

The Sound of Fury Fan Club

Newsletter

Issue 4: April – June 2020



Hi there,
Welcome to the latest issue of the Sound Of Fury Fan Club newsletter.
We hope that you and your families are safe and well during this very difficult time that we are all currently facing.

For obvious reasons, this issue does not contain an events diary, but we hope to be able to include one in the next issue. **The Mill-Hill meeting for April 2020 has been cancelled.**

Billy continues to be well represented across social media platforms, so if you are stuck at home and have access to the internet, please check out all the wonderful groups and pages. There's thousand of Billy fans all across the world, sharing their stories, memories and pictures of Billy.

It's hard to imagine, but this April (17th) would've seen Billy turn 80 years old. Chris Eley has written an excellent article included in this newsletter, examining Billy's legacy and also asking the question of - what if?

From all of us at the SOF team we wish you all a very Happy Easter holidays.

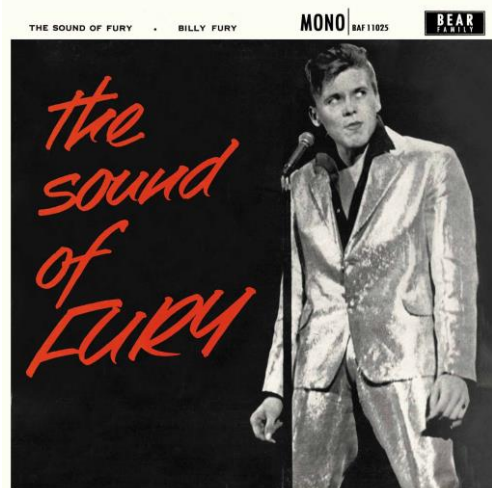
To join the fanclub simply email soundoffurysecretary@gmail.com or write to - The Sound of Fury Fan Club, P.O. Box 157, Frodsham, WA6 1BY

New Releases / Re-Issues.....

The Sound of Fury re-issued on 10 inch limited edition coloured vinyl by Bear Family Records

The classic Sound Of Fury LP sees yet another re-release, this time from Bear Family Records.

The edition is strictly limited to 500 copies and is pressed on coloured vinyl with 2 additional tracks added to the original 10 - Wondrous Place and Gonna' Type A Letter. Order your copy now from the Bear Family Website.



PLAY IT COOL BLU-RAY RELEASE

Billy's debut film from 1962 gets a long overdue Blu-Ray release with brand-new High Definition picture quality. Sadly, the release does not contain any additional extras. But still well worth adding to your collection to watch Billy in full HD!



Billy with Bobby Vee on the set of Play It Cool

CLEM CATTINI-THROUGH THE EYE OF A TORNADO.

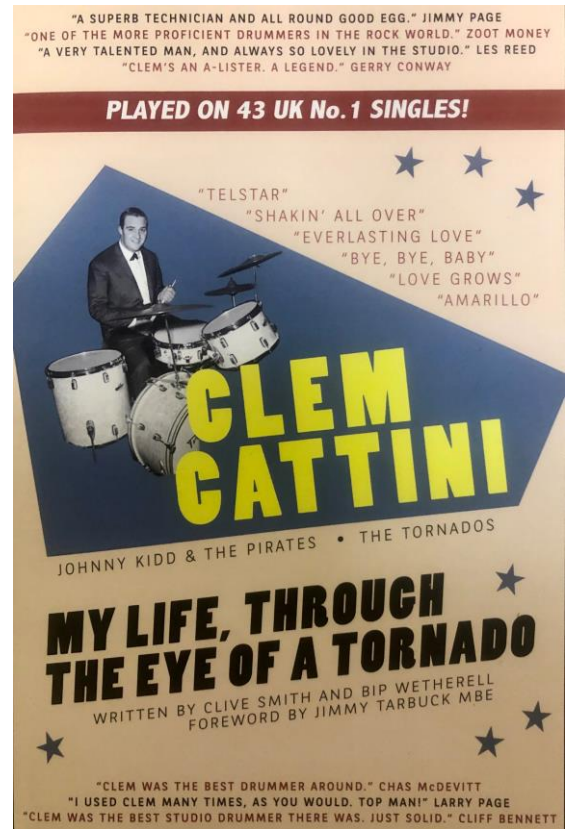
Written by Clive Smith & Bip Wetherell. ISBN 978-1-911273-84-4 Mango Books.

I had the privilege of first meeting Clem and his wife Anna in the 90's at the home of the much missed Hal Carter. The last time I saw him was at the London filming of interviews for the No 1 DVD Halfway to Paradise -in 2015 I think. He looked up as I walked in and said, "Hi Chris mate, how are you doing?" That tells you a lot about this lovely no-edge guy-a real celebrity in a world of modern fakes and a thoroughly down to earth and decent man. He makes no distinction between celebrities and the rest of us lesser mortals. Vince Eager was there also and is much the same. This niceness from Clem does not mean however that he will not 'tell it as it is' and he does just that in this new and wonderfully titled book. Starting in the mid-fifties he was in at the birth of UK rock 'n' roll and played behind Terry Dene, the wonderful Johnny Kidd, Billy Fury and many others. From 1965 he became primarily a session musician, later forming a new line-up of the Tornados around him and taking them on the road.

From 1960-2005 he played on a staggering 40 No. 1 singles and most importantly of course for us, the incredible We Want Billy LP-an album that should have been more highly acclaimed and in the running for best live UK album of the time and genre. For anyone interested in UK music history from the late 50s through the 60s and 70s, some later years, this is an interesting read. Billy gets a positive mention of course-especially regarding his R'n'B ability which Clem saw first-hand and which I have tried to push over the years, and there is one group photo with Bill in that I had not seen previously.



Billy on stage with Clem and The Tornados in 1962



As with such books, including the recent Halfway to Paradise biography, everything is set in context, thereby making it a social history of the time, and not solely about Clem. I have not seen any paperback versions and this hardcover copy from Amazon cost me £20.00. Worth every penny.

Chris Eley.

Other News.....

Billy's Grave - Update

In January it was noticed that green discoloration had found its way onto parts of the memorial. The cleaning contract had expired because the contractor had ceased trading. We have been busy since January in arranging for a survey, now completed, and it seems that some restoration work may be required in addition to cleaning. There is no need for concern and things have been progressed through a reputable local company to effect the work once agreement and all permissions are in place. It is a complex business to undertake any such work. We are currently working with Billy's Lisa who owns the memorial and hope that once the current national crisis is more contained, or over, that the situation will be remedied. It normally takes several weeks from order placement for work to commence in any case. Local private attempts to clean the surfaces are not allowed nor are they a good idea because of the damage that may result. We will keep fans posted as best we can.

Yours Magazine

The latest issue of Yours magazine has a nice two page tribute to Billy by Katherine Wootton. It's fantastic to see Billy still appearing in new magazines and this is well worth getting hold of a copy.

Just two very slight things to note; Billy was pronounced dead on 28th January, not the 27th and in 1982 he did not tour with Marty Wilde.

Billy's Bench

A few people have asked about the bench opposite Billy's grave. At the moment the bench does not need to be replaced (after a small repair), but the intention is to replace the bench with a new one in the next couple of years – or sooner if required.

Harry Whitehouse

Harry Whitehouse, always supportive of Billy Fury fan clubs and creator of the excellent billyfury.com website has now announced his retirement. We thank him for all the work that went into the site, the promotional events such as the Fury Fests, The Billy Fury Bronze Fund, the release of unreleased gems, the support for tribute artists, CD/DVD releases and the many thousands of pounds raised for Alder Hey Children's ward and then hospital. We wish him well and will thankfully retain some Peaksoft CD releases on catalogue. Thanks H.

32 BONUS PUZZLE PAGES
BUMPER VALUE 2 mags in 1
RELAX WITH / Sudokus / Crosswords / Wordsearches

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Easy projects Budget buys Clever cleaning tips

164 packed pages

MORE Short Stories EXTRA Real Life

HELEN MIRREN
'My garden is my sanctuary'

GARETH MALONE'S HOME CHORUS
'Music can help get us through tough times'

Meet Max: the dog who saved his owner

retro favourites

From left to right: Billy Fury with his manager Larry Farmer and Dean Dean Billy performing on TV show Ready Steady Go in 1966. The winner of the year on the Royal Albert Hall, Liverpool.

You, Over the course of the Sixties he had more Top 20 hits than anyone except The Beatles, Cliff and Elvis, although he never reached the elusive No.1 spot.

As well as music, Billy's good looks made him a natural for television, and he made appearances on 'Oh Boy' and 'Whereas in well as films such as 'I've Got a Horse and That'll Be the Day. Billy couldn't have been more famous, but cracks were beginning to show. Larry was working him too hard and Billy's health was suffering. Following major heart surgery in 1970, Billy retreated to a farm in the Welsh mountains where he settled down with his girlfriend Lisa Bruce, who gave him emotional support and financial stability following his bankruptcy that Billy blamed on Larry Farmer's poor management. Here he could also indulge his love for animals, caring for a flock of 300 sheep, horses and a group of badgers.

Eventually, though, Billy missed the music scene and that he enjoyed a short break in the early Eighties touring with Marty Wilde. But he was not a well man. On January 27, 1981, he collapsed at home with a heart attack. At the age of 42, he found he could no longer strain the heart problems that had plagued him since he was a child. The original British rock 'n' roller had sadly finally made it all the way to paradise.

As we mark what would have been Billy Fury's 80th birthday, we remember how the shy boy from Liverpool became Britain's answer to Elvis

For the love of FURY

By Katherine Wootton

In the Esplanade Theatre, Blimston, a rented 18-year-old room behind a curtain, shuffling. Just minutes before, this young man had talked his way into a backstage meeting with Larry Farmer, the most important manager in British pop. Larry discovered a lad with a voice to make big bucks and a face to make girls weak at the knees and requested the boy get ready to make his debut performance – in just eight minutes' time!

Stunned by the idea of joining the evening show alongside Mary Wells and Jimmy Tarback, Billy hesitated to open the curtain. Behind him, a hand reached forward to push him blinking into the spotlight and clinking the microphone. He began to sing 'My Blue Heaven'. By the time the song was finished, the room was in raptures. The timid boy whose real name was Ronald Wycherley was about to become Billy Fury, the star born in Dringle, Liverpool. Billy had a challenging childhood, suffering with a bout of rheumatic fever at the age of six, leaving him with a weakened heart. Nevertheless, Billy threw himself into a great passion.

For music, teaching himself to play the guitar that was kept safe in a humble pillowcase. Only able to afford three chords, Billy found it hard to play the songs he enjoyed learning so he decided to make up his own.

Leaving school at 15, he worked on a doughnut on the Mersey estuary, but continued to make music in his free time, eventually taking the step to further his career by cutting a record of him playing Elvis, which he sent to the impresario Larry Pines, who invited him to the Esplanade on that fateful night.

Just one day after that first performance sealed his fate as a singer, Billy joined Larry on a punishingly hectic tour that would make him a household name. Not long after he'd developed a severe eye ailment with bacteria and release his first album. The Sound of Fury, a collection of self-penned numbers, Billy was that unique species of a singer-songwriter, something even his American 'bro' Elvis couldn't claim. Billy's songs captured the burgeoning rock 'n' roll spirit but also had a moody tenderness, with Billy claiming it was often when he felt most depressed, maybe after a girl left him, that he would scribble down a lyric and sing it straight into a tape recorder.

A naturally introverted person behind closed doors, on stage he craved this moment, seeking the chance to let just the slightest hint of his natural vulnerability showing through. With his hip-curling diagonal smile, quiffed hair and effortless James Dean kind of sexuality, he became just irresistible to fans – although his suggestive hip-swivelling didn't always go down well with guardians of morality who claimed he was competing unfairly with Elvis!

With his hip-curling smile, quiffed hair and James Dean kind of sexuality, Billy became irresistible to fans.

There was no question that there were two sides to Billy Fury – the rocker who would leave the screaming girls waiting in awe and the sweet man who would leave the starry-eyed fans teary-eyed. 'Yes that's alright' after each performance.

As Billy's star ascended, his manager Larry started pushing Billy to sing songs other than his own. Billy didn't like it, but it did earn him some huge hits including 'Baby to Paradise', 'Baby', and 'I'll Never Find Another

Pat Young.....

It was with deep sorrow that those of us in the Sound of Fury team heard on the morning of Monday 9th March that Pat had passed away in hospital just a few hours before. One of the most dedicated Billy Fury fans we have ever known; indeed, perhaps the most dedicated, she was a dear, generous and wonderful friend to many of us. This was perhaps especially true of those who had the pleasure of staying with her in the 'Billy Room' and going to the numerous Billy Fury related charity events in her home town of Evesham, the Worcester area and elsewhere. I know that Ken and Cecilia were particularly close to Pat and that was how Linda and I initially became invited to stay. They were among the best of times for us all, and just as with so many of our Billy friends lost to us over the years-things will never be the same again. Our world is now a far greyer place with the loss of this wonderful warm and bubbly person, whose favourite Billy song was It's Only Make Believe. I for one will always miss her smiling eyes and warmth (and her propensity to chat until the early hours!) Where she got her energy and drive from I shall never know.

It seems Pat had raised around £50,000 in Billy's name for local charities, including the Air Ambulance which was a cause dear to her heart, but she never wanted a fuss made, being modest to a fault. She really was a force of nature, tenacious in enlisting whoever she could or needed to, including local promoter John Banner, Billy Fury tribute performers such as Rob Dee, (another great friend and long-term supporter of this fan club) and other performers - indeed anyone who would help to put on shows or perform in a way that would both promote the legacy of her idol and raise money in his name. Pat was a very proud and highly supportive member of the Sound of Fury Fan Club and in recent years, even when feeling below par, she would still travel to Mill Hill to support her Billy and this fan club-and it is at these events in future that this sense of loss will be keenly felt, in addition to the great times at Evesham. The last time I saw Pat was at Mill Hill where (aside from sitting in her usual place next to the entertainment set-up and dancing with our mutual long-time friend Roy Harvey), she explained how she was attempting to sort out the issue of the Billy Fury mural in London, which for some reason has been



plagued by vandalism since its inception. In addition to being so devoted to Billy Fury, Pat loved her family and friends and did whatever she could for them. The thoughts of all of us in the fan club team, our partners and I am sure, the wider fan base, are with her daughters Karen and Stephanie and their families at this very sad time. We love you Pat.

Chris Eley March 2020

The Fanclub has made a donation to the Air Ambulance in loving memory of Pat. This was a charity very close to her own heart.

80th Birthday Tribute By Chris Eley

Billy Fury Today

On April 17th Billy Fury would have turned eighty, catching up with his old mate Marty Wilde OBE and preceding Sir Cliff Richard by several months, both still turning in great live performances and some excellent recordings; especially Marty over the past few years, with his still incredible voice. Other performers from our era and around the same age are still on the circuit, or have been until quite recently; the inimitable PJ Proby, Mike Berry, Eden Kane, Mark Wynter, and Joe Brown being fine examples. Eden of course has had a couple of bouts of heart surgery in recent years and consequently missed the last tour. Mark, also a real gentleman, has remained incredibly fit, lively on stage and in great voice despite his age. Being a great musician as opposed to a former 'Teen Idol' Joe can carry on with credibility as long as his health holds. If fate had been just a little kinder, health-wise, just where Billy Fury would have been 'at' this year-we can



never know but we can make educated guesses based on information we have gleaned over the years. It is difficult to make an assessment because if he had never been ill, but as fit and healthy as Cliff, Mark, even Marty and Joe, it is likely his whole career profile would be quite different.

There are really only two options, or directions to take therefore. One is to assume he had been very fit and healthy and was still with us now, or that he was poorly as we know but that his third bout of heart surgery in 1983 did take place and was highly successful. As the latter is the most realistic and likely outcome I have plumped for that. So, with that in mind let's consider what might have been his direction of travel from January 1983 until, realistically the early to mid-nineties, 2000 at most. I say this because even today, heart surgery and other treatments seldom prolong life in a major way, but hopefully make the quality of life for the remaining period a little better, or in some lucky cases, considerably so. To imagine where Billy would have gone career wise and in his personal life, if he had always been healthy, would be quite an exercise in itself, and is perhaps one for the future. How wonderful it would have been if Billy had never been ill and as a fit eighty year old was rocking alongside Marty and the others. His brother Albie always reckoned Billy could have been bigger than Cliff and even as big as Elvis. It's a nice sentiment but I think that's pure hyperbole in either case, the kind exercised by Larry Parnes, although certainly Billy must have become a major international star in the Dusty Springfield mould, especially throughout the sixties and seventies, and therefore been better remembered today than he generally is. But let us look at the trajectory of his life should he have had successful heart surgery, either once or perhaps on more occasions from 1983 onwards.



Songwriter

I was once taken to task by someone for whom I have great regard, Spencer Leigh the respected Liverpool broadcaster and writer, for calling Billy 'A prolific song-writer', and of course Spencer was correct. Adding up the songs we know Billy finished at Decca plus all those 'Missing Years' recordings and finished and unfinished acoustic ditties, there are a respectable number, but it falls short of prolific. What is not debatable, in my view, is the quality of some of those self-penned songs. It may be true, as some say, that none of Billy's recordings, self-penned or otherwise, were as commercially 'catchy' as the hits experienced by many American singers, or the early to mid-sixties best of Cliff and the Shadows or even Adam Faith, with and without the Roulettes. It is possibly true that aside from Halfway to Paradise, Jealousy and perhaps I'd Never Find Another You, (probably comparable to There'll Never Be Anyone Else But You by Ricky Nelson),



Billy had no instantly recognisable and remembered equivalent in the eyes of non-fans to some classic hits from the time. These include What Do You Want, Dream Lover (perhaps the most perfect song and performance of the whole genre), It Doesn't Matter Anymore, Three Steps To Heaven, Poetry In Motion, I'll Remember You, Return to Sender, The Young Ones, Save the Last Dance For Me, Runaway, Little Children, Bad To Me, Oh Pretty Woman, and so many other classics. I remember disagreeing back in 1977 with a reviewer of The Billy Fury Story double LP who said that Billy never really did get it together on record. That in my view is easily challenged but I do see where he may have been coming from. If Billy had the original of Dream Lover he probably would have had his No.1 UK single. Conversely, timing, together with strength of the competition was always going to affect anyone's chart positions; as it did in my view with Billy's highest charting 45's. What is important in balance of this is that his unique and instantly recognizable voice almost always transcended the recorded material—certainly from 1961-66. Who else in the UK during 1962/63 could have handled the awesome Letter Full of Tears, A King for Tonight or Wondrous Place '63; Marty probably if his excellent Lonely Avenue and My Baby's Gone are anything to go by, but what outstanding performances by Billy. Marty also suffered commercially, being robbed of two recordings which deserved Top 5 placings and which were at least as good (and in the latter case, as commercial) as almost anything released during '61-'62. Tomorrows Clown and Jezebel truly were the Best of British, so why only No.33 and No.19 respectively! True Jezebel was on the chart for eleven weeks, no mean feat. Of Billy's self-written songs, his classic 1958-60 output aside as it speaks for itself with any self-respecting rock'n'roll lover or critic, If I Lose You, Don't Jump, Keep Away, What Do You Think You're Doin' of? all stack up well against others of the period and genre so would Billy have been song-writing today—probably—Marty still is! It is likely then, that from 1983 until death or infirmity, Billy would have continued writing some songs, and co-writing, as indeed he had done with ace guitarist Mick Green during 1982, resulting in Deborah and perhaps others we don't yet know of. I don't imagine for a moment that he would have found the time to write a lot, because of other pulls on his time and the knowledge that the heart valve problem could return at any given moment, making each day one not to be squandered. He would however, I feel sure, have continued with the habit of song-writing right through the rest of the 1980s and if lucky, even beyond. Don't Tell Me Lies and Your Words were superb-heartbreaking songs and it is possible that he might have come up with something really classic and even more catchy—with a great hook line and one which became a massive eighties hit for Billy or Duran Duran or similar. Either way a good solid Top 5 entry would have boosted his reputation (and his bank balance) no end—and led to more song-writing of course. I believe that a country band or duo today could cover the faster version of Don't Tell Me Lies and have a hit with it.

Manager and Producer

Back in the mid-sixties Billy was starting to take an interest in managing and recording groups such as the Trends, and we know that during his Polydor years he was mentoring two protégés; Ricky 'O' and a musician called Marcus. He recorded a nice 'modern version' of the old hit Angela Jones (not officially released as far as I know, but circulating among fans for years) and it was rumoured that Billy had laid down a vocal also-but it has yet to surface. Other than that I know little about him. Right now I cannot locate my Marcus version to refresh my opinion. Tony Read told me Billy had actually recorded it but the studio master sold to me didn't have it on-quite heartbreaking at the time that I got it transferred. Someone else may have the right master tape of course, and be sitting on it. Billy liked this catchy number even though Michael Cox had recorded far better songs, but apparently this was the one he wanted to record. Tony asked the much missed Frank Bull (the prime mover behind the upgrading of Billy's grave and founder of the Mill Hill 'movement') to send him his copy of the 45 for Billy-which he did-well you would wouldn't you.



Billy with The Trends in 1964

that, we would all have tuned in for the duration and you can bet a lot of the acts would have wanted mentoring by Billy. Dave Berry, Ian Dury, Morrissey, Bob Stanley, Dave Vanian, Boz Boorer, and several others in the business claim to have been influenced by Billy and recently Sir Tim Rice appeared on face book extolling the virtues of the Halfway to Paradise album. Good for him and it makes a change for that great LP, thrown together on a budget label or not, to get a much deserved plug from a music professional instead of The Sound of Fury LP-wonderful though it may be, and which so many celebrities bang on about. I didn't get my copy of Halfway until 1965 but played it to death-every track a gem. We did a track by track breakdown I think in one of our magazines. How I miss the magazine-but not the pressure!

Ricky 'O' (Caroline Vandermolen) we know a little more about because of photographs of her with Billy, the promotional grey sweat shirt with her name on, worn by Billy in several photographs, and the surviving recordings she made with him; the slightly risqué It's Getting Harder and other song work-ups in the studio. So would Billy have been promoting and recording young talent such as her during the eighties and perhaps nineties-it's probable, but only in a low key way in my view. What is not likely is whether Billy would have become a Simon Cowell type figure, or even a Hal Carter type manager. I don't think he would have had the health or drive to do the first or the interest to do the latter. More than that I really don't believe he would have had any inclination or been ruthless enough to do more than just be a sort of patron for some acts. One thing is certain-we may sometimes tune into The Voice (just for Tom Jones in my case) but if Billy had become a successful record producer and been able to be on a programme like



Billy with 'Ricky-O'

Rock 'n' Roll and Pop Performer

Back in early 1983 Billy was due to start a nationwide tour with Helen Shapiro, who was still performing well in about 2000 when I saw her for the first and only time. During 1982 Billy had looked great and sounded powerful and really good on-stage and on TV programmes such as the Russell Harty Show (except for his trousers being hiked up a bit too much!). According to Tony Read that was done in protest at being made to sing Halfway to Paradise for Harty! Unfortunately the screening of Unforgettable and Greatest Hits revealed how unwell he was-although looking every inch the star and a decidedly 'Handsome geezer' still. Had he not been taken ill in the January (or had successful surgery taken place) we can imagine how well he would have performed during that 1983 tour and any subsequent ones he may have undertaken. Obviously the tour dates would have had to have been pushed back a few months, but if we indulge ourselves with the prospect that he had successful heart surgery in 1983 which improved his quality of life no end, and enabled him for several more years to perform and or do what he wished to do-gruelling tours not included after the mid-eighties, then we have likely parameters to work within. Billy was not keen on cabaret and those Solid Gold and Solid Silver Tours which are still continuing in the 2000's may have afforded him a place during the eighties.

In truth however I cannot see him embracing the concept in the same whole hearted long term way Marty, Eden Kane, Mike Berry, the now retired John Leyton and others have done. I think if he did perform it would be either where he was top of the bill as per the projected 1983 tour or listed as a guest performer, tacked on to some of the Solid Gold etc. shows. A great UK bill would have been Billy with Joe, Marty, Eden Kane and Mark Wynter. Putting Billy on with top US artists, especially with the much loved Bobby Vee or Del Shannon, Brian Hyland perhaps (a guy who loved Billy's first album) would have been just marvellous.



Marty Wilde, Billy, Joe Brown and John Leyton in 1962

Top billing would have been problematic, but perhaps not insurmountable; perhaps with the 'Special Guest' slot option. I have often imagined how it would have been for Billy to have been included in the fantastic 1985 Rock 'n' Blues Reunion Tour with Rick Nelson, Del Shannon, Bobby Vee, Bo Diddley and others, which I saw in Harrogate and which totally blew me away. Rick was the star no doubt-he had magic in spades, but it was Del whose perfect powerhouse performance lifted the roof off. What a show that would have been with even just a small guest slot by Billy. Many have felt that Billy was the UKs own Ricky Nelson-a view I actually share. In some ways he was also the UKs Bobby Vee- the purveyor of some of the best produced and most wonderful songs and performances of the era. Rick Nelson was successful over here although like Billy some great songs failed to get a very high placing. Likewise the underrated Johnny Rivers and even the more well-known Dion never managed the hits over here that were deserved-certainly the latter deserved a couple of number ones and Rivers too with the superb Secret Agent Man. Anyway, the sound was perfect that evening and I could only bemoan the lack of a sound desk at Billy's gigs just three years before. Realistically, other than having a respected 'side-kick' posing no threat -such as Helen Shapiro, Billy only ever belonged on a bill of his own in the same way as the mighty Roy Orbison, terrific Gene Pitney and excellent Cliff of course-with Cliff's perfect pitch and the joint distinctive sound he enjoyed by having the timeless Shadows 'Constantly' (sorry!) with him for so many years. A continuity of sound, especially guitar, and distinct sense of group/band identity which Billy, through no fault of his own, regrettably lacked.

Day dreaming aside I suppose we are back in reality to the single 1983 tour, probably a late summer/early autumn one following January / February surgery ,perhaps a follow-up in '84 or '85 with limited venues and just a forty minute slot with another good sixties artist sharing the strain. Another possibility of course might have been the occasional one-off theatre show, where the pressure would not have been so intense. Just imagine how Billy must have felt in January 1983 (even without the terrible news about his heart playing up again) about taking on a full tour. But how great would that have been had it taken place. His reception in Burton, Northampton, Norfolk and at the Beck in particular, had been ecstatic and his performance at the Beck professional and superb, so there is no reason to assume he would not have gone from strength to strength during 1983 and perhaps beyond, if fit enough, and especially with chart success. In the Four Aces he had a great young band with a real feel for all of his styles of music and in Mark Haley he had a friend to sit and chat and write songs with-such as In the Wind and Rain.



Billy performing in 1982

No matter how well we can imagine the tour went we must take into account not only the troubling physical side of Billy's health but the mental and emotional sides also. Although seemingly more self-confident in later years he was still a nervous wreck before coming on stage, and anyone with a heart condition, successful surgery or not, will know how that stress and worry can really impact on the heart-and on the well-being of the individual. I am choosing not to go into his eighties private life, about which we know just the little that we have read or been told by some of those close to him. Frankly it's none of our business, but how that turned out during 1983 and beyond would have also had a bearing on his health and career moves. From this perspective-of being a shy nervous guy, it must be asked-would he have wanted to continue on the 'Merry Go Round' he once said on-air he just could not get off-we can't say for sure. Given previous history he would only surely have been happy if he could have had control over the direction of his musical life-and that is no easy ask-rather it is driven by other factors such as others in 'The Business', promoters and similar. Emile Ford, a great singer and sound engineer once working on the Billy Fury demo's CD project with Roger Dopson and myself, told me in a wonderfully interesting two hour conversation that I regret not recording, how his career had suffered because of the controlling aspects of theatre management back in the fifties and sixties. The way certain famous families in control of the theatre and club system dictated to singers -in his case allegedly forbidding him from setting up and using his own sound systems. His insistence on using or trying to use, his own equipment for authentic sound comparable to his records cost him appearances in those theatres. He had crossed the wrong people. Throughout his career until 1981 onwards, Billy had a documented propensity to sometimes be unreliable in attending gigs, shows, TV and rehearsals.

He was far more focused during the eighties so such problems occurring during 1983-85 and onwards would most likely only have been due to ill-health, as indeed would sometimes have also been the case in earlier years. However, more reliable or not, Billy was still far from being a typical show business animal and perhaps dipping the occasional toe might have been enough for him-just to give him an interest in something tangible other than nature. Many would say, that the likely outcome would have been the one tour later in 1983, some recording and perhaps TV and radio promotion during and following the tour. If he had of enjoyed a Top 20 hit, which he deserved with his 1982 releases and may well have gained in 1983 with the right song and promotion, we would certainly have seen him on TV and heard him on the radio as we had during 1981/82. As an aside, just why is it that Radio 2 never plays any of his Polydor output but are happy to play other eighties 'stuff' most of the time! He had eighties hits-however minor and they deserve airing-Forget Him in particular. For that matter the other Polydor era tracks deserve airplay-the superb Someday, Let Me Go Lover, This Little Girl of Mine, the quite 'modern' No Trespassers -synthesizer and all, make for great listening. Fans should face book Radio 2 DJs with just that comment and request-and why does Johnny Walker never play 1970's Billy recordings on his seventies programme, thin on the ground though they may be? Why can't we hear Long Live Rock on air, or those two seventies 45s?



Billy performing with The Mick Green Band. Copyright Chris Eley

Another leading question is-would he have developed an apparent love for sometimes singing easy listening and perhaps standards from The Great American Songbook? I don't think his fans would have let him do just that except maybe on TV but he might well have sneaked in onstage, TV or radio, the odd standard. Billy had recorded or performed some of them in the sixties and performed them at parties-so it's feasible that he would have performed a few in that style-especially as he got older. Note to some young reviewer from not so long ago-Billy Fury does not croon his hits-he is a singer. Bing Crosby was a crooner, and a great one, largely forgotten now and such a shame. Would Billy perhaps have included a few country numbers on-stage as he got older-perhaps, because he had performed and recorded several from that genre during his career? It goes without saying I think that predominantly, live, his old hits and some up-tempo rock 'n' roll and rhythm and blues classics would have been staple for as long as he continued to perform. The set might have become more varied however, as time went on, a bit like that exceptionally lucky man Rod Stewart who is still a great live performer even today, and seems, with his love for football and model trains, like a good down to earth guy. In the mid-sixties with his hair long but still in a quiff, Billy bore, in a few shots, some passing resemblance to another class act, Bryan Ferry (another BF!), who throughout his solo career managed to successfully mix various styles of music, including standards, into recordings and performances. Given continued reasonable health Billy might have managed a similar musical melange.

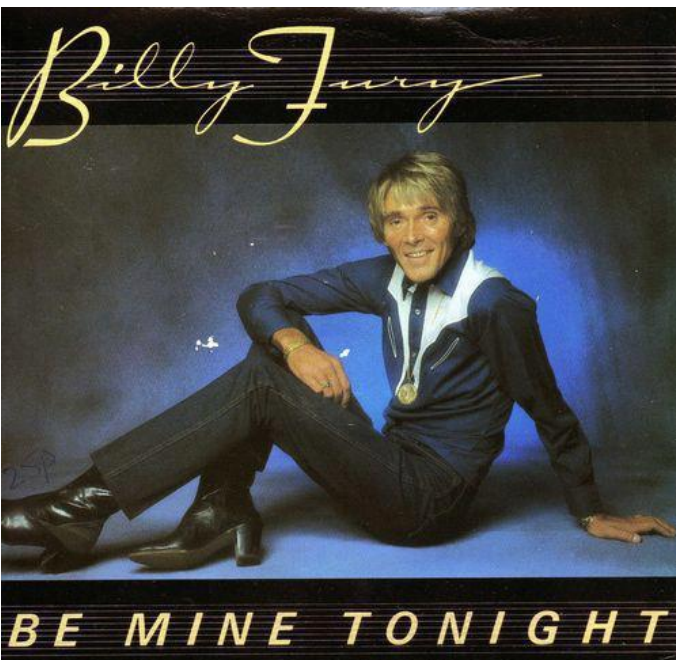
Recording artist

Billy was first and foremost, a recording artist. Some would argue that his live shows were his main draw and there is some truth in that, but without the vinyl success he would have been little more than a footnote in musical history-comparable to the splitting of PJ Proby's trousers. As with that famous over exaggerated and really harmless moment in Jim's pop history, the resulting furore over Billy before that in Dublin and to some extent during the 1960 Cochran/Vincent Tour the following year, tended rather needlessly to overshadow, in both cases, their immense talent; with Jim Proby having one of the greatest voices in the history of popular music and Billy maturing into one of the finest ever British performers. In 1958 Jerry Lee Lewis too had suffered a devastating blow to his career-also because of narrow minded British press and general public.

Being such a successful recording artist from first release the fact that Decca/Parnes/Billy allowed the recording frequency to tail off so badly post 1964 is, in hindsight, quite appalling. Twenty six hit singles is a great achievement but several more EPs and albums in particular should have been recorded, especially a studio one with the Tornados (pulling all the country style recordings together including Nobody's Child) and a stereo live and studio one with the Gamblers. We are talking about Britain's No. 2 singer here after all! Dave Berry, very often quite flat in vocal delivery in comparison to the excellent BJ Thomas (who had the US version of Mama and so many other finer performances/songs over the years), but a mesmerising performer even today, made some great records and was going great guns in the Decca studio during this period. Meanwhile, an equally fine exponent of rhythm and blues (Billy) was recording virtually nothing during 1965-66; only six recordings if session details are to be believed. Then we had nothing but a very mixed bag of eleven EMI 'Fury-less' 45s (some excellent), two unexceptional one-off 45s, (OK so Fascinating Candle-flame was great and Will The Real Man Please Stand Up interestingly different), five new and stunning (but not especially well recorded) album tracks and a patchy, but welcome stereo album of re-recorded hits, until 1981. To be fair Billy was ill during the session recording period and only recorded it out of necessity due to the bankruptcy.




Billy and Stu Colman at the studio mixing desk



In its defence I'll Be Your Sweetheart was punchy, even quite catchy, but in my view would have been a lot better without the sing along chorus thereby matching the pleasant I Survived by Adam Faith, issued around the same time but surprisingly also a flop. Whatever happened to Billy's alleged other Warner Brother's recordings (and Marty's) we don't know but reportedly there was some flooding at the storage facility at some time, so it does not bode well.

Sung in the wrong key or not, (the backing track was already laid down) the underrated Be Mine Tonight hit me personally like a rocket and I ended up playing both sides incessantly- I love that magical expensively packaged picture cover 45 as much today as any Decca one (just where did that great shirt go). The Polydor sessions that followed have been partially covered in our magazines but we are imagining a situation at the end of 1982/early '83 where Billy needed surgery and survived to have it in the January or February.

Further, that the relationship with Stu Colman was as solid as it had been earlier in the year; with Billy still grateful for the boost and good songs that the talented producer had brought to the sessions. Logically then, we may not have ever seen the 1983 version of Forget Him come to light, although it is possible it might have been resurrected for inclusion on the album whilst Bill was still with us, because Don't Tell Me Lies had already been afforded a new backing by November 1982. The One and Only LP, with a likely maximum of 14 tracks, could have looked quite different and could also/instead have included Let Me Watch The Children Play, (no known vocal by Billy), Angela Jones (ditto) or the heartbreaking Going Round The Bend. Perhaps the self-penned He Looks at Girls could have been finished and included and in general the whole album might have been able to hang together better than it did. It could have been recorded with more deliberation and choice and been Billy's equivalent of the classic 'later life' albums such as Rockin' My Life Away by Jerry Lee Lewis, Roy Orbison's acclaimed Mystery Girl, Del Shannon's wonderful Rock On or Dion's excellent Yo Frankie or more recent Heroes album. Angela Jones would probably have been issued as a single and perhaps Let Me Go Lover (and not withdrawn this time). Despite all of this I still believe the existing album to be a fine one—but it could have been, or could become, far greater. I have no doubt but that Billy would have carried on recording during 1983 and 1984-85. If successful he may have carried on until the end of the eighties and most certainly all of his working life he would have been in demand from other singers to join them on duets or as a guest on their albums. Would Sir Paul McCartney, Sir Cliff Richard or Sir Elton John have brought Billy on-stage during an eighties concert—who knows. Sir Billy Fury has a certain ring to it, but the self-effacing Billy probably would not have wanted such an honour. Or indeed any honour.



BILLY FURY

THE ONE AND ONLY

At the time of his sudden death, Billy was working on a new album with all the enthusiasm and effort he threw into everything he did.

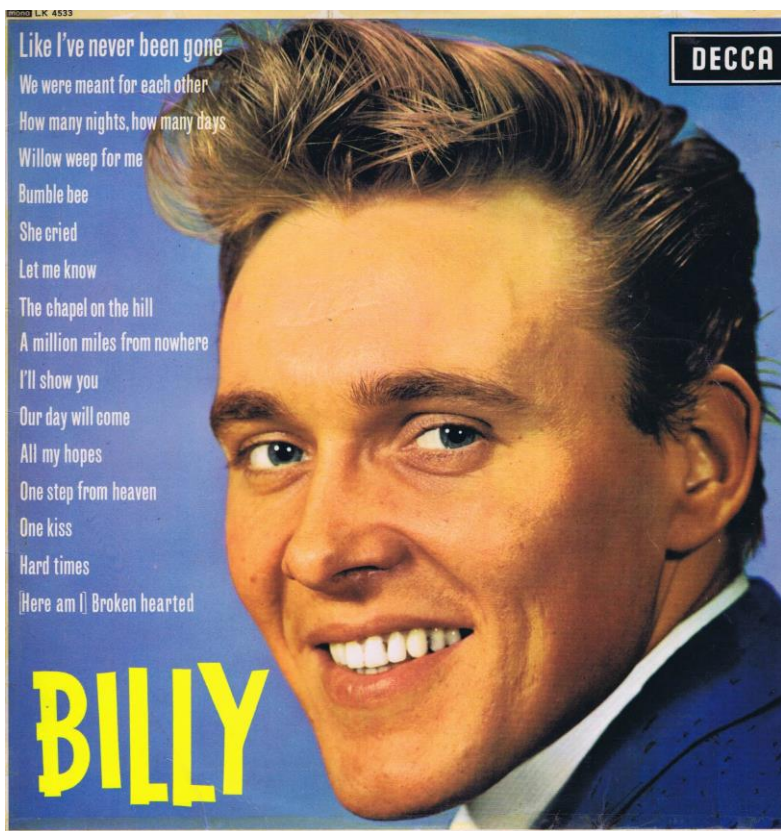
Billy's recent single releases for Polydor and his rare live concerts clearly showed that the devotion of his fans had not waned over the years. No one meeting him could fail to be touched by his honesty and sincerity—rare commodities in the music business.

We hope that this, his final album, does justice to the memory of Billy Fury.



From around 1981 Billy looked a little like a British Barry Manilow and it may be that it was a deliberate attempt at pushing him as such. Of course, as Bill's manager and friend Tony Read, who may or may not have been party to this approach, said in interview and to me "The fans won't let Billy be anything other than Billy Fury." The questions arising from image and increasing age are the same as for Elvis and others who lacked the good grace to depart this world whilst really young (in the way of such massive talents as Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, Eddie Cochran, Sam Cook and others)-just what would Billy have wanted to record or been pushed into recording once the 'Revival' tour was over. Whilst acknowledging why it was that Sinatra almost (and in some polls) did eclipse Elvis as Artist of the Century, (having Robbie Williams as such a close-run contender was a bad joke) I have never been a fan as such. But in recently listening to and enjoying Frank Sinatra's life-reflective Summer Wind and Once Upon A Time (especially the latter which is so true and incredibly sad) I pondered whether Billy would have crossed over into standards/easy listening territory again. He had of course done this in 1961 on Radio Luxembourg with Slow Boat to China, When I Fall in Love and I May be Wrong (Am I Blue from the same session being a kind of standard/blues hybrid in my view), and in November 1961 Begin the Beguine, one track (see below) from the superb, but regrettably mono 1963 LP Billy, and on piano at the last New Year's bash that he would ever attend.

Those early attempts in no way matched the great crooners (no one was going to top Nat King Cole for one), but they were a credible effort and if Rod Stewart can sing The Great American Songbook then Billy, with an arguably more flexible and better voice, certainly could have done. Although Billy would be the first to admit that he lacked the ability to sing easy listening/standards like the Rat Pack or the wonderful Nat King Cole, or indeed most forms of popular music in the accomplished, easy way of the great Bobby Darin, there are signs that when he really put his mind to it he could really cut it. Hey Look Me Over from his 1964 TV show was handled really well I thought, (roll on a good clear version one day when we find the TV film), Willow Weep for Me is, in my view, a hybrid standard and blues number, and Billy does a superb version; the equal of any, even of Dakota Staton's classic and influential recording.



In fact, when it comes to blues or blues tinged songs, Billy was as good any other singer on the block, surpassing Darin on mutually recorded Ray Charles songs, and at the very least equalling the Genius of Soul himself on those numbers (but not on What'd I Say where Billy, like Elvis before him, lagged behind Ray Charles and Jerry Lee Lewis). So would Billy have cut more blues and rhythm and blues songs in echo of the fabulous Am I Blue and Billy Fury & the Gamblers EPs? My guess is probably not because its never been commercial and no EMI/ Polydor recordings really lean that way, although several are downright melancholy! When song-writing Billy could really do heartbreak and If I Lose You (eat your heart out Bobby Darin), was surely blues oriented, as was Baby How I Cried.

Billy was into the blues when it was cool to be so; and into the standards/easy listening thing image wise (witness the Sinatra style hat he often wore during the Decca years), but would he have revisited this in a more major way in the eighties and nineties-difficult to say. On balance I think an album of standards (the genre being difficult in my view to absolutely nail) may have been likely nearer the end of his recording life. Fans would have bought it; because that's what we do, two copies at least if the budget allows. Would it have been good-yes of course it would.

Conversely, could Billy's playing of Cole Porter numbers on New Year's Eve 1982 have perhaps made him want to record some of them soon after? Just imagine his take on Night and Day, In the Still of the Night, Just One of Those Things, I've Got You Under My Skin, and a re-recording of Begin the Beguine (one of his Mum's favourites). Maybe, but would Polydor have allowed it at the time-probably not. We must not forget the commercial imperative, and according to Tony Read money was lost by the record company because of the lack of expected success of Billy's recordings. Only Polydor can confirm or gainsay that-and doubtless sales records are lost by now. Irrational though it may be, I often feel a sense of acute disappointment with the record buying public, including several fans at the time, who despite the immense TV and radio coverage going on in 1981-83 just didn't bother to go out as some of us did, buy those great singles and make his challenging comeback a true success. Just one Top 10 single would have made such a difference.

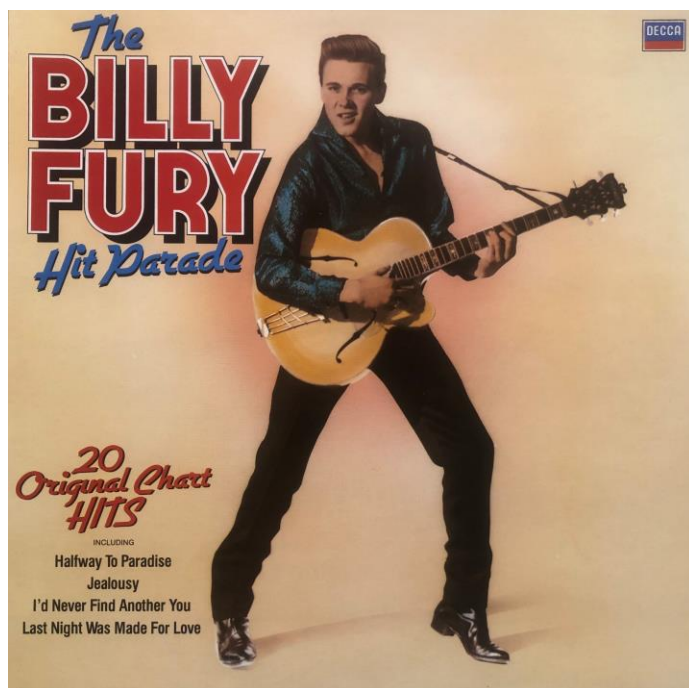
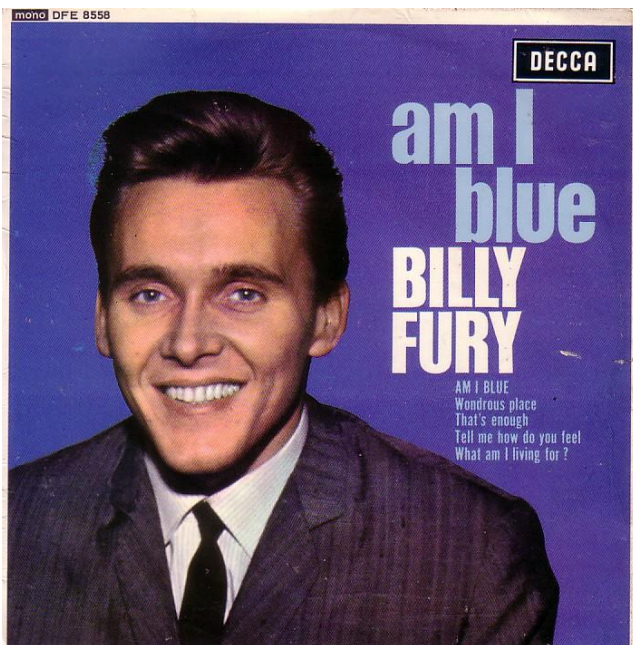
In truth, most fans would have been like me-with a young family and I suppose that's what makes the difference from then and the internet fans, most in their later years now, with time on their hands

Fan numbers were even very limited when the rest of us worked on the Bronze Statue Project, that's why it took us all so long to complete it. In addition celebrity support for Peter and Lynda Keller's project, driven by us together with the venues, entertainers and others, was, financially anyway, limited to Sir Paul McCartney, although several original stars such as Dave Sampson, Tommy Bruce, Eden Kane and one or two others did perform or attend events-Vince Eager with Harry Whitehouse got us Jack Good for the unveiling. Jess Conrad, Jet Harris, Judith Wycherley and Neil Christian I recall attending fund raising events. Without contributions from tribute and other non-original but great bands and artists, and the five hundred or so active members of this fan club, we would never have managed it. We (Jean Prosser mostly) had written to virtually every UK singer or music business personality we could think of, especially those associated with Billy in the mind of the fans-the response being disappointingly negative.

Some Liverpool and other business, local authority staff were supportive and in particular, without the generosity of the Museum of Liverpool the statue may not have been placed. Decca contributed about 150 LPs to sell.

Billy's Mum Jean and brother Albie (the latter performing with Colin Paul & The Persuaders and the much loved Danny Rivers) were of course right there helping out by their participation at events. Billy's whole fan base can be proud of this statue-because it was predominately the fans who achieved it-which is obviously what, to judge by their response, Sir Paul McCartney and Sir Cliff Richard obviously wanted (Cliff at least replied and wished us well).

To be fair The Billy Fury Hit Parade did sell well for years-in vinyl and on CD, perhaps because of its appeal to the general public. No tribute to Billy could avoid mentioning Decca's John Tracy for all his work in getting Billy albums out there over a twenty year period or so, and especially those unreleased tracks like the wonderful version of Kansas City. It was John who found the two completely new stereo recordings which grace the 40th Anniversary Anthology (his brainchild but worked on later by Decca with the SOF).





Country music is often, it is said, the refuge for retired rockers and 'popsters', and it is partly true, but no means generally correct. When Jerry Lee Lewis went country it was really only a return to his Sun roots, where country was mixed with rockabilly, rock'n'roll and blues anyway. He just became for a while a little more purist and mainstream in the country world. For several years from the mid to late sixties onwards his music has proved to be amongst the finest country music ever produced—just check out his 1963-69 output and *Over The Rainbow, Thirty Nine and Holding, I'll Never Be 18 Again* and so many others from later years. Frank Ifield, who had a fine voice, and one of the most memorable hits ever, (but who to me, like the great Tom Jones, never seemed to fit into the music scene of the time), made his name though country music and continued for years in that genre. Billy was also influenced by country music because of the Liverpool shipping connection and as we know Hank Williams, Hank Snow and others featured in his stage repertoire and some recordings—just listen to the *Radio Luxembourg Shows*. Regrettably his most overt and commercial country recording, the excellent *Don't Worry* was, at only No. 40, a relative flop. Marty Robbins (whose original version failed to chart in the UK) was a great singer—always, according to my friend

singer-songwriter Chase Webster, who recorded the original *Like I've Never Been Gone*, "So pitch perfect in the studio it makes you sick" (meant in a joshing way because Chase does not have a bad bone on his body). Who can forget Karl Denver's folk/country/pop sound and Houston Wells and The Marksmen (who recorded a pleasant country version of *Nobody's Child* in 1964) but despite several big country chart hits such as *I Can't Stop Loving You*, country was nothing like as big as Trad Jazz in the UK in the early sixties (except Ireland perhaps), and it was surely not Billy's excellent performance of the song that failed to sell it—but the song itself. Country classics *Candy Kisses* and *Lovesick Blues* were adequate, *I'm Hurting All Over* pretty good, but *I Can't Help Loving You* suffered from it's too slow tempo, soulful though it undoubtedly is. On the other hand some of the country performed live on air on *Radio Luxembourg* was outstanding; *You Win Again*, the faster country styled version of *I Can't Help Loving You*, *It Don't Hurt Anymore* and *Wedding Bells* spring to mind. Even earlier how about the great covers of Hank Williams *Lowdown Blues* or the superb *Have I Told You Lately That I Love You*, aired on the BBC. In fact I would rate Billy's versions of *Wedding Bells*—especially the live album one, as more emotive (which country is all about) and superior to the country originals and covers by Tommy Steele, Marty Robbins and even the excellent Jerry Lee Lewis version. So would Billy have included country or country rock on his 1980s albums?



Billy The Kid!

Well, his love of the Eagles is documented but if he had of really been into that type of music then surely he would have cut more of it during the EMI years than the excellent country track It Just Don't Matter Now, emulating the excellent Rick Nelson and The Stone Canyon band instead. Rudy the Fifth is a great album and one that Billy may have heard but I can see Billy actually covering Rick's Garden Party because his voice would have suited it. I really wanted to interview Billy during 1982 but aside from brief meetings Tony Read kept me at a distance-he had his reasons I guess. I would have loved to know what Billy thought of truly great bands such as Creedence Clearwater Revival. Perhaps Stu Colman would have selected a track from that band for Billy; if Long Live Rock is anything to go by Billy could have managed a track or two from the CCR songbook- Up Around The Bend or Lodi would have been good-so many to choose from. I know Billy liked Stealers Wheel because I have a small size gig shirt from the band who, Tony told me, gave it to Billy. So another likely track for The One and Only or a later album could have been Stuck In The Middle With You (later recorded pretty well by Adam Faith on his final album Midnight Postcards) and before that by Rick Nelson. So would Billy have included country or any variation such as country rock on albums which followed The One and Only-possibly. Would the album still have been given the same title-Lisa might have a view on that but I suspect that naming it after a hit 45 might have been the route taken. If Love or Money had cracked the Top 10 as it deserved to-that would have been a good title for a start. It was pretty faithful to versions by the Blackwell's and Jimmy Crawford (who with that great voice should have been a major star) yet had a modern feel, with the trumpet etc. It should definitely get Radio 2 airplay today! I do like to think that on subsequent albums Billy would have been able to include some great self-penned songs-better than Deborah (catchy but with some dodgy lyrics) and more of the standard of Don't Tell Me Lies and some others.

Actor

Adequate and so watchable in Play it Cool, not too bad at all in I've Gotta Horse and riveting in That'll Be The Day, Billy would probably not have been offered or sought a part in any film or stage presentation. He might however have been offered a bit part as himself; how great to see him visit The Rovers Return!



Billy, Helen Shapiro, Norrie Paramor and Anna Palk on the set of Play It Cool

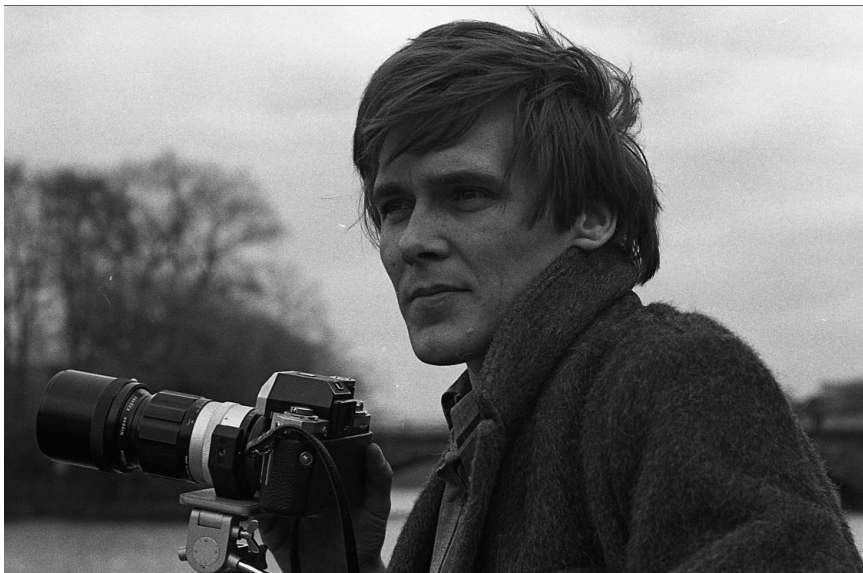
Bird watching and wildlife preservation

We all know how much Billy loved to go bird watching, partly as a stress busting relief from the pressures of the music business and continual poor health. Just how much good being in a hide in the pouring rain did to his heart and well-being is perhaps mute-but he loved it. In later years his comeback trail obviously meant more time spent at St John's Wood, in various studios (TV and Radio) and at gigs (read the last few Sound of Fury magazines for more detail), and far less at Rhos Farm. Due to his health issues life could be hard in Wales from the weather to the tasks required to keep the farm ticking over. Looking after sheep and horses is time consuming and hard and those shots showing Billy handling swans in the pool just down the lane from the farm entrance indicate that it was very much a hands-on 'wellies' and ,more often than not, waterproof job. I spent two years in North Wales from 1964-66 and the one thing I remember is-rain (and snow). That's two things! Never mind! So, imagine a scenario where Billy, having had successful heart repair surgery, enjoyed a successful tour, TV and radio appearances and above all, Top 10 hits and a hit album before the end of 1983, or beginning of 1984

What time would there have been for bird watching or trying to preserve the red kite (with meat from the local butchers as he said)-very little. I have little doubt however but that once the initial comeback period of probably eighteen months to two years had started to subside, with less pressure, Billy would have again begun to apply himself to the countryside and its animals and birds. With increasing commercial inroads and decreasing wildlife he would have probably, health permitting, become quite an ambassador for wildlife and the environment.

How would he have felt about those first warnings about global warming-probably quite strongly. He hated blood sports too and would have been delighted at the ending of fox hunting and badger baiting and might have been linking with the likes of kindred spirit Brian May about it all. Would Billy have continued not only to watch but to photograph and perhaps film birds, perhaps even other wildlife-almost certainly. Would he have resurrected the late sixties unpublished Mixed Bag of Birds -quite possibly.

Would there eventually have been an autobiography -we will never know but I like to think it would have happened, in the way we hope Marty Wilde will produce his before too long.



One thing we all feel I am sure, is that no matter where his life may have taken him afterwards, we wish with all our hearts that the events of the 28th January 1983 never happened-or at the very least that he had survived the incident, been repaired and been able to creak on for many more years. How we missed Elvis and those regular new recordings, which had become for so many of us our main musical life blood due to the musical demise in general of our other favourites. We still miss the other greats who gave us such pleasure and still, like Billy, had so much to give when they were taken from us. John Lennon, Rick Nelson, Roy Orbison, Del Shannon, George Harrison, Carl Perkins, Gene Pitney and many others, but losing Billy was a really harrowing thing: so much more personal for many of us. Especially those privileged to meet him, talk with him, no matter how briefly, and watch him literally perform his heart out. 1981-83 may have been a sad time but it was also a magical time for some of us-for which we should ever be grateful.

Promoting Billy's Music

I know that you-tube is now the thing and the pure dynamite clip of Billy live in 1961 performing Just Because has done more for his reputation, in my view, than any release in the past 10 years. Lee Fry is the main person to thank for getting that to us and may that type of thing continue. There are however, (car manufacturers take note!), still many of us who like the CD as a medium for listening to our music-no downloads for me-songs are not real unless on vinyl or a shiny disc! With that in mind I feel quite sad about all of the ideas sent to various organisations for releases such as The Complete Decca Sessions (already compiled by us but dropped by Decca just prior to engineering -around 2011/12 was it- when HMV first had a major wobble) and still not resurrected for Decca's 90th Anniversary last year as we requested. The Complete Polydor Sessions is long overdue, and a twelve inch Sound of Fury LP with extra tracks and insert to coincide with the anniversary this year, was also turned down by Decca-and a possible vinyl with the unreleased More included on it. Decca did not want to run with the vinyl but thankfully Bear Family has -the Sound of Fury, although with a slightly different track listing to what were envisaging. It seems Bear Family is now the company to watch for Billy Fury releases. I would say though-in a note of optimism at this awful time, we should not give up on the possibility of future releases, including some unreleased material. The main issue, or problem, is that whoever decides to make the above releases, and others featuring the BBC and EMI/Ronco/Warner Brothers/Fury label /Radio Luxembourg material cannot necessarily expect to get their money back on CD sales anymore- it needs to be more a labour of love type thing.

I will say that I am grateful to Decca for running with our philharmonic orchestra concept in 2018, and that although I was initially deeply disappointed by not using the RPO, several of the song-choices and the artwork; it has now nearly all grown on me. It's upsetting that some music purists, yet good friends of mine, won't even entertain a listen, but there really are some really good tracks on this collection-do give it a try. Also, if you still don't have Billy Fury-Wondrous Place (The Brits are Rocking Volume 2)-get a copy I urge you! I also see that The 40th Anniversary Anthology double CD (some fans I know incredibly still don't have a copy); can now be found at under £8.00. We should, in my view, all try to persuade the music world that the music from the whole of Billy's career is worthy of air play and reissue-not just the Decca period. Get onto Radio 2 and local radio to play Billy!



The views expressed in this tribute are my own and may not necessarily reflect those of the other members of the SOF Team.

Sad losses

I would like to express the deep sadness we all feel in the team at the loss of so many of our dear 'Billy Friends' over the years, including very recently. How we wish they were still with us and sharing their support and affection for Britain's finest performer with us, as they have so faithfully and enthusiastically done over the years. This tribute is not only for Billy, at a sad time when we have been unable to gather as usual in celebration, but for those friends and their loved ones, and indeed, any others who may be lost to us in the future.

Chris and the Team.