million copies. Heartbreak, pain and loss, loneliness, unrequited love, all permeated Ray's performances and the high voiced delivery of such lyrics made him virtually unique among non-black artists-indeed the histrionic and high voiced vocal style and name spelling, Johnnie, had many a radio listener believe that he was black-and female! Gaining popularity with the white audience too, he was moved to the parent label Columbia, soon becoming the primary 'Teen Idol' before Elvis blew the music world apart!



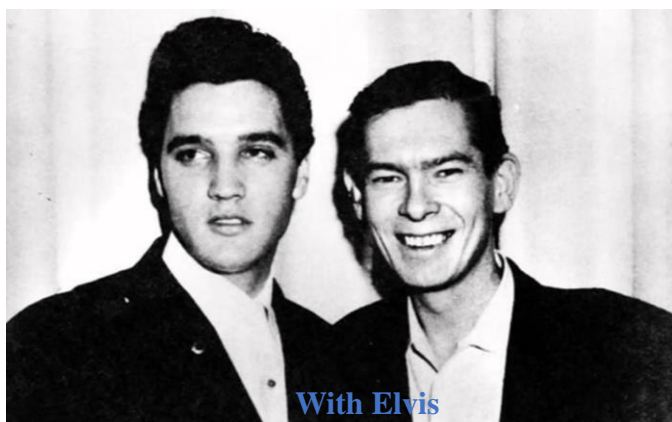
Born in Dallas Oregon, Johnnie began to sing from a very early age but had severe hearing issues eventually requiring the use of a hearing aid (which helped but still left him badly impaired). Undaunted by this significant sound loss in both ears, by age fifteen he was singing professionally on Portland radio stations.

A little like young Ronnie Wycherley missing school and some friends contact due to frequent hospitalisation and ill-health, Ray's sense of isolation made him feel a need to overcome the deficiency by establishing some kind of emotional bond with others. Both 'lonely' performers would find at least part of such a bond with their audiences, and Johnnie's musical style and approach was perhaps partly predicated upon that need. Ray's reasons for vulnerability were many and valid but differed from Fury's in two major ways; his hearing impairment (within the bounds of which he was forced to operate) and his sexual orientation (self-evidently creating tremendous personal pressure until his bi-sexuality could be recognised). Like other US contemporaries such as Frankie Laine and Tennessee Ernie Ford, Ray has been cited as a pioneering figure in helping to shape what would become coined by Alan Freed as rock'n' roll. Young Elvis, a musical sponge, must have been influenced by Johnnie's on-stage persona and certainly by



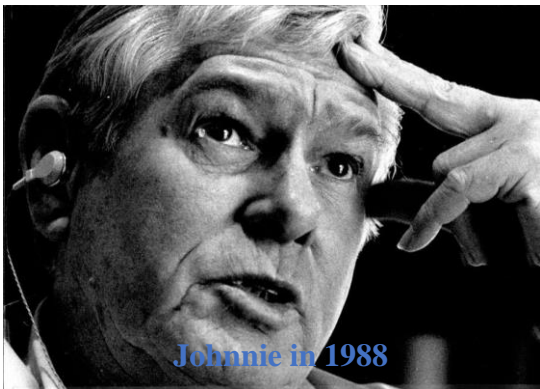
the latter's 1954 hit *Such A Night* (featured in 1960 on the astounding *Elvis is Back* album). Ray, himself influenced by gospel music and several artists black and white, including Billie Holiday, Ivory Joe Hunter, and Kay Starr, was not only a singer (he seemingly thought of himself more as a 'Communicator'), and a songwriter but also a pianist-something he had sometimes done in those early clubs.

His chart success in the UK does not appear to include any hit albums but he did experience twenty-one Top 20 singles hits. These included seven Top 10 placings and three No 1's-*Such A Night*, *Just Walking In The Rain* and *Yes Tonight Josephine*. Some sources have *Cry* as a No1 UK Hit, but it is not featured in my point of reference (see below).



Wanting to become an actor from very early on, Johnnie was to star in only one major film, *There's No Business Like Show Business* in 1954, but the list of his TV appearances in the US and UK throughout his working life up to about 1987 is impressive, despite his drop in chart success after the main hit years. Due to the loyalty of his fans he managed to retain his popularity in the UK and Australia throughout his career. In the UK he broke the 1950's attendance record for appearances at the London Palladium previously set by Frankie Laine. In the USA he appeared quite regularly on TV including *Toast of the Town*, the Frankie Laine and Dick Clark shows, *American Bandstand*, the prestigious 1970 *Andy Williams Show* and others. There was a 1959 special in the US called *Johnny Ray sings*, which would be good to see. How many Fury fans recall Johnnie appearing on *The Wheel Tappers* and *Shunters Club* during 1974? Marty Wilde's appearance has surfaced but I cannot recall seeing Johnnie's.

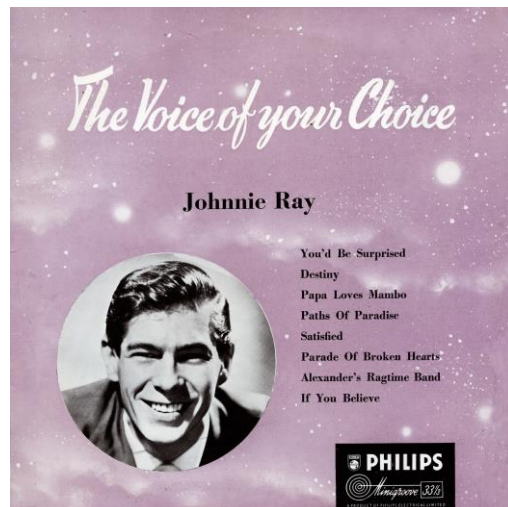
He undertook many tours of the UK and as still happens with Elvis, there have been several cultural references to Johnnie Ray in song lyrics and other mediums over the years. Most of us well remember the mention in the lyric from Dexy's Midnight Runners, 'Poor old Johnnie Ray-sounds sad upon the Radio.' An obviously deeply troubled man, for years Ray had suffered from alcohol related problems and following a final theatre performance in 1989, he succumbed in early 1990 to a condition related to liver failure.



His position in the history of popular music is as assured as anyone's can be given the accelerating changes in the world, and the current, and in my view, ill-judged trend, to rewrite history in its every form in order to meet today's values and 'norms.' Fortunately an available extensive CD set on the prestigious Bear Family label, and the maintenance of the Columbia catalogue and possibly other off-shoots now under the Sony label, helps to validate his work and position as a major link leading to fifties rock' n' roll. You can't argue with the music.

Coming full circle as regards the extent of the Billy Fury connection already alluded to, and in addition to the self-evident visual and vocal influence on Billy Fury, what other evidence of a connection is there?

Well, there is direct information to be found in the music press and the Boyfriend comic from August 1961. In one music paper Billy cites *Destiny* by Johnnie Ray as his favourite Ray song. No doubt there are other references made by Billy in the music press, to Johnnie Ray, but right now I cannot recall them. Whether Billy owned a copy of the UK or US version of the ten inch UK album, *The Voice of Your Choice*, or an equivalent LP/EP featuring the track, or a 78/45 rpm copy we don't know. Certainly given the scene in Liverpool during the 50's anything is possible, due to Cunard Yanks or other transatlantic ships crews. A copy may have been owned by an uncle or by young Ronnie's Grandmother whose 78 rpm copy of Tennessee Ernie Fords *Give Me Your Word* we know Ronnie had played to death!



It seems that two of Johnnie's appearances on the London Palladium during 1955-60 were televised and Billy might have seen them if anyone in the family or any friends had a set, and there may have been some airplay. In the Boyfriend report dated 12th August there is a picture which seems to sit Johnnie and Billy together in the dressing room of London's Talk of the Town, where Ray was appearing. The report cites Johnnie as an idol of Billy's who says, "I always liked Johnnie, and I am a great admirer of his technique." Larry Parnes arranged the meeting apparently being an old friend of Ray's.

Tellingly the report continued; You girls should have seen Billy's face while he watched the Artist's act-he was positively gone. His ice cream melted as he stared-fascinated by Johnnie's microphone antics, (which were) **rather similar to his own**. The full article can be found in SOF Magazine No. 25 from August 2005. To clinch the influence there are the three Ray songs that Billy opted to cover whilst at Decca. Of course one or even all may have been suggested by Dick Rowe, the most usual route being a handful of demos supplied by either Dick or someone else at Decca, sometimes even Larry Parnes or Hal Carter (his *Please Love Me* springs to mind).



As the Musical Director for the three songs seems to have been the highly accomplished Ivor Raymonde that could have been the source. We know however, that once his career really took off Billy started to build his own vinyl collection as evidenced by music press articles and photographs-at least three come to mind showing Billy with record player and either albums on the carpet or singles in racks. Being a Ray fan it's very unlikely that Billy had no hand in selecting the three songs to cover. First of all in January 1963 came the catchy *How Many Nights, How Many Days*, released by Ray back in 1961, also recorded by Bobby Sheen and in the UK by the talented singer-songwriter, Alan Fielding (who wrote *Last Night Was Made For Love* and *When Will You Say I Love You* for Billy Fury).

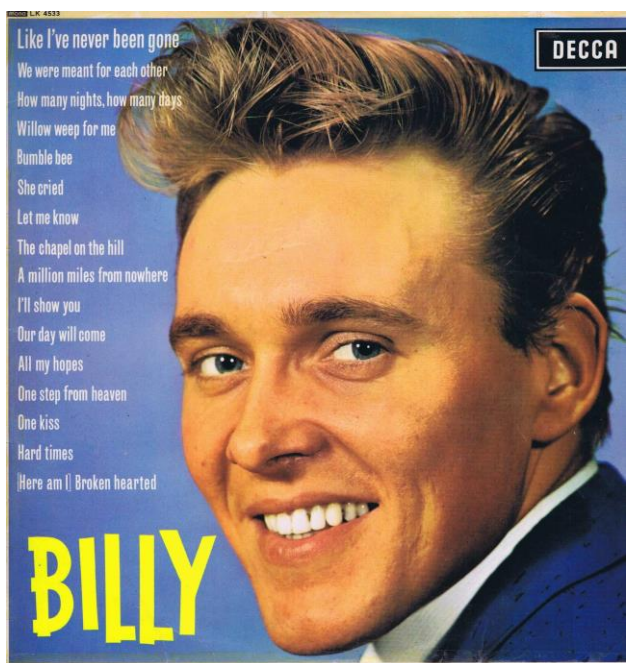


Raymonde's arrangement knocks spots of the other versions, being so much punchier. With Bill's voice being hard edged, this results in a Fury classic. Next up, also apparently in January, came the quite different (Ray was always eclectic), *Here Am I (Broken Hearted)* from 1951/2, also appearing on the excellent and eclectic sixteen track LP, *Billy*. A rousing catchy number and superior version by Billy, it was reported that he sometimes closed his shows with it. I wonder if anyone out there actually remembers seeing this being performed? The clincher was one of Billy's finest ever performances, the B-side to the hit *In Summer*, namely *I'll Never Fall In Love Again*. This had been a No. 26 hit in the UK in 1959 and was to be the last Top 30 UK entry for Johnnie Ray.

Billy would certainly have been familiar with that Philips 45 rpm release, which is a nice version. First attempted by Billy on the 14th March 1963, it was seemingly rejected and cut again in June. It is possible that other songs that I am not aware of were either recorded or at least performed by both artists, but the above three help to provide firm evidence of the influence of this highly individual entertainer, on so many aspects of the performances and recordings of Britain's finest ever performer of his generation-Billy Fury. **Chris Eley**



South African 45



Acknowledgements and thanks: Wikipedia, Guinness Book of Hit Singles and Albums, Tad Mann (Johnnie Ray Archive), Readers Digest CD Collection 2004-Johnnie Ray-The Prince of Wails. **Dedication:** This connection tribute is for the late and much missed Frank Bull-a great friend and life-long Billy Fury and Johnnie Ray fan.

Jukebox & Bobbysox – The Octagon Theatre, Yeovil, 22nd January 2022

When you live as far south as Yeovil, in Somerset, you don't get to see many Billy Fury tribute shows come to your local theatre. I've travelled to Sturminster Newton, Weston-Super-Mare, Evesham, Salisbury, Swindon, Bournemouth and Basingstoke to see shows like The Billy Fury Story (with Billy's Tornadoes and Colin Gold), The Billy Fury Years (with Michael King), Dansette Days (with Rob Dee) and Be Bop A Lula (with Gavin Stanley). The Billy Fury Years did come to Yeovil once in June 2013, as did Colin Paul, in July 2014, but that was it. So when I heard that a show called Jukebox & Bobbysox was coming in 2020, and that it intended to include I knew not how many of Billy's songs, I was of course eager to go and see it. What was even better was that it was coming on the 17th April, which would of course have been Billy's 80th birthday.

I emailed the show's creator and manager, Debbie Denton, to see if they could mention Billy's birthday and she was more than happy to do so. She even said they would add an extra song to mark the occasion and invited me, as a member of the fan club, to write an introduction for them to use.

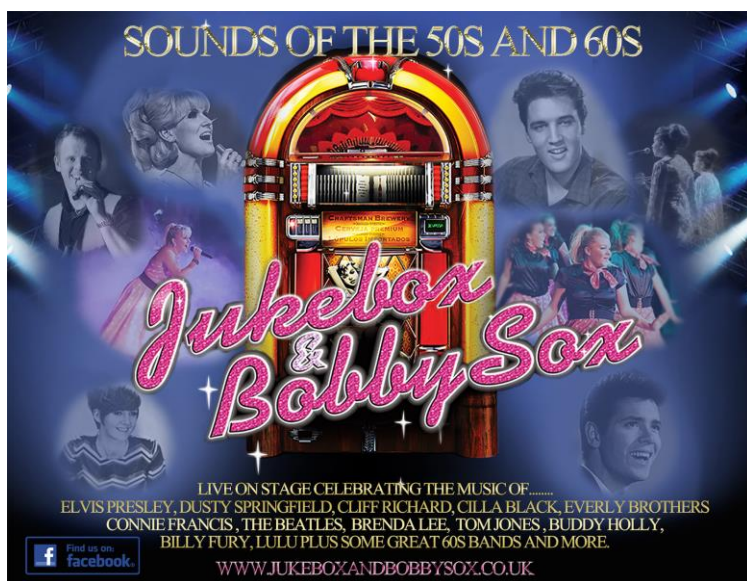
My first draft was about a page long and covered all of Billy's professional life very briefly. As the show covers many different artists from the 1950s and 60s, however and time was limited to introduce each one, this was too long to be used. I cut it down to just a short paragraph about how Billy became an overnight sensation, after appearing at The Essoldo Theatre in Birkenhead, on the evening of the 1st October 1958. Debbie was happy with this, so naturally I couldn't wait for the 17th April to arrive.

Then came Covid 19 of course and the show was first postponed and then cancelled. I was disappointed, but it was inevitable, with theatres all round the country having to close their doors. Then late last year, I discovered that the show was returning to the Octagon Theatre on the 22nd January 2022. I bought tickets for my Mum and I and off we went to see it at last.

After an introductory song, which included 3 female dancers, the first half of the show was dedicated to the music of the 1950's and all the performers were dressed in costumes from that era. It began with a singer called Andrew Marc performing a couple of numbers by Billy's good friend, Eddie Cochran. Debbie herself, the undoubted star of the show, was up next with a couple of numbers by Brenda Lee. Then Andrew was joined by the other male singer, Brian Shaw, to duet on a couple of Everly Brothers songs.

Debbie was back and together with the 2 female backing singers, performed Lollipop by The Chordettes and Born too Late by The Poni-Tails. I was born too late to remember the release of any of these songs, but I knew them all anyway from my Mum and Dad's record collection. People were singing along, clapping and having a great time by now. The theatre wasn't 100% full, but enough to make a good noise.

Brian Shaw came back to do 3 Buddy Holly numbers, then it was Debbie's turn again, this time paying tribute to Connie Francis. Andrew, the stronger of the 2 male singers, was last to perform again in the first half and of course you just can't have a show about rock 'n' roll without the legend that is Elvis Presley. I was very satisfied with the first half but looking forward to hearing what they would sing of Billy's, in the second half.



You may have noticed that all of the acts paid homage to in the first half were American. This was made up for in the second half, where all the acts, (except for Roy Orbison), were British. The 4 musicians returned first, dressed like the Beatles in grey, collar-less jackets. They treated us to a rendition of Hit and Miss from Juke Box Jury and would later perform Foot Tapper by the Shadows.

I wasn't sure whether my introduction would still be used, but I didn't have to wait long to find out. Billy was next up. It took me a moment or two to realise that, yes, the words now being spoken by the show's narrator, were the ones I had written, which meant that these same words would probably be used at every show. I felt quite chuffed. A cheer went up when Billy's name was mentioned and Andrew faithfully performed It's only make believe and of course Halfway to Paradise. He neither sounded, nor looked like Billy, but that was OK. I could gaze up at the pictures of Billy, on the screen behind him, while he sang.

Debbie was back next paying tribute to Dusty Springfield, probably our best female singer of that era. She was then joined by the 2 backing singers to do a couple of Lulu numbers, followed soon after by a couple of Cilla songs. Brian did the Cliff Richard numbers, then Andrew was back to do a couple by Tom Jones. This was where he excelled himself, because he did sound a lot like Tom and had the hips to go with it. Overall, however, it wasn't really a soundalike/lookalike show, although that didn't detract from the quality of the singing in any way.

Towards the end of the show, they concentrated on British groups, like Herman's Hermits and The Turtles, but only did one number each from those. They saved 4 numbers for the group which of course dominated the 1960's, The Beatles, although with the exception of Help, they didn't really choose any of their classic tracks. They were aiming to get people up and dancing by then, so chose songs like Twist and Shout. The show ended with Glad all Over from the back catalogue of The Dave Clark Five.

There were a couple of minor errors in the show, such as people extending their cues, or forgetting the odd word, but Debbie explained that this was their first show since theatres re-opened, so they were a little bit rusty. I don't think anyone really minded, if they even noticed. Afterwards I heard lots of people say they had enjoyed it and why not? It was a very entertaining show, performed by a group of experienced musicians, which before Covid 19 had been going for several years.

Rowena Crabb 2022



Lee Everett Alkin (14th February 1937-24th February 2022)

It is with great sadness that we report the death from cancer of a major figure in the life of Billy Fury; a partner with whom he spent several years from the early to late sixties, after which Lee left for London to re-establish her career. By 1968 Billy had entered into a relationship and soon, by 1969, marriage with a mutual friend of the couple, Judith Hall, and Lee emulated that with Kenny Everett around the same time. Back in 1958, Audrey Valentine Bradshaw (nee Middleton) had left husband Alan Bradshaw and moved to London with musician Alex Warton, but the relationship failed. A petite and attractive blonde she sang at the famous 2's coffee bar, allegedly becoming a backing singer to Emile Ford, before being spotted by Larry Parnes and signed to Decca for a singles deal in 1964. So whilst living with Billy, Lee Middleton (as 'Lady Lee') was a performer and recording artist in her own right on the same label as her famous partner, even claiming at one point that she was paid more than her partner for her recordings!

She was very defensive of Billy with Larry Parnes, often writing to him about Billy not being sufficiently managed or promoted. The first 45 on Decca in 1965 was her version of the song made famous by Herman's Hermits, *I'm Into Something Good* (itself a pleasant cover of a very weak US original version by Earl Jean McCrea), c/w *When Love Comes Along*. The second release, the quite enjoyable *Ninety-Nine Times Out Of A Hundred*, was coupled with her frantic version of the R'n'B original by The Kings and Queens, *I Can Feel It*. The latter was recorded by Billy Fury, forming part of some of the finest work he ever did, when released on the classic 1965 EP, *Billy Fury and the Gamblers*.

Another Fury connection was when in 1965 Lee recorded and released *My Whole World (Seems To Be Tumbling Down)*, c/w *Girl* on Columbia. Billy of course featured it live on Saturday Club in 1966, and later recorded a studio version for EMI which only officially surfaced on the 2011 Peaksoft CD, *The Lost Album*. Did he perform and later record the track because he had heard Lee's earlier version? The author of two autobiographical works, sadly largely bereft of dates and times but interesting nevertheless, it was Lee's memories backed up in some cases by extensive cine film, that has provided the fans of Billy Fury with fascinating insights into shared holidays in Jamaica; and romping with the animals so beloved of them both.



Photo credit Shutterstock



Lady Lee & Billy on another adventure!





Photo Credit unknown

She has enabled fans, on film, especially with the 2015 release and No 1 Chart DVD, *Halfway to Paradise*, to get a glimpse of Billy Fury at play as it were, and for that we owe her a debt of gratitude. I have met and phoned Billy's wife Judith Wycherley (Hall), whom I like, and of course met Billy's Lisa (Voice) on several occasions over the years, and whom I also like very much, but for some reason I never did try to meet Lee, despite always wanting to. This was because, I think, there was so much information already in the public domain. It was a pity that she never turned up, as Judith did, at one of our Bronze fundraising events at the Ace Café.

Lee always seemed to me to be very worldly but, I imagined, a very warm and engaging personality. Together with her devoted husband and fellow spiritualist, John Alkin (they married in 1985) she founded The Obsidian College for Mindfulness and Counselling in Berkshire. Aside from being a celebrity psychic and spiritual healer she is perhaps best remembered for her relationship and marriage, in 1969, to comedy legend Kenny Everett, and four books; two of interest to Billy Fury fans, *The Happy Medium* in 1983 and *Kinds of Loving* in 1987. I was made aware in 2017/18 that she was very poorly, by the nice authors of the book, *Halfway to Paradise*, who said that Lee's husband was being highly protective, and rightly so when they apparently wished to get back to her for clarification. Inevitably her loss has made me wish even more, that I did meet her, not just as one of the main women in Billy's life, but a strong career woman in her own right, and I have no doubt, a very interesting person to spend time with. Our thoughts are with John and their family and friends. RIP Lee, and thanks for the memories.

Chris Eley.



Photo credit Shutterstock

Eventually Alkin and Lee (pictured) moved to Berkshire, where they ran a boatyard, while Lee opened two spiritual healing centres

Acknowledgments: Wikipedia. Discogs.