

The Sound of Fury Fan Club

Newsletter

Issue 5: July – September 2020



Hi there,
Welcome to the latest issue of the Sound Of Fury Fan Club newsletter.
We know it's been a difficult and challenging time over the last few months, which has affected all of us greatly. Losing the everyday things we take for granted and not being able to visit with our families and friends has been especially hard, but we have seen very best of the Great British spirit during this pandemic, as we have adapted as a Nation and supported our neighbours, the NHS and all of the keyworkers.
We know many of you have found some comfort listening to Billy and chatting on the Billy Facebook groups. The Facebook members increase by the day and it's amazing to discover just how adored Billy still is by his fans. If you're not a member already, please do check them out. You'll be very welcome and will definitely meet a large group of very friendly like minded Billy fans.

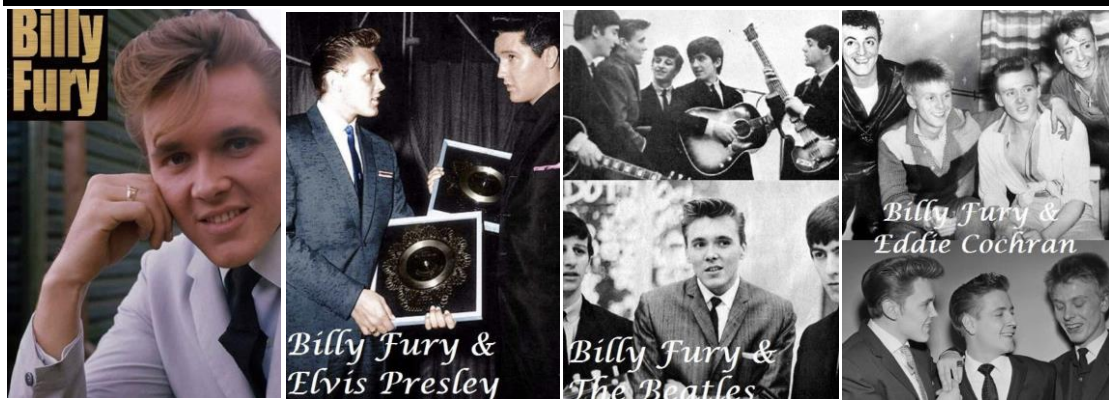
As you know the Sound Of Fury Fan Club has taken over the fantastic Harry Whitehouse website www.billyfury.com This is a treasure trove of information and detail about Billy that is several years in the making. We will be adding some more content to the page over the coming months and now all the previous back issues of the Newsletter are now online and can be found on this website.
With special thanks to Alan Coombe for his work and dedication on this.

Our good friend Ricky Gould has also created a brand new Billy Fury website <https://billyfury.co.uk/>
This site has a brand new forum for fans and exclusive Billy content. It's well worth taking a look and joining the forum.

Sadly, many of the Billy planned events over the last few months had to be postponed or cancelled, but as we see things starting to recover and get back to something like normal, there will be lot's of Billy events planned and taking place towards the end of this year and next.

It is still the intention to hold the Mill Hill Fan Club meeting in October 2020, but as you can appreciate this is dependent on the situation at the time. We will confirm in the next newsletter if this will go ahead, but if you have any questions before then, please contact the Fanclub directly in writing or by email.
soundoffurysecretary@gmail.com or write to - The Sound of Fury Fan Club, P.O. Box 157, Frodsham, WA6 1BY

A series of books (four so far) all written by author - Harry Lime, have just been released. These contain a short bio of Billy (it's the same one in each book) and then a bio of the other subject, as well as a basic U.K. discography. These are available to order from Amazon, but although I usually welcome any "new" Billy release, I have to say I was disappointed with this. The bio is poorly written and doesn't contain anything that isn't available from the internet or previously published material. Price circa £12 per book – book covers pictured below. Lee



Billy's Grave

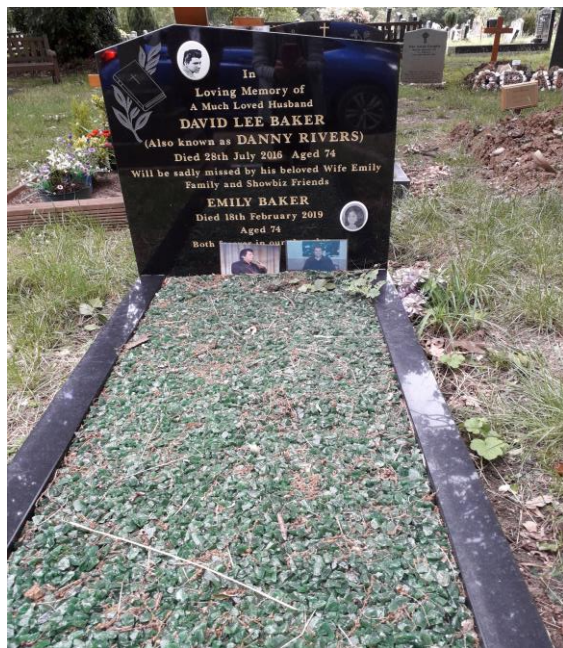
The grave has recently been visited and some tidying up of the bed and flanking bushes has been done. It seems that despite our requests and a notice left at the site to leave cleaning to the professionals only, someone has attempted to clean the headstone. It appears not to have caused any damage and whilst we understand the desire to help, we again remind fans that this should not happen please, especially as cleaning and expensive restoration work on the lettering is required and booked together with some upgrading work. Of course removing dead flowers and other detritus is fine as always. The only reason work has not been done (it's all been authorised and paid for by the grave owners - the Billy Fury Estate - Billy's Lisa), is because of restrictions due to Covid-19. We have been informed by the appointed contractors that the work will be done, subject to Covid issues, before October this year and we look forward to it hopefully looking pristine for years to come.

Chris and Jackie

Danny Rivers

At last the devoted Danny and Emily Baker (aka Rivers) are officially reunited, with their new headstone now in place in Hendon Cemetery, Mill Hill. Danny worked with Billy and they had a mutual respect and regard for each other. Danny did so much to help fund raise for the Bronze Fund Project. He and Emily were fixtures at Blackpool and Mill Hill for years, with Danny missing no chance to perform. We were lucky enough to see them both at our Mill Hill gatherings months before Danny's passing. Good friends of Billy's brother Albie and Mum Jean, Colin Paul and many of us, they are both sadly missed by everyone who knew them. It is great that Billy fans take the time to visit them often before attending Billy's grave.

Chris and Jackie



These amazing photo's are of Billy performing on 5th October 1972

Bank Hall Miners' Club and Institute, Off Colne Road, Burnley and recently appeared on the Burnley Civic Trust Heritage website (full credit to them).



Billy Fury still has all his old charms.

Top of the bill at the Bank Hall Miners' Institute on Thursday 5th October was Billy Fury, superstar of the early sixties and the idol of millions. In his heyday Billy Fury made one hit record after another and was the main star everywhere he appeared, including places like the London Palladium. Even though his popularity has declined over the years, he proved he is still a great attraction as a singer and entertainer. He showed he still has all the old charm, and at times during his performance the audience went hysterical. One fan, 23-year old Jean Waddington from Burnley, could not restrain herself. She rushed on to the stage between numbers for a cuddle with her idol. Club steward Mr. Sean Richards said: "It was a terrific evening. The club was completely packed. About 400 people watched the show and about 150 were turned away from the door because there was no room. People started queueing at 6.20 to pay at the door. All the reserve tickets were sold by Wednesday. He sang some modern numbers, but his most popular songs were those that made him a star. There were some young people in the club, but I would say that the average age of the audience was about 24, and they really appreciated him. At present he is touring clubs in Yorkshire, and we feel we were very lucky to get him." Story by Steve Entwistle, pictures by Keith Snowden.



BILLY FURY

Decca Records



Regd. Trade Mark

Due to the circumstances with the Covid virus and pubs, clubs etc. we have not included an Events Calendar in this issue.

However, we have been informed that the Billy 'Weekender's for both Blackpool in November 2020 and July 2021 are going ahead and places can be booked now. These events are always special events for any Billy fans. See below for further information and booking details.

Blackpool Holidays Ltd.

Diane Wardle
presents

Rockin Like Fury at the Met

Billy Fury Tribute Week-End

at The Metropole Hotel,
Blackpool
6th - 8th November 2020

starring The return of the fabulous
Colin Paul & The Persuaders
also **Colin Paul Solo Show**

Direct from her
"Walking back to happiness tour"
Jane Hubert

Rockin' DJ's Neil Williams
and **Andy Cordwell**

Back by popular demand - the fantastic
Mark Keely's
Good Rockin' Tonight

Dinner, Bed & Breakfast and Sunday Lunch
ENQUIRIES - Telephone (01253) 722300 (24hr answerphone)
TO BOOK - Complete inside reservation form

The management reserve the right to amend the programme as necessary.

ACCOMMODATION DESCRIPTION

STANDARD ROOMS

En-Suite bathroom with bath or shower
Colour T.V.
Tea & Coffee making facilities £160 per person

As above with sea view £162 per person

PREMIER ROOMS

En-Suite bathroom with bath or shower
Colour T.V.
Tea & Coffee making facilities
Sea view £172 per person

ROOMS AVAILABLE:-





Single - Double - Twin - Triple

Yesterday Once More
music theme holidays, weekends and concerts


Billy Fury Weekender

at the fabulous
LINER HOTEL
LORD NELSON STREET, LIVERPOOL L3 5QB


4pm Friday 16th July 2021 to 10am Sunday 18th July 2021


FEATURING



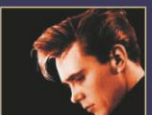
COLIN PAUL
with his
BILLY FURY SHOW
and many others



THE ALLIGATORS
featuring
TONY GRAHAM



THE FIREBIRDS
one of Europe's
top Rock n Roll
bands



BILLY FURY
visual disco on the
BIG SCREEN with the
NUTTY BROTHERS

FROM ONLY £189 } PRICE INCLUDES: EXCELLENT ACCOMMODATION, ENTERTAINMENT, BREAKFAST, SUPERB 3 COURSE EVENING MEAL AND FREE CAR PARKING

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FIND US ON FACEBOOK *You Know It Makes Sense*

FOR FULL DETAILS AND BOOKING FORM PLEASE SEE OVERLEAF

INFORMATION

THE LINER HOTEL - LIVERPOOL



The Liner Hotel in Liverpool is situated next to Lime Street station the central location is perfect. Amazing reviews on trip advisor highlight cleanliness and good food . Makes this hotel a great venue in Billys hometown for our Billy Fury weekend.

MEALS INCLUDED

DINNER - Friday and Saturday. **BREAKFAST** - Saturday & Sunday. Your table for dinner and the evening show will be reserved for you for the whole weekend.

ROOMS

All rooms are en-suite with colour tv's, radio, trouser press, hospitality tray, direct line telephone and hairdryers.

TRANSPORT

The hotel is only 2 minutes walk from Lime Street train station. FREE car parking is included.

ADD ANOTHER DAY

Liverpool has so much to see and do why not add a Thursday or Monday night for just £69 per person half board (based on two sharing). Take a ferry cross the Mersey, visit the Billy Fury statue in Albert dock, the World famous Cavern Club or do an organised Beatles tour. The city has an atmosphere all of its own which you will enjoy.

THE YESTERDAY ONCE MORE DIFFERENCE


We have 29 years experience of promoting music theme festivals in the U.K., Europe and the U.S.A. We are a specialist music theme weekend break organiser. We ensure that all elements of the weekend are run in a professional manner, and every element of the event is carefully planned. Our sound and lighting systems are second to none.
Our DJ's are the best in the business, playing music from the era. We ensure that we limit the numbers for our clients comfort and, most importantly, everyone attending is there to enjoy the event; so you can relax in the friendly atmosphere with like-minded people.

OTHER EVENTS

Yesterday Once More also offer 50's, 60's, 70's, 80's and Elvis Weekends as well as foreign holidays. To receive information on any of these, just call the office Monday or Wednesday 10am - 5pm on 01934 733958.

COST

This popular Billy Fury weekender is only £189 per person, half board and based on two sharing. With a single supplement of £45 for the weekend.

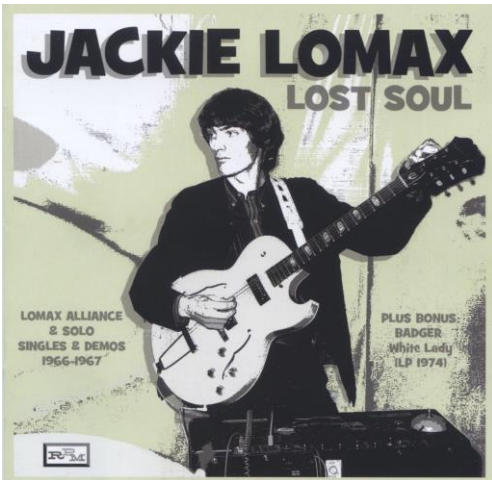


THE BILLY FURY CONNECTION

BY CHRIS ELEY

Fans will be aware from SOF Magazines that we tend to include information and sometimes radio programmes about connections with Billy. These can be firm ones such as Elvis, Tony Orlando and Johnnie Ray or more tenuous, like some of the following. With so much information now out there about Billy it is always good to find out a little more about his connection to or with other performers, which helps to give perspective to his work.

Jackie Lomax-One Minute Woman Please. CBS 2554



The pictured 45rpm cover of the Bee Gees song was issued as the B-side to Genuine Imitation Life on 20/10/1967, some five months before Billy Fury's version, also a B-side, surfaced during March 1968. Whereas Billy was apparently grateful to record the track and stuck quite faithfully to the original found on the Bee Gees' 1st album 1967, and a Portuguese EP, The Bee Gees Holiday-also 1967, it seems that Jackie (the former lead singer and bass player of Liverpool based beat and blues band, the Undertakers), recorded his version as a favour to a Bee Gees loving producer in order to get his A side released. Whether Billy ever knew of or heard this version we don't know-but he certainly was not influenced by it, fellow Liverpudlian or not.

Jackie's version is more bluesy/soulful than the other two versions mentioned, although I find that the others work better in terms of mood. Jackie seems to more obviously tackle it, rather than 'go along with it' (pun intended!), and this makes for an interesting version. I found it irritating to find no mention of Billy's version anywhere in the booklet write up; but this happens quite a lot as I have found in several notes and biographies, where one would think Billy should have received a mention. You can find the track on-line and play it, find the (very expensive) single or demo on various sites or, for around a tenner, just buy the 2010 Cherry Red label CD with it on. These recordings are not really my 'bag', especially CD 2 from 1974, but Jackie possesses a distinctive voice and there are good musical performances all-round-a melange of beat/blues/soul on most tracks. This is very much a collectors CD and probably not representative of Jackie's main body of work.

With thanks to Nigel Lees.

Esquerita-Hittin' on Nothin'/Letter Full of Tears.

Norton label picture cover single



Although actually recorded in 1966 it seems and therefore not much of a connection with Billy Fury, I found this quite different styled recording to be worth listening to, no matter how tenuous the connection with Billy and his superb, and in my view, definitive version from 1962. Another connection is that they both recorded a version of Maybe Baby.

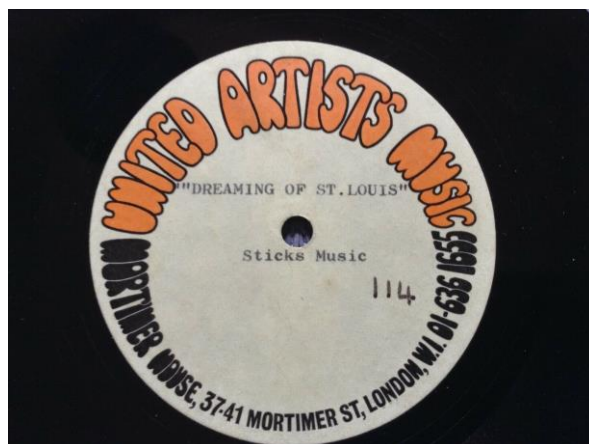
The superb original of 'Tears' was I believe by Gladys Knight and strangely enough, released on the Fury label in the USA. For those who don't know, Esquerita was a Little Richard style performer and recording artist; even more flamboyant than Richard-but in my view nothing like as talented. He could really rock though-just check out Good Golly Annie Mae for instance.

There are copies of the Esquerita picture cover single available from Norton Records in the USA (you can find it on-line), or a vinyl album, Sinner Man-The Lost Sessions (which includes of course Letter Full of Tears), or you can download the album or just this track from Amazon music (99p a track I think).

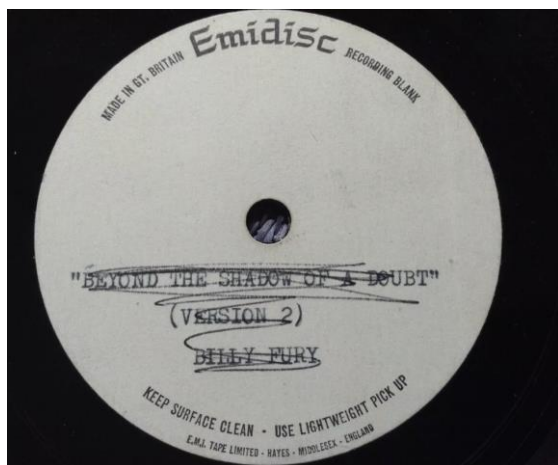
With thanks to Graham Hunter.
Chris Eley

Billy on eBay.

I was surprised to see during lockdown that rare Billy items can still command very high prices on the internet. First of all came an acetate of Dreaming of St Louis ; one side Billy and the other an artist I had never heard of. The label was, unusually, very colourful and attractive (normally they are single coloured-cream/off-white with basic writing). This item was sold as being a different take to the released version and a half version was placed by the seller on You-tube. I could not tell the difference but my hearing is damaged so perhaps it is slightly different. It went for around £400-astounding!



Next up was an acetate, also apparently different to the single version of Beyond The Shadow of A Doubt, written as Version 2 on the label, but scratched out. Once again I could not tell the difference. As we have several versions of this song on The Missing Years double CD I didn't think it would exceed about £80-but it went once more for around the £400 mark!



I have no problem with high prices for rarities like acetates or known clothing etc, after all it's a seller's market-but I do have a problem with some sellers who blatantly over charge or put tat online. I did notice that someone was selling one of my copyrighted photos, Billy on the set of Play it Cool leaning against a brick wall, but there is always the possibility, as I know from one other of my copyright, that two negatives from that session ,virtually identical may exist. There were no contact details on the packet when I bought a copy so for now I have left it. I did get some nice Billy photos allegedly from Australia-no copyright shown so I guess there is a lot of this happening.

It's annoying also when photos with a reversed image are offered up for sale-so unprofessional. A Canadian copy of It's Only Make Believe was on sale for £20, which was quite cheap I thought. Scrolling through so many pages takes too much time so it's not something I want to do very often. Interestingly Billy seems to have so many more pages than most other sixties acts.

Chris Eley

The Sound of Fury from LP Bear Family-Gold Vinyl Edition

Recently this LP quite correctly got a positive review from Now Dig This-a great rock' n' roll magazine still going strong. It's always good to see praise for Billy's work. The only jarring thing about the review was that whilst the 1981 basic reissue of the LP was mentioned there was no mention at all of the superior press of a strictly limited thousand copies , released by Decca with help of the Sound of Fury in 2000. The only thing amiss with the later release was where in the insert I idiotically referred to Joshua Harris store as Joshua Reynolds!



I have been informed by a specialist dealer that the 500 limited edition copies from Bear Family have sold extremely well with less than a hundred left, so if you want a copy better get your skates on and order from Bear Family online <https://www.bear-family.com/fury-billy-the-sound-of-fury-lp-10inch-ltd..html>

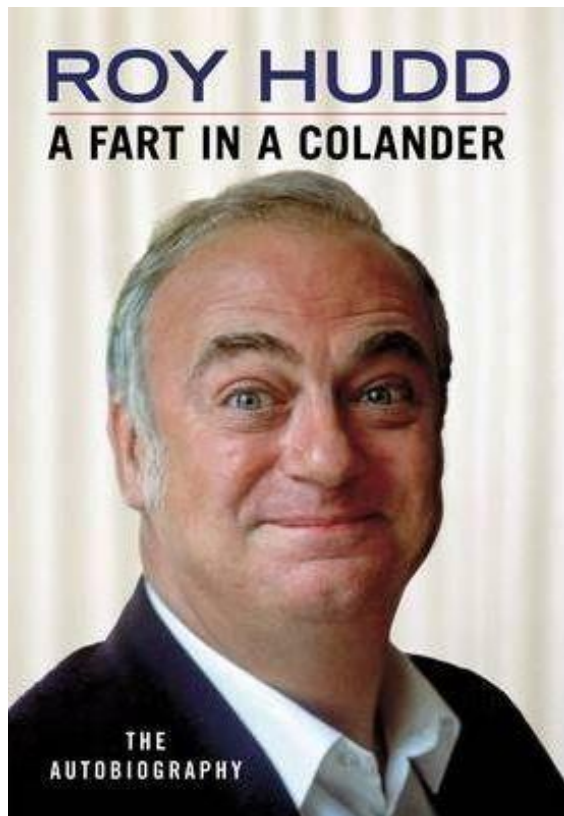
by phone from BimBam Records (023 80600329) or email:-

bimbambob@googlemail.com

Chris Eley

Roy Hudd OBE

Back in the period 1999-2002 there were apparently broadcast six programmes in a six part sitcom with the title Like They've Never Been Gone-starring Roy and the much missed June Whitfield among others. I recall hearing part of one on the radio and I seem to remember (but I'm not sure) that they played Like I've Never Been Gone by Billy Fury or perhaps sang the song in the programme. Right or wrong (pun intended)this gives me all the excuse I need to write this brief tribute to a much missed British comic genius, actor (he played serious and even occasional Shakespearean roles), writer, (about 18 books published),playwright, musician, singer and music hall archivist. Roy was the living embodiment of his heroes of the past and as such a fellow spirit to Joe Brown-another national treasure who nurtures aspects of the music hall past of this nation. Making his comedy debut in 1957, Roy was a Red Coat with Cliff Richard in Butlin's during the late 50s and before that played banjo and sang in a jazz band during National Service in the RAF.



Most will probably remember him for the The News Huddlines radio show during the 70s, his TV Shows and excellent tributes to Bud Flanagan, (winning an award for Best Actor in a Musical for his portrayal). He made a great panto dame and of course was Funeral Director Archie Shuttleworth in Corrie (where the drama was real as he experienced a minor heart attack on set). Charity was high on his priorities and he was at one time King Rat in the Grand Order of Water Rats. There were numerous other radio stage and TV appearances over the years, including more recently Benidorm and Broadchurch, but he always considered radio to be his bread and butter. He lived and breathed the old time music hall and is a sad loss-gone the way of the irreplaceable Max Miller,(his premier idol), Jimmy James, Max Wall, Tommy Cooper, Sir Ken Dodd and so many others that today's crop of would be comedy performers simply cannot hope to emulate. To my knowledge there has still to be a TV tribute to him-but then, we are still waiting for one about the inimitable Freddie Starr! Roy was one person I would love to have shared a table with for a couple of hours. I have no doubt that like a lot of those old comics he could be smutty, (in Music Hall tradition-and why not) but you can be sure the quite unnecessary F word never left his lips in public-how wonderful is that. Perhaps unusually, unlike so many comics from yesteryear, there has never been a hint of the depressive about him-nothing publicly known anyway. Regrettably, unlike the wonderfully funny Ken Dodd (who told Mrs Jean Wycherley that her son was a 'Lovely lad'), we don't know what Roy thought of Billy, but if he did have a hand in the above radio sitcom, then perhaps he did like him and his music! RIP Roy.

Chris Eley

Little Richard. (Richard Wayne Penniman).

Dec 5th 1932–May 9th 2020

I was appalled (but not really surprised) when there was no rush to broadcast a tribute on mainstream TV, even BBC 4, following the death from bone cancer of one of the greatest performers ever to draw breath. The internet may have been awash and I think there may have been a brief mention on the TV news, but so far –nothing that I am aware of. At the very least there should have been a reshewing of the 1964 Granada TV Documentary just so those who have never heard of him could see what the fuss was all about. I dusted off my treasured and autographed copy of Here's Little Richard and rediscovered the magic in the grooves-no wonder the music frightened parents half to death in 1956.



In the pantheon of rock' n' roll greats they just did not come any greater than Little Richard; who rocked harder than any others who shared the top of the tree with him. It's pointless to ascribe a rung placing because just how do you achieve that. Elvis had it all (from around 1956 anyway), Jerry Lee was as unique and hard driving as Richard -two peas in a pod although Jerry had more light and shade in his music. Chuck Berry was equal to all, also totally unique and able to rock out as well as anyone- Fats Domino perhaps less so, but still up there with the rest and so influential. Most would add Buddy Holly to the other greats- up there among the generally acknowledged and truly legendary 'Big Six'. Others might justifiably cite Carl Perkins, Eddie Cochran and Gene Vincent-all superb and among my top favourites as it happens (Cochran and Vincent in particular), and some might include Bo Diddley also. But what set Richard apart was primarily the combination of hard driving, pounding piano and his astonishing voice-which Sir Paul McCartney attempted to emulate on the wonderful I'm Down (and pretty well too), but could not equal any more than could the mighty John Fogerty on the superb Travelling Band. Lucille is perhaps the best example of the magnitude of combining piano and vocal; leaving all other versions in the shade. Richard never quite managed to equal the sheer wonder of the hits (and misses) issued between 1958-64 in the UK -too many classics to mention here in a Billy Fury newsletter-but certainly typified by Tutti Frutti, The Girl Can't Help It, Good Golly Miss Molly and last but not least-as I well recall from '64-the fabulous Bama Lama Bama Loo. Penniman appears as sole credit on this track and joins other writers on many of the others. The expression 'They don't write songs (lyrics) like that anymore' was coined I am sure for these wonderful songs.

On gospel Richard could sing nearly as sweetly as Elvis did in 1960 on the album, His Hand in Mine and later recordings such as Great Gosh A mighty (from the film Down and Out In Beverly Hills) , the duet with Tanya Tucker on Eddie Cochran's wonderful rocker, Something Else and several others proved he still had it vocally years later. I saw him in London Docklands probably 20 years ago now and whilst Jerry Lee was his usual great self and Chuck Berry (closing the show) was charismatic but musically poor-Richard blew both performer's away-he was that good-a sheer powerhouse.

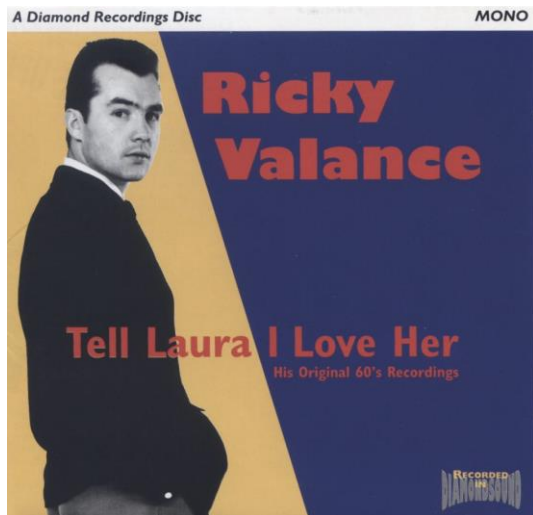
How I wish I had seen him back in '58 or even 1964. Billy Fury connection-none that I know of except that Billy liked black music and shared a bill with Richard at Webley in 1972. Ironically, Richard was not at his best and it seems that Billy and Fury's Tornados delivered a better rocking set -certainly more professional than Little Richard was to do later in the day! Also of course both Billy and Richard recorded a version of Kansas City. One thing is certain however-no-one was ever going to follow Little Richard at his very best! I don't know if the ACE CD shown is still available, there are several cheaper compilations around these days, but this 24 tracker is probably the best you will find in sound quality and content, unless you see a second hand copy of the ACE Records Specialty years 6x CD set. Later output on Vee Jay and other labels can feature some good stuff but in general just does not come close to the original fifties recordings. A Bear Family Boxed set is long overdue.

RIP Richard.

Chris Eley

Ricky Valance (David Spencer).

10th April 1936-12th June 2020



The Billy Fury connection here is only, as far as I know, that both singers recorded for Decca records (in 1965 only, for Ricky who cut most of his songs with Columbia). He is not to be confused (which often happens-inexplicably in my view) with the great teenage US rocker, guitarist and song-writer Ritchie Valens who sadly died with Buddy Holly in 1959. There are a couple of stories around why David became Ricky Valance but in one interview he said he had Ricky in his head for some time and then saw a racing programme featuring a Colonel Richard Valance-which clinched it! After recording a demo of Here Comes Summer Ricky was offered the song which would make his name. He recorded his version and had a massive No 1 hit in 1960 with the cover of Ray Petersons US 45, Tell Laura I Love Her.

Initially controversial, but the best of the three versions (John Leyton also had it released); it went on to enjoy sixteen weeks in the UK chart. and become a platinum disc selling and charting all over the world. This was quite something for the former RAF volunteer (who saw active service at Suez) and holder of half a dozen previous mundane temporary jobs -all taken while he waited for his big break-having always wanted to be a singer. Unlike John Leyton however-who enjoyed a string of hits, the problem of this major success was in having a follow-up and despite having a fine voice this never happened. Some recordings are excellent-Don't Play No 9 and Try to Forget Her (obviously not as dramatic as PJ Proby's version but still really good), being perhaps the finest examples of his work. He toured with Johnny Kidd and the Pirates and Dave Berry and had the distinction of being the first solo Welsh star to have a No.1 single. He recorded until 1969 and in 2005 a CD, Once Upon A Time, surfaced on the budget Pegasus label where Ricky, still in good voice but let down by cheap backing, covered various hits of the 60's. Copies are still around on-line and probably in the market stalls at Blackpool and Fleetwood etc. but the only original tracks compilation I am aware of is the excellent one shown here from the Diamond label in 1996. There was an LP, Rainbow, in 1978, a CD, The Country Side of Ricky Valance in 1994, and CD Reflections in 2006. Ricky is reported as being musically active from 1958 to shortly before his death (certainly he was on stage as late as 2015) and issued an RAF Charity 45 in 2016/17. Full marks are due to a talented and dedicated entertainer, who gained a reputation as a solid, good performer throughout so many years in the business. I wish I had seen him onstage as no doubt many Billy fans have done over the years. He is survived by his wife Evelyn.

RIP Ricky.

Chris Eley

With thanks to Roger Dopson.

Dame Vera Lynn. (Vera Margaret Welch).

20 March 2017-18th June 2020.

As regards the connection of Dame Vera with Billy Fury-this is only, as far as I know, in that both were truly iconic British performers and both recorded for Decca. Dame Vera became an international star-and Billy ought to have done! Billy liked Ruby Murray and other female singers mostly black its true, but I cannot imagine that he would not have had great respect for such a much-loved figure as Vera. This wonderful East Ham born lady, radio, concert and TV star, now lost to us at age 103 has a long list of awards to her name, both British and Foreign being made a Dame in 1975 for her charity work. This has mostly been with ex-servicemen, children with disability and breast cancer.



She was the epitome of wartime spirit, not only of the quintessential and wonderful Britishness of the time, but also of the unassuming sheer pluck and dogged determination of everyone from Great Britain, Northern Ireland (and Ireland in some cases), the British Empire and Dominions – engaged in the titanic struggle for freedom all over the world. In addition to being adored by UK Veterans (including many of us from later conflicts), many Canadian, ANZAC (Aussie and Kiwi) and Americans veterans also have fond memories of Vera's music and morale boosting image. In 1952 she enjoyed the first US No.1 single for a Brit and a recent compilation allegedly contains five UK No. 1's. Her contribution to the war effort may not equate in real terms to those who steered us through the war or fought in it in some way; childhood heroes, such as decorated

pilots and other gallant persons from the war, or the wonderful WW 11 aircraft that still thankfully fly overhead (even as I write), but as an exemplar of the unquenchable spirit of a nation and empire fighting for it's very life all over the world, she is right up there with the most revered icons from the period. In terms of morale, which is key in any conflict, she was highly symbolic, very important to the war effort and a highly significant presence at other times in our history, as the nation remembered various anniversaries such as VE Day and D-Day, and Jubilees. No doubt she would have made her contribution to the forthcoming VJ Day (August 14th) had she been able. At this recent awful time in our country's history, she has been without doubt, together with the reassuring and indomitable presence of HM The Queen and the likes of Captain Tom Moore, a much-loved, admired and respected figure once more to those struggling to cope with the situation-especially the remaining elderly from her generation. The fact that so many of us had relatives (Iraq, D-Day and beyond in my case), and older friends (at Anzio and beyond), engaged in the conflict whilst on the home front my mother as a teenager was machine gunned by a German bomber gunner whilst in her garden- but luckily unhurt, ensures the war still figures prominently in our consciousness. Young Ronnie Wycherley's father, Albert, of course served in the Royal Artillery (RA) at Woolwich during the war.

Add in all of the war comics and stories eagerly devoured, war films and books during our formative years and no wonder the war is in our DNA; and by proxy, our finest hour too-for as long as we live. That's partly why even those of us too young to have first-hand memories of the war, can be so affected by Dame Vera's soulful songs and uniquely 'English Rose' voice-or the strong nostalgia evoked by sight of her on film or onstage. The nice girl next door appeal made her every serviceman's sister-perhaps a potential sweetheart, but non-threatening so that families loved her too. A sweet and soulful reminder of a home, a family, or a girl, many would never get to see again.

There is no doubt that she made a real difference to our military at home and abroad-and their families-especially to the 'Forgotten (14th)Army' in Burma, where her courage in performing near the front line eventually earned her the Burma Star, (with those veterans earning a special place in her heart). I saw her perform only once, at a Royal Variety Performance (attended by Princess Anne) in London in 1968 and whilst the warm tactile and lovely Anita Harris impressed, (we once met at Lisa's place), it was Dame Vera who most moved the audience and stole the show. Certain things move me to tears, and hearing Dame Vera's versions of We'll Meet Again, (There'll Be Bluebirds Over) The White Cliffs of Dover and others unfailingly evoke that response in me-and I am not ashamed to admit it. She made her first recording in 1935 it seems, moving to Decca in 1938 and remaining until 1960. In 2009, aged 92 she topped the album charts earning a platinum disc, and in 2017 was the first Centenarian to hit the Top 10 when Vera Lynn-100 reached No.3. There are many quite cheap compilations to choose from- a choice between original analogue (several compilations) or some enhanced digital recordings on Vera 100 where half of the numbers regrettably (but quite enjoyably) feature duets with others. CENTENNIAL is a no frills comprehensive 3 x CD budget original collection. Quite why there is apparently no whole album featuring Dame Vera's original voice only, with the RPO, I don't know, but it's long overdue. The nation owes this very special (and self-evidently) determined lady and performer, and that wartime generation, so very much. RIP Dame Vera, (together with my mate Robbie Roberts RA from Portslade-and all of the other veterans lost to us).

Chris Eley.



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