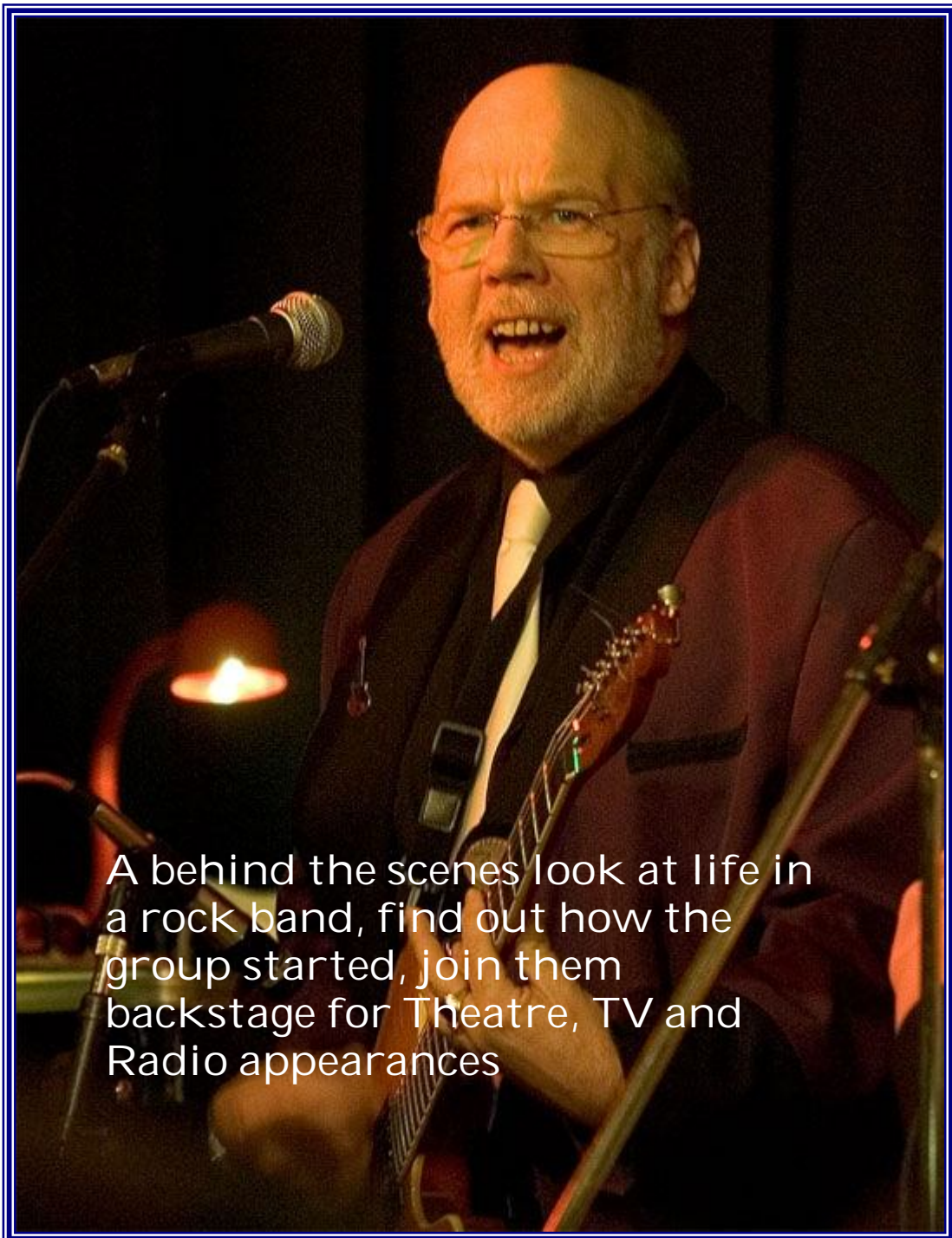


Revival

From my side of the stage

By Steve Potts

With help from Brian Tansley



A behind the scenes look at life in a rock band, find out how the group started, join them backstage for Theatre, TV and Radio appearances

Revival - from my side of the stage

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www.revival-uk.com
steve.potts4@ntlworld.com

Foreword

Memory is a funny thing. Some of this story was written as it happened and some of it is from memory, so I am sure that some of those involved will remember it differently from me.

I don't keep a diary, so it is possible that some of the events have become jumbled up, but as far as I am concerned it is factually accurate and it certainly reveals my emotions and my view of events as they happened.

That's reflected in the title – 'Revival - from my side of the stage'. What isn't up for negotiation is the love, warmth and good feelings that we have all experienced from our fans and for each other over the years. Revival is a very special experience for anyone involved, on stage and off, and it's been a great privilege to be part of this adventure.

Anything involving Revival has to be fun - so a little quiz for you. The name of each chapter is either a song title or an album title or a line from a song. Can you name the artists we would associate with the songs? For those who need them, the answers are at the back.

Acknowledgements



Brian Tansley

So many people have helped Revival over the years that I am fearful of mentioning individual names just in case I forget someone. However, I must start by thanking our very good friend Brian Tansley for his unstinting support over the years and most important of all the work he has put into editing this book. Brian has taken my dyslexic ramblings and used his skill as a professional journalist to turn it into a more readable document. Thanks Brian.

We must also thank our long-suffering wives and partners for their support through the good and not so good times.

And, of course most of all, we offer a deep and sincere thanks to all of our fans for your continuing support over the years.

THANK YOU ALL

Peace and love - rock till you drop!

Steve Potts, 2010

I'll Go Where The Music Takes Me (How it all began)



The Lace City Singers

The sound of Geoff Ellis playing the beautiful melody from the theme music to the Disney film *The Lion King* melted away to be replaced by the enchanting harmony of the Lace City Singers vocalising the chorus, producing more than one magical, musical moment. The unlikely pairing of a sixties band and an all-female barbershop ensemble had brought together 986 music fans on 21st March 2001 in Nottingham's Albert Hall for a sell out concert - "Rock 'n' Pop meets Barbershop".

As *Revival* and the Lace City Singers brought this amazing concert to an end, there was only one thing left to do, and that was the encore. The crowd was going berserk so the obvious choice was to sing 'Teenager in Love' the song both groups had performed together on TV earlier in the week. I will never forget the thunderous applause and the sheer noise that nearly 1,000 people made as we went down the stairs to the dressing room. We couldn't hear ourselves speak as people shouted for more. As I sat down and tried to take it all in, my mind wandered back to how it had all started.....

'How much longer is this guy going to talk for?' I am sitting in a business meeting listening to some boring technical jargon and I know I have to meet my wife's employer and my very good friend Geoff Ellis at 2.30pm. It's the first afternoon off I have asked for in years and my plans are going badly wrong. I can't leave halfway through the meeting and set a bad example to my colleagues, and I can't let Geoff and the 30 or so children waiting for me down. What am I doing here?

Geoff had been staging school concerts for years, but he felt that he was being restricted by having to play guitar and conduct the children at the same time. It didn't take me long to volunteer to help. My musical career had come to a full stop at the time my professional career took off five years earlier. Being the Sales Director of a telecommunications company and playing Rock 'n' Roll would never work. Or so I thought at the time.

I arrived out of breath and hungry, but just in time for the rehearsal. I can't tell you how thrilling the next 30 minutes were. Most primary school choirs that I have heard can sound out of tune, naff or sugary. Geoff has a gift for taking any ordinary bunch of children and turning them into a musical group with a sound that will send shivers down the back of even the hardest of parents.

ROCK & POP MEETS BARBERSHOP



NOTTINGHAM ALBERT HALL

SATURDAY 21st MARCH 1998
at 7.30pm



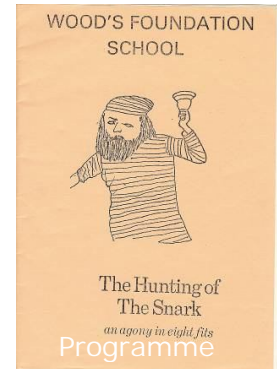
Programme from the show

Brochure: £1

Revival - from my side of the stage

It was a thrill for me – but I still only had two brief musical experiences a year, the summer and Christmas concerts at Woodborough Woods Foundation School. In the seventies I had played live music for up to four nights a week every week, and working with Geoff reminded me of how much I missed the thrill of playing guitar in front of an audience.

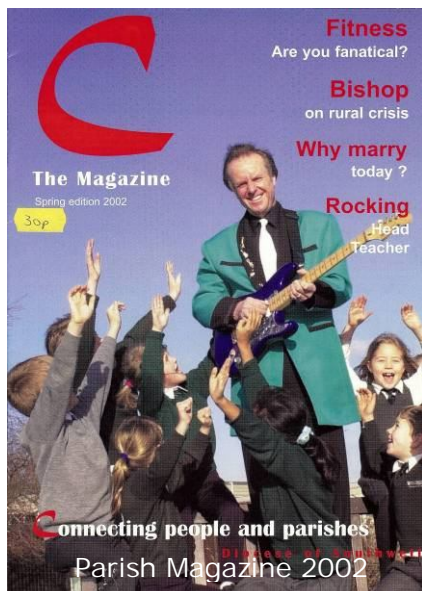
Each year Geoff's concerts had become more ambitious and involved. In 1989 for example he re-scored Mike Batt's *Hunting of the Snark*. Putting the songs in children friendly keys and putting together a band of parents. A couple of ladies on keyboard a drummer, yours truly on bass and a certain Mr James Kirby on guitar. Geoff really stretched us musically but at the same time he encouraged us and gave us a confidence to try things that we might not have done on our own. There was also a degree of bluff on my part. Geoff would ask me to do something and I would cockily say 'yes' and then have to practice like mad to make the grade.



Geoff couldn't find the score available commercially so he emailed Mike Batt's office and entered into an email conversation with the man himself who generously sent him a photocopy of his own hand written score. After a few weeks of rehearsals I joked with Geoff that as this would be the world premier of the work he should invite the composer to the show. So he did and Mike Batt came to our school to see the second night of our performance. The thrill of performing the composers work with him being present was immense, intense and very memorable. This would be the first of many examples of Geoff's determination and commitment leading to Jim and I having many further memorable musical adventures together.

Just as one of the final rehearsals for the Snark came to an end, Geoff delivered his hammer blow. He was practising with a sixties group at St Mark's Church in Woodthorpe for a one-night fundraiser in aid of the Church's heating fund. He didn't stop talking about it for the next few weeks. I know it's a sin - but I was so envious! I was delighted that he was having such a good time and I knew that our school adventures had awakened his desire to strap on a Stratocaster and Rock 'n' Roll, but what about me? I want to play too!

Of course that was impossible as he was playing with people I didn't know and worse still they already had a bass player and a rhythm guitarist. Bass is my instrument and I had only played rhythm guitar with the children at school. In any case, there wasn't time to learn another instrument - I was much too old and didn't have any spare time. Or so I thought at the time.



The school concert was fabulous and all of the parents agreed how exceptionally well the children had performed. My annual musical fix was over until Christmas and lucky old Geoff still had his sixties night to look forward to! By now I knew Geoff very well and I saw for the first time something I would later learn to be an important part of his musical make up.

Stage fright is something no doubt experienced by all musicians – although very few will admit it. It affects us all differently. In my experience the greater the talent, the bigger the ego and the more pronounced the pre-show nerves are. Of course the minute these

Revival - from my side of the stage

people hit the stage they are always brilliant. So I didn't fear for Geoff because I knew it was a good sign.

The way it works is that the musician wants to get up on stage and play brilliantly to anyone who will listen. The problem is that there are many things which are out of their control that can get in the way of the perfect performance. The most likely thing to screw up a show is the technology you have to use. If, as in the case of a Rock 'n' Roll group you depend on electrical equipment, you need as much technical bravado as you do talent.

As the show came nearer I saw the confident headmaster turn into a twitching and very fussy individual. Every minute detail of the show became a mega decision. I received phone call after phone call - where should we stand, should the bass player stand next to the drums etc, etc. Of course the things that really should have bothered Geoff hadn't sunk in yet. For example, the keyboard player - at that time St Mark's Church organist - didn't have an electronic keyboard. The band didn't have a PA and they had one microphone between six of them!

I was delighted to offer my advice. Years of playing in bands enabled me to answer all of Geoff's questions. But remember, I was wickedly jealous and a small part of me was saying 'well get on with it - you're in a band and I'm not!'

Of course my loyalty to Geoff kept all of this bottled up inside. Then the phone rang once again. "Steve, I've told the rest of the guys that I would be much happier if you could come along and offer us your help on the night, so how about it?" My answer was obvious as wild horses wouldn't have kept me away and my agreement immediately reduced Geoff's twitchiness. However, it became quite clear later when I met the band for the first time that although my advice in all matters technical was greatly appreciated, there was more to it.

The bottom line was that they needed to borrow a good sound system. Much to my wife's despair I had doggedly refused to sell my sound system just in case it was needed again. Problem one solved. An electric piano? Well I just happened to have one under the bed that I had never learnt how to play, but I had kept it just in case. Guitar amplifiers? Yes, in the shed and a microphone was no problem either.

Suddenly I had my foot in the door. If I couldn't play music with these guys I'll do everything I could to help make the show a success.



The First Concert 1990

I will never forget the first time I met what was to become Revival it was March 1990. I arrived at St Mark's Church hall the afternoon of the "gig" with my wife's car crammed to the roof with equipment. Expecting to find the band deep in rehearsal I walked in to scenes of chaos. Children were running around, well-meaning ladies were worrying about the cakes and some bloke, who I immediately recognised as the scoutmaster, was chasing about organising the chairs while arguing with some other guy about getting the keys for the church from the vicar so that they could build the stage! The band was due on stage in three hours – but where were this six-piece group? They should be ready for a sound check.

Revival - from my side of the stage



All was not lost, as standing on what was slowly becoming a stage among much shouting and clanking, was a bass player who was very calmly trying to bring order to the chaos. He and the scoutmaster didn't appear to like each other very much. There was also this really quiet bloke who said little but occasionally cracked a nervous joke. Geoff, always the professional of course, was set up with his guitar in tune and was beginning to play some great lines.

There was no time for introductions. I had to get the equipment set up. I just hoped that the rest of the band would arrive soon. Geoff took charge of the musicians on stage; the bass player and a young lad on drums who was obviously not old enough to have been born in the sixties. They kicked off with an awful attempt at 'Apache' - off beat, off key and not together at all.

I was now really worried. My enthusiasm for the project had prompted me to invite my best friend Ian Manning to the gig. Ian also happened to be a senior journalist at the Nottingham Evening Post and after my big build-up about this band, had brought his camera for a possible front page story. Rock 'n' Roll and headmasters had been a recurring theme to interest the press over the years, but what would he think? This band appeared to be awful!

The scoutmaster, who turned out to be the rhythm guitarist, and whose amplifier only seemed to work on full volume, now joined the trio on stage and suddenly I couldn't hear Geoff anymore. You've guessed it, the guy arguing about the keys to the church was the keyboard player.

After some musical leadership from Geoff and some technical advice from me, a row developed between the bass player and the rhythm guitarist about who should stand where. It was too late really - setting a precedent for the years to come, with Geoff Ellis already managing to stand under the only available spotlight!

My experience had taught me that the bass player must stand next to the drummer enabling them to lock into the rhythm - so that argument was settled.

I also discovered that the bass player and the rhythm guitarist didn't really hate each, but it was just a mixture of brotherly love and stage fright. I wondered out loud who the singer was and who wanted the microphone.

"I do", said the quiet bloke. "How do you like your microphone set up?" I asked. "I don't know!" he replied - to which the brothers started again: "We had lots of echo in the sixties" said one. "No we didn't," said the other. Geoff pulled them together, counted in and played the opening riff to Cliff Richard's song 'Move It'.

The band were now balanced, and while the singer looked bored with it all, for the first time that afternoon I understood why Geoff had not stopped talking about the fact that the guy could sing really well - even with an out of tune, off beat backing band! But a performer he wasn't. He didn't appear to have any charisma - and you don't get anywhere without it. It's funny how first impressions can sometimes be so misleading. How could I have got it so wrong?

After three or four more numbers I thought their choice of material was far too ambitious for their apparent lack of musical skills. The keyboard player sounded like Jerry Lee Lewis - but that was no good if no one could hear him. I made a decision to turn him up a bit.

Revival - from my side of the stage

We were running out of time. I had set up five microphones, but everyone was far too concerned with playing their instruments to offer any backing vocals. Suddenly the sound check was all over and they rushed off to have tea, collect their wives and get back for 7pm sharp.

"What do you think?" Geoff asked me on the way to his car. "Fine" I said convincingly. "It's going to be a great night!" Secretly, I was thinking it was a good job they were a Christian group as they were going to need all the help they could get!

I stuck around and twiddled with the equipment as this is my way of dealing with stage fright. I think I was more nervous than the band at this point. I was focused on little red lights and volume controls. I wondered whether to ring my friend Ian and tell him not to come – but to heck with it, he could always go down the pub if it was that bad!

First back after what seemed like only ten minutes, but was actually two hours, was Geoff tuning his guitar up in earnest and looking more relaxed than I had seen him for weeks. "Great sound this afternoon Steve - I'm glad you came along to help. I feel so much better knowing you are there if anything goes wrong," he said.

The band assembled, the audience arrived and I realised that the whole population of Arnold seemed to have turned out to see the church organist, the two brothers, the headmaster, the shy bloke and young Evan make fools of themselves - albeit for a good cause. Fortunately, Geoff and the boys had other ideas.

I will never know what happened between 5.00pm and 7.00pm on that day but it changed my life forever. Maybe it was divine intervention or just sheer talent, but during those two hours a very special chemistry was born.

Bryan, the bass player, was no longer quiet and reserved. Suddenly he took charge of the band and organised them into a cohesive unit. We were on stage at 8.45pm. "Be here and be ready," he commanded. "Yes" replied his brother Geoff. It was the first time they had agreed on anything all day.

The band changed into their costumes - really authentic drape jackets made by a lady in the audience. Ken, the lead singer, had become animated and was telling jokes and cracking one-liners. With two minutes to go the air was full of anticipation and I have to say a lot of support and affection from the audience who were committed to having a good time.

"One, two, three, four" Geoff counted them in to Apache. It was a thousand times better than at the sound check and I was now hopeful that we might just get away with things. The band was tighter; Bryan and Evan were playing together and Geoff was as always right on the nail with every phrase he played.

A joke and then a very professional sounding introduction from Bryan, who welcomed "the star of our show – we haven't played together for 25 years - Kenyeee Pritchett!" To enthusiastic applause he told the audience, "Ken, me and our kid played together in the sixties." My journalist friend was eagerly scribbling notes in his reporter's pad. Maybe that front-page story was on after all!

'Apache' was good, but what came next knocked me off my feet – 'Move It.' The band played the most blinding version of that song I had ever heard and Ken transformed into Mr Charisma, a fabulous vocalist with more stagecraft than any singer I had ever worked with before.

Revival - from my side of the stage

The first set got better and better. This band could really rock! There was still not much singing other than by Ken but they were tight and, most important of all, they recreated a very authentic sixties sound.

Richard Marsden played the rock piano unlike any church organist I had ever met and Geoff Ellis was in full flight growing in stature with every lead break. Do I sound like a fan? Well, everyone in the room that night will never forget the sound these guys created. My journalist friend who has interviewed the stars including, Sir Cliff himself, was more than a little impressed. So much so we got our front-page leader and four pictures inside as well.

After two cracking spots they ran out of numbers having rehearsed about 20 songs - so they started from the beginning and played 'Move It' again! I can't remember how many encores they did but a splendid time was had by all and over £1,000 was raised for the St Mark's Church heating fund. Not a bad start!



This picture was taken a few years later after Allan had joined us on the drum stool

Aftermath

(More than just a one night stand)

Several weeks passed and I got on with my life, but one thing had changed - I was determined to find a more regular musical outlet.

The problem was where I would find other guys of my age with busy careers and families who just wanted to play live music regularly. Those Revival guys had made a super human effort for just one night. I couldn't see it working. Even if I found the right musicians it surely wouldn't last long - the pressures of middle age and Rock 'n' Roll don't mix - or so I thought at the time.

Geoff and I exchanged many phone calls re-living the night at St Mark's. One night he rang and told me excitedly that someone in the audience had rung them up and asked if they would play at his daughter's wedding. They had agreed and were determined to rehearse some additional numbers. Could they borrow my equipment again and would I like to come along? Much to my disappointment I was away on holiday and couldn't attend. Geoff, now full of confidence from his one night stand, said Ken could therefore do the PA as he was an electrician.

The gig went well. They nearly managed three spots and the PA behaved itself. So as I had suspected all along, I was dispensable. Revival didn't need me. Guess what? Six weeks or so later the guys were offered another gig at a Rugby club and decided that it wasn't fair to keep borrowing my equipment, so they were going to buy their own PA. What did I think of the advert for a Carlsboro system that was advertised in the paper?

My heart sank. I respected their decision to buy their own gear but there went my excuse for being behind the scenes at gigs. Now I was demoted to being just a member of the audience. The thing that alarmed me most was that the PA they were thinking of buying was absolute rubbish - totally inadequate for their sound. My own PA had struggled to deliver Ken's voice and Geoff had reported that they were working on more backing vocals. Five singers and two tiny twelve-inch speakers just wouldn't work. No matter how talented the band, if the audience couldn't hear the lead singer and "feel" the beat, it just wouldn't happen.

I gave Geoff all of the technical arguments as to why they shouldn't buy this PA and offered to help them find one that would do the job. Reading between the lines, band politics was already asserting itself and they bought the small inadequate PA anyway.

My wife Sonja and I set off for Revival's third gig, with my only real excuse for being there the fact that Richard was still using my keyboard. The gig was a tough one there wasn't a stage - they were all crammed in the corner on top of Evan the drummer so they couldn't hear each other. Richard was forced to perch on top of some beer crates with my very expensive keyboard teetering on the brink. It was just waiting for some drunken rugby players - who were in great supply that night - to knock it, and/or Richard, over.



Revival - from my side of the stage

A splendid time was not had by all. The crowd was not interested in the music, the PA didn't cut it and much to the band's alarm my keyboard was knocked into orbit. Only Richard, exhibiting an athletic skill that I haven't seen him display since, saved it from oblivion. Welcome to the real world Revival. The world of regular gigging in front of an audience who are only there for the beer takes a different set of skills.

Now, the one thing I have learned over the years is that one minute's glory on stage is such a buzz that the musician becomes determined to overcome any obstacle put in their way. No matter what common sense tells them. And remember Revival had had the buzz of a lifetime at St Mark's a few months before. That is why so many stars die young, turn to drugs or religion - they are forever seeking that buzz of being the centre of the universe for a few precious minutes.

So Revival were not disillusioned by the events of their third gig. Besides, they had bought a PA and they were going to use it. Not having another gig in sight didn't seem to bother them either.

I was now beginning to get to know the rest of the band; Bryan in particular was beginning to take control of this unruly bunch. Remember, during the working day, several group members were in senior positions of authority - headmasters, company directors and people who run their own businesses. These people don't join teams - they usually lead them. Bryan blatantly ignored all of this posturing and took charge anyway and nobody argued with him. Over the years it has been Bryan who has kept us all in line in terms of the business and organisational side of the band. We have never let anybody down, been late, over-charged, ripped anyone off, been unprofessional, or any of the things normally associated with so-called pop groups. This is down to Bryan's professionalism and leadership.

Having said that, there is no definitive leader in Revival. It is a very democratic institution with different people having clearly defined roles. Geoff Ellis is without doubt the musical director. But even that has a twist. Richard is the musician with the best ear and technical expertise. If Richard says it is Bb7 then everyone concurs without argument. Although Geoff might lead the way musically and Richard keeps us on the right path, Revival will only ever play a song that Ken is happy to sing.

On stage Ken is the spiritual leader of the band, the mood of our performance is dictated by his frame of mind. We will see later in the story how Ken is always positive and passionate about entertaining our audiences, even under the most difficult of situations. So you can see that while there isn't one leader we are all there working to provide the backdrop for Ken's performance. It's a well-worn phrase but Revival is really bigger than any of its component parts.

At the same time all musicians have egos of varying sizes and the scramble to be first in the spotlight is as hard fought now, 20-years on, as it was in the early days. As I mentioned earlier, in Revival the scramble for the spotlight is a waste of time because we all know Geoff Ellis will always be there before the rest of us! Bryan will say that he is happy to stand quietly at the back of the stage and that he doesn't have an ego. But if you take the microphone away from him and tell him he can't speak to the audience you might get a different reaction!

So here we were with a developing structure, some great music and a little experience. All we needed now was another gig.

Day Tripper (I join Revival)

The next phone call I received from Geoff turned my world upside down. "Great news! We have been offered three more gigs over the next three months," he enthused. "The problem is that Geoff Wilkinson can't do two of them as he has a prior commitment to go on a day trip with his bowls team. We are going to have to turn them down. You know when we played together at the school concerts I often saw you playing rhythm guitar, well I know that you are a bass player but do you think you could handle playing rhythm for us"?

Just say 'yes' Steven - engage your brain later. "Yeah! No problem Geoff. I have a lot of experience and used to play rhythm guitar in a band during the seventies. When do we start?" I said building up my experience well beyond reality. Who cared? I'd just been asked on stage with Revival and would worry about the technicalities later.

The truth, I can now admit, is that I used to be in a duo and I played rhythm guitar in only two numbers, but by coincidence they were 'Apache' and 'The Rise and Fall of Flingel Bunt'. So that was two down and only 30 or so songs to learn in three weeks! Playing rhythm all night in a six-piece group is another thing. Just to add to the pressure, this was already a very good group, with five superb musicians, so I couldn't bluff my way through it and had to learn fast.



The next day my excitement had given way to a realisation that once again my mouth had got me into trouble. Now Geoff's expectations were higher than I could at that time fulfil – so I called him that night with a plan. "Can I suggest that you and I get together to go through a few numbers first before a full rehearsal with the rest of the band? I'm a bit rusty as it's a few years since I played guitar on stage with a band," I told him. "No problem Steve. How about next Tuesday?" he replied. "You'll be fine. You'll know a lot of the songs anyway. I bet you played them in the group you were in before," he added. Of course he was right. I knew how to play many of Revival's songs on bass guitar, but on rhythm I hadn't a clue where to start!

As soon as I put the phone down it rang again. It was Geoff Wilkinson. "Hi Steve. I am just ringing to say thanks for standing in for me. I would hate to think of the band having to miss a gig because of me. My career, social life and the band are going to be difficult to manage so if you can stand in for me it would be great as there are quite a few dates I won't be able to do. Is there anything you need?"

I realised that this was my chance. It wasn't about one or two gigs, I could be on stage with Revival four or five times a year. "Can I borrow your crib sheets and a list of the songs you do as I have a practice with Geoff Ellis next Tuesday," I informed him. "No problem. I'll drop them round tonight. If you want me to show you any chords just call" he replied.

A word about crib sheets: In the early days of Revival, Bryan and Geoff Wilkinson would set up music stands with the chords to the songs on. They were very rarely needed but provided a comfort factor. Bryan got rid of his crib sheets after about a year but it took us three or four years to wean Geoff W off his. They were my saving grace as Geoff delivered a cosmopolitan binder full of scribbled bits of paper and photocopied sections of songs. You see crib sheets are just that. The musician only needs to be reminded of the parts of the song that he can't remember. My next job was detective work. I had some bits of

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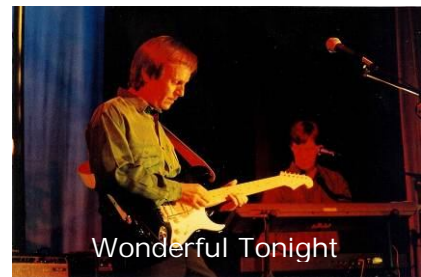
paper, some original records and some of my own notes and bass parts that I had forgotten long ago.

I had one other problem – and a major one at that - I can't use crib sheets as my eyesight just isn't good enough to see them on a dark stage, and anyway, I wear shades on stage to look cool (hide behind). So first I had to work out what the chords were. Then I had to learn how to play them, memorise them, and then pretend that I had been playing rhythm for years. After a few days I had 75% of the material on paper and could remember half of it. Now how would I find the missing chords? I could ring Geoff Wilkinson and ask a few questions, but if I asked too many questions it would blow my cover and I would lose the gig. So I devised a cunning plan. I was short of about six chords in four different songs. So I rang Bryan and asked about two, then I called Richard and asked about another two and finally Geoff W for the last two. Whew! That was close!

Tuesday night came and I was due at Geoff's house to practise. I wrote earlier about stage fright and how it affects us all differently, well at this point I was 'passing bricks' as they so elegantly put it. The next few hours were critical. I was going to see the headmaster for an oral exam and I couldn't remember my lines. On our earlier adventures at his school, whenever Geoff and I had played music together I had always felt an affinity with him that I hadn't experienced with many other musicians. The minute we sat down to play the feeling of being in tune with another musician overcame me and instead of feeling guilt for digging a hole for myself, I suddenly felt calm.

I suggested that we start with 'Apache' (safe ground for me) and then do Flingel (two of Geoff's favourites) - Hank Marvin being second only to Geoff's family and God. The tunes went well and I actually enjoyed playing them. Geoff made a few suggestions about tone and expression and I tried earnestly to please him. On to new (very new) territory and I remember getting stuck when we came to 'True Love Ways'. Geoff conceded that the whole band had struggled with that song and patiently corrected the wrong notes on my crib sheets. I won't reveal which band member had told me the wrong chords - but it wasn't Richard!

Geoff seemed to be quite pleased with me on that evening. I recognised he was encouraging, cajoling and teaching me the songs using exactly the same techniques he used on the children at school concerts. Well if he can do for my guitar playing what he did with those children's voices, I was really looking forward to playing with the band.



Most lead guitarists I have played with are big headed, impatient and refuse to show you how to play anything in case you dare to challenge their position as top honcho. Geoff was just the opposite his patience and encouragement helped me a great deal. With his help I enabled Revival to play many more gigs than Geoff W's diary would have allowed.



My big night came at the Ilkeston Co-op Banqueting Suite. My friend Ian, the journalist, was in the audience once again as are many of my family and friends. I had really enjoyed the rehearsals and I felt up to speed with the songs. The stage was abysmal - but I had enough to worry about. I hadn't played in public with a proper group for ten years. I was very nervous and now I was balancing precariously on the 18 inches of stage that was left next to the drums. Four feet below me Richard was forced to set up on the floor due to the small size of the stage.

Revival - from my side of the stage

I spent more time trying not to land on top of him than I did screwing my eyes up trying to see my all important crib sheets (yes I wore the shades and a hat to cover my bald head). The last time I had exercised my ego in public I had a full head of hair. I am normally quite comfortable with my lack of follicles, but it's hardly Rock 'n' Roll. Rock on Phil Collins!

How did it go? Thankfully we started with 'Apache' and while the guys were nervous having a stranger on stage, we all felt comfortable with good old Hank. The gig was all over in minutes - well that the way it seemed to me – but I had a ball! We actually played three 35-minute spots and the audience loved it. I was privileged to experience for the first time the kind of reception that Revival has enjoyed at every gig.

The Revival PA was still a problem though, which we solved at the next gig by combining my PA with theirs to give us a whacking 300 watts. You see, I was now a member of the band. During one of the breaks Bryan told me that in future I was to come to rehearsals and learn any new songs in case "our kid" wasn't available. In the words of John Lennon, "Thank you on behalf of the group and ourselves and I hope we passed the audition." I know that I certainly had.



Early publicity shot (dig the hat Steve)

Each Night I Ask the Stars Up Above



I found myself racing from another business meeting to get to Woodborough Woods School on time. To hell with setting examples, I was leaving even if the meeting wasn't finished and I was taking one of my colleagues – sound engineer Lee Poxon – to help prepare for our biggest gig ever.

The mad rush was to attend a full dress rehearsal with the beefed-up sound system we were going to use on Saturday night at Nottingham's Albert Hall. The Lace City Singers were going to be there and so were the Nottingham Teddy

Boys Society who were providing dancers for the TV crew to film. Yes, it was Revival's television debut – for me a lifetime's ambition fulfilled.

We set up our equipment and waited for the television people to follow suit. As they seemed to be taking a long time about it we decided to rehearse one of the two songs we are going to sing during the finale. Both acts were going to combine and perform Geoff Ellis's special arrangement of the Theme from the Disney film *The Lion King*. I remember that we were confident enough to rehearse an encore as well - just in case!

There were by now 30 musicians in the room and we all knew that our version of the song wouldn't leave a dry eye in the house. For fun we decided to rehearse 'Teenager in Love' - the irony of the title and the fact that it had lots of 'shoo wop wops' for the girls to sing made it an obvious choice - and it was something the Teddy Boys could dance to as well.

After a very successful run through the TV producer asked us to play it "one more time"..... again and again and again and again. We played the same song 35 times that afternoon and ran out of time for our intended dress rehearsal - but never mind, we were going to be on Central News tomorrow. Yes folks the news is often rehearsed! The title of the song wasn't the only irony. The first time Revival had ever played that song was also at a rehearsal in Woodborough Woods School Hall.

It was my first full rehearsal with Revival and we were there to learn new songs. We had all been asked for ideas and I had rediscovered a tape of a 60s group I had played in during the seventies. One of the songs on that tape was 'Teenager in Love', a song that I thought was ideal for Revival and a song that I actually knew the chords to. I thought that after my Herculean effort to learn 30 of their songs it was time they learnt one of mine!



One of the trademarks of Revival today is those rich harmonies that on a good night will send shivers down your back. It wasn't always that way. The guys will tell you that there were backing vocals right from the beginning, but as an observer off stage at the first few gigs I remember it differently. Yes, there were backing vocals - a few shouts of "Come on everybody" now and then, but my recollection is that several band members were too busy concentrating on playing the right notes to take their eyes off the fretboard in order to sing.

I had a love of harmonies from the earlier bands I had played in and these were the hallmark of many sixties songs. The bits and pieces of singing coming from Revival suggested to me that there was more to this group than was presently being heard. Another problem was that even if there were more harmonies, no one would have heard them because, although our newly combined PA's pushed Ken's voice out front, the others were using cheap microphones that simply weren't up to the job.

Revival - from my side of the stage

This was soon solved though. The guys had been using a lot of my equipment, but I had not let them get their hands on my beloved Shure SM58 microphones. My last band, ten years before - as opposed to Ten Years After - had been a harmony trio with us all singing through SM58's, and these valued and hallowed mikes were not to be given to people who didn't appreciate them!

Now I was a part time member of the band I felt differently. I gave one to Ken one to Geoff and unselfishly gave Ken's old mike to Richard, while I ended up using the worse mike myself. I was the least talented singer so I suppose it was the right thing to do. Later Geoff Ellis bought an SM58 for himself and I got my old friend back. I still sing through an SM58 today. Keep your new-fangled mikes - the SM58 is the vocal mike of the sixties.

I am not claiming here that I was responsible for creating Revival's harmony sound. They would have developed anyway without my help. But I do clearly remember the first time I heard the sound of those gorgeous ringing Revival vocals was when we rehearsed 'Teenager in Love' for the first time.

I was delighted that the guys decided to do my song and it took me about five seconds to show the chords to Geoff Ellis who quickly added a few extra chords that immediately made me realise I had been playing it wrong for years. That is a clue to Revival's authentic sound - the attention given to chord voicing and musical structure. My old band wouldn't have made the effort to get it exactly right, but with Geoff and Richard there was no other way of doing - only the right way.

We were soon working our way through the song, which came together very quickly. I felt at home with it and I quickly resorted to singing the backing vocal part that I had always sung. Only this time I was suddenly joined by five other singers all singing different parts and harmonising on the 'bop she wop wops'. It sounded really good very quickly. The song made it into the set at the next gig and became part of the Revival show.

Also around this time Geoff Ellis emerged as second only to Ken with vocal ability. Not only that, but Ken and Geoff's voices blended together to create a special sound of their own. Ken was generous enough to let Geoff take the lead line, which left him free to use his vocal talents to sing some lovely harmonies. A product of this early discovery was the Everly Brothers song 'Let It Be Me'. Bryan also had a strong confident voice and his brother Geoff W could pick out all sorts of nice lines. I could do bits of falsetto, bits of unison and octaves and I discovered that I could also latch onto other band members' lines and double up with them. Richard, of course, is always note perfect if not a little microphone shy on occasions.

The result of all of this vocalising was that we had six harmony singers available all taking different parts at different times during the song. The effect of this is to produce a variety of vocal sounds and cover a wider range of songs than is available to some groups. Many groups I have been in have been lucky to have two singers capable of harmonising let alone six. Other songs that emerged at this time were the Everly Brothers' 'Wake Up Little Suzie' and 'Bye Bye Love. But the song that really was exciting to sing was the Hollies' 'Yes I Will' with Geoff Ellis taking lead vocals, Ken harmonising with him and the rest of us dropping in and out at the relevant moments.

One of Revival's secrets is ironically the lack of ego – added to the generous sharing of the limelight. If you watch closely at the next Revival show you will see a moving sea of musical contributions. All the way through the evening different people drop in and out take the spotlight, or in the case of Richard and myself even leave the stage if our instruments aren't required. I was always taught that on bass guitar the most important notes are the ones you don't play. With Revival, each song is arranged using different combinations of instruments and voices

This I think is one of the keys to Revival's success. The result of this flexibility is that every song is performed using different musical timbre which keeps the audience interested and allows Revival to tackle a very wide range of material.

Revival - from my side of the stage

A final word on Revival's singing. It's a very selfish thing, but we get such a buzz out of singing together that we will sing anywhere, anytime. Our audience has never heard some of our best-ever vocal performances. Bryan's kitchen is a favourite venue around a single acoustic guitar.

One other occasion that comes to mind is a magical summer evening, sitting on a patio outside a golf club. Our audience was having dinner while we sat in this beautiful outdoor setting, singing harmonies just for the fun of it.



The first concert March 17th, 1990



The Woodborough branch of the Village Green Preservation Society

Lost In Music

(One big step for a musician)

Shortly after we discovered our vocal affinity we played for a wedding at the Commodore Banqueting Suite. Geoff Wilkinson was as usual late due to other commitments, so I stood in for him at the sound check. We had for some reason arrived in the afternoon and decided to use the time to rehearse our new numbers. Seven people with families and career commitments, it was difficult to find the time to rehearse, so any opportunity was snatched to polish up our developing stage show. By now we had more than enough songs - in fact we had such a ball on stage that we played for longer and longer. No three 25-minute spots with us - if you book Revival you will get at least two to three hours' music whether you like it or not!

Ken was under a lot of pressure being the lead singer and some members of the band were still preoccupied with playing the right notes. Ken was always encouraging everybody to offer him some vocal backup. "Come on. Are you going to sing with me?" he would often shout to a musician whose eyes were transfixed to the crib sheets.

As we broke up from the rehearsal Ken came over to me and said: "Why don't you set a mike up for yourself tonight Steve and join in on the backing vocals". It was a chance to be on stage with Revival every gig - you bet mate! I had to dash off and borrow an extra mike stand from work.

I had done it again. My overwhelming desire to be on stage with Revival had overtaken my brain. If there are any musicians reading this I can tell you from personal experience that standing on stage singing and playing guitar is nothing like standing there naked with no guitar to hide behind or pose with. As I arrived back at the Commodore with my borrowed mike stand in hand, my mind was full of paranoia. Does Geoff Ellis know about this? What will Geoff Wilkinson think? I can't sing - oh hell, I want to go home!



I stood by the side of the stage in my now affirmed position as Revival's sound engineer - a position formally acknowledged the week before when Bryan mentioned me in the credits at the end of the night. I was transfixed looking at that empty mike stand knowing that in just two songs time I had to make that monumental single step onto the stage. In front of a live audience I felt stark naked with nothing but a one inch wide mike stand to hide my obvious lack of talent.

Life is full of fear for a musician. You spend several years learning how to play your instrument, then you have to leave the bedroom and play it in front of other musicians who are always far more talented than you are. Then it gets worse. You have to pluck up enough courage to attend auditions and be told time and time again that your the best guitarist they have seen but you are too young, too old, too fat or simply "we are into a different bag man". Then if you are really lucky, you get to rehearse with like-minded individuals and build up to that moment you have all been dreading - your first public appearance.

That journey from virgin to hardened performer is literally one step. From behind the curtain to under the spotlight is a two feet or three foot journey at the most. For most of us, stepping onstage for the first time, it might as well have been as wide as the Atlantic Ocean. Then something really funny often happens. If you're well rehearsed and up for it and you like it when you get there, you never want to leave the stage again. It's home - it's where you come alive, and it's where you belong. If you don't feel

Revival - from my side of the stage

that way you sell your guitar and buy a fishing rod. For those of us who make it, there is always the comfort that once you have crossed that great divide you will never have to go through that kind of fear again.

So here I was having paid my dues, putting myself through that same anguish for the second and definitely the last time in my life - or so I thought at the time.

Bryan introduced the song, I stepped up to the microphone, but no one in Revival seemed to notice or care. I stood there feeling a right prune, opened my mouth at the right moment and much to my surprise the right sound came out of my mouth. Not only that, but everyone else was singing with me when they should have been and not looking at crib sheets. I suspect they were spurred on by the usurper on the right hand side of the stage who was trying to steal their bit of the spotlight. Clever bloke that Ken, rarely says much, rarely gets involved in band decisions, but when he does it's always far reaching.

Needless to say I had a ball. The audience loved us and a splendid time was had by all. Now I was a full time member of Revival with five songs every week, I had to discover a way of making it more songs - and find something to do with my hands! Better still, what could I hide behind? I know percussion so I bought a big pair of Congas to hide behind, along with shakers, triangles, cowbells and tambourines. They all became a priority. I don't know how to play any of them – but that was something to deal with later. Here we go again - more hours of practising!



Nothing to hide behind, Steve stands alone

Substitute (The deputies)

I continued to deputise on rhythm guitar when Geoff W wasn't available. It was always going to be a challenge remembering the songs as I only played in gigs which could be several months apart. You don't get the chance to form a routine as regular performing assists the memory. Each time I sat in it was like starting all over again. It's not just remembering the chords. There is stagecraft, controlling the instrument and in my case running the sound system as well.

The answer was to bring in a friend of mine from work to provide sound engineer duties – and that was Chris Cooke. In the early days of Revival the sound system was an ongoing challenge. Six singers, two guitarists, keyboards, drums and now percussion demanded equipment we just didn't have.

Our main problem was hearing ourselves on stage and still is today at some venues. So I stood in for Geoff W and Chris stood in for me. Later, as we invested in and developed our sound system, Chris wasn't required because with better equipment I could do the sound and play at the same time. It was perhaps just as well because Chris was also bitten by the performing bug and went off to join a very good heavy rock group who were called Millennium, long before we knew about the computer bug.

Other substitutes were a friend of the band called Alan Sears, who was one of those clever buggers who could play any instrument really well. I had wondered why Bryan's bass playing was getting better and better with every gig. He was a good player to start with, but in the first couple of years he lacked confidence and played so quietly that I started to mix him through the PA. Each week he turned up and played something new. Then one week he played something I couldn't. Having played bass myself for many years I asked him how he played that particular line. It was then I discovered that Alan Sears had been giving him advanced bass lessons every Tuesday night.

Richard had also been finding it difficult to make some gigs so Alan Sears stood in for him on keyboards. On Tuesday nights he was a bass guitar teacher and then on Saturdays a keyboard player. Such talent can only make you sick - he made it look so easy! Thanks Alan! Without your help Revival might not be the band it is today.

Bryan then pulled a stunt that really threw me. I was now settled in as part time rhythm player, part time backing vocalist and full time sound engineer. We were playing at a church hall in West Bridgeford when Bryan announced that he had a very important cricket match in London and that next Saturday he wouldn't be able to arrive until the second spot. Would I mind playing bass for the first spot.

Now this time there really was no problem as this is my instrument. I know the songs and I was really going to enjoy being on stage with Revival on my own turf for once. Not only that, the gig was at Southwell Minster School and I had already invited some friends now that I could really show off.

As we came off stage after the second spot, Bryan un-characteristically announced that he was fed up with the gig and he was going to dance with his wife. "You can do the last spot Steve," he said. Was this a test, another audition, or was Bryan saying come on then clever clogs lets see what you can do? If it was the latter he certainly put me into panic mode. Yes, bass is my instrument and I now knew the songs, but I hadn't played bass for at least three years and the ends of my fingers had lost that rhinoceros skin feeling that all bass players need to hold down those thick iron bars that are strangely called bass guitar 'strings'.

I thought about the last spot which was mainly rock-n-roll twelve bars, but there were a couple of songs that I was going to have to bluff my way through. I disappeared into the changing room for more frantic practice. There were just 15 minutes to get into shape. To quote the

Revival - from my side of the stage

Beatles, "I've got blisters on my fingers". Bryan dances with his wife while I got through and a splendid time was had by all.

I spent the next five evenings practising the first spot which had some hard songs in it. Well they were hard for me. I had just about committed them to memory as a rhythm player and now I was getting chords and bass lines mixed up. Bryan saved the last joke till my big night - my first time as Revival's bass player. Remember, I was really psyched up to play the first set, but with five minutes to go who should walk into the room but Bryan! "Rain stopped play. We finished early," he said with a wicked smile on his face. Bryan sensed my disappointment and did the right thing. He let me play the first set as promised. He then did the last two sets and just to re-assert his authority, played some of the best bass I had heard from him. A splendid time was again had by all. I got drunk with my friends and went for a curry after the gig.

Bryan has missed very few Revival gigs over the years, but I was to get the pleasure of playing with Revival on my own instrument for the whole evening on several occasions to come. The one that worried me the most though, was when I was on bass and Geoff W turned up late. No, I can't play two instruments at once and do the sound!

Some of the musicians in Revival are interchangeable - some are not. Without Ken or Geoff Ellis there is no Revival, but there still can be a group. On two occasions Geoff had family commitments and just couldn't play. Fortunately Geoff W had an employee, Ray, who had played lead guitar in a sixties group. On two occasions we had plenty of notice that Geoff Ellis wasn't coming and were able to fulfil our obligations to the audience by having Ray stand in for us. Ray liked to solo so we played fewer numbers and lots of twelve bars but at least we didn't let anyone down.

We all agreed that Ray did a great job, but unlike substituting for bass or rhythm, changing lead guitarist really meant changing our sound and we thought we might be short changing our audience so we agreed not to do it any more. We also felt that as good as Alan Sears was, using a different keyboard player changed our sound too much, so in future if Richard was unavailable we would go out as a six-piece and not play the keyboard orientated songs. We never agreed a policy for gigging without Geoff Ellis because Geoff was always there until.....

Five years after Ray's last performance with Revival we were scheduled to play at Toton Village Hall. I was just loading the gear into the car when the phone rang. It was Bryan, to say that Geoff Ellis's wife Peggy, had just been rushed into hospital. We couldn't cancel so Geoff W had gone round to see if Ray was at home. "I'll see you there" Bryan told me confidently. By the time we arrived at Toton everyone was determined to make the evening a success - no matter what.

Geoff W arrived with Ray, a pipe full of sheepshank or something firmly clenched between his smiling teeth. "Hi guys. Sorry I'm late, but my guitar's been in the attic for five years and I couldn't find it. What's the first song?"

'Apache' followed by 'Move It' as always" I responded. Geoff Wilkinson, Ray and I got into a huddle and rehearsed in 20 minutes a show that Revival had spent eight years perfecting.

The audience arrived and off we went. 'Move It' and 'Apache' - no problem. Our difficulties then came from an unexpected area. A lead guitarist is perceived as the flash chap who plays all of the solos, but the real lead guitarist's role is like the first violin in an orchestra. They lead the music. In Geoff Ellis's case, he plays so many little embellishments that we all take them for granted. Many of those little twiddly bits are our queues to stop or start songs. Without our lead guitarist we couldn't get the engine running - and once we started we hadn't a clue how to finish!

Ken announced the next song and there was shock horror as no one knew how to start it. I did, but my guitar was sitting on its stand. I quickly grabbed hold of it and got the number going. Richard knew the ending and Ray played a great lead break. Bryan introduced the next song and this time Geoff W knew the beginning. I decided not to put my guitar down again as anything could have happened! However, a pattern developed and each of us managed some of Geoff's twiddly bits, as we started, stopped and changed gear through our normal set.

Revival - from my side of the stage

Geoff W and I took it in turns to shout chord changes to Ray who was having a ball. I reflected on how lucky Ray was to have the right chords shouted to him, as five years ago when I was standing in as substitute, I often had the wrong chords shouted across the stage to me. As a solo guitar player I know one lead break. I got to play it in every key that night. Ray would launch of into a Rock 'n' Roll solo, give me a wink, and I would do my well rehearsed party piece and then hand back to Ray who would finish the song off.

The audience didn't know that anything was different until Bryan told them at the end of the evening. Everyone in the room - Revival band members included - applauded Ray's talent and guts. Geoff Ellis needn't worry though. His job was safe. It was a fun night and a good performance - but it wasn't Revival.



Richard in action at Arnold Park

On The Road Again

(The last date of Revival's first UK tour)



I arrived as instructed on Friday 14th July 2000 at the car park of St Mark's Church at 11.45am for Revival's big gig at the Guildhall in London. Within ten minutes the rest of the band arrived with their cars full of equipment, sandwiches and bottles of pop. No cocaine or loose women to be seen - but this was fifties Rock 'n' Roll (I 'm referring to the average age of the musicians at the time).

Barry, the husband of our number one fan Marg, arrived with the 32-seat coach from Skills exactly like the one my mother use to take me on to Skegness when I was a child. I was given the job of loading the equipment; drum kits and guitars squeezed into places usually occupied by fat bottomed ladies and fidgety old men, off for a day by the seaside. By about 12.45 it was all packed inside and there were just enough seats for the band, Marg and yes, we left a seat for Barry as well!

Geoff Wilkinson, our rhythm guitarist, had shown an uncharacteristic amount of foresight and brought along a cool box full of beer. It would have been better if he had put some ice in it but as he had excelled himself in the being thoughtful department, we didn't complain too much and settled down to a warm beer and a trip down the M1. I realised that I hadn't got to drive or play an instrument for many hours to come, so I took on the responsibility for playing the role of traditional Rock 'n' Roll drinker.

It was just like Cliff's film 'Summer Holiday' - young girls waving hysterically as we drove past and their boyfriends wishing that they were as good looking and cool as we were. OK, it wasn't quite like that, but by junction 22 I had drunk enough beer to feed my fantasy!

We did actually get a reaction from passers-by - probably because Marg had put 'Revival On Tour' stickers up in the windows. The British public spying the guitars and drums were much too polite to say Revival who? So we did get some nice smiles and waves from people as we proceeded past Swiss Cottage at the usual London speed of 5 miles an hour.

After a nice journey for a Friday afternoon we are soon navigating our way through the back streets of the City to find the Guildhall. When we pulled into the courtyard we all gasped at the same time, as outside the front door was a marquee and a red carpet. "Surely not? Well, they knew we were coming. How many groups do they get down from Nottingham anyway?"

We were soon all brought back down to earth by a very polite but firm security man who told us: "You can't park that bus there!" Bryan soon sorted him out showing him our very detailed contract and as usual Bryan has covered every eventuality. "It clearly states that we can park the bus outside all night" he informed the erstwhile jobsworth.

It turned out that the red carpet was for the Queen Mother who had visited a couple of days earlier. We were shown into the hallowed building and beautiful it was too. Of course, we had a right old trek with all of the gear to the library, the room in which we were to perform the devil's music for the "landed gentry". When I say library, I mean a room that is larger than most of the halls we have played in. Beautiful carpets, wood panelled walls, pictures of various dignitaries including the Queens's coronation, former chancellors and prime ministers. "It's a bit different from Mapperley Social Club innit?" remarked one of the band members as we huffed and puffed up the stone steps with the drum kit.

Revival - from my side of the stage

We set up our equipment with the assistance of a couple of cheery cockneys who helped us with the stage, and I started the sound check. As I suspected, the room's acoustics were perfect and the quality of the sound was amazing - but there was something very wrong with the balance and I couldn't put my finger on it. So I got the band to play a couple more songs. By now, we were gathering quite a little audience of stagehands, security men and cleaners, all apparently shaking their heads with approval. Perhaps they don't hear much sixties music in London.

Marg, who has attended more gigs than some of the musicians in the band, agreed that something wasn't quite right with the sound. I was getting a little panicky because I couldn't pin it down and scurried off to check out the sound system. A few minutes later and I had it sussed. The rig had been tipped upside down in the bus and the FX unit providing reverb and other technological wizardry, had become unplugged. I pushed in the offending jack plug and the band came to life sounding the way Marg and I know it should. Now the sound sent shivers down your back, rich harmonies at CD quality going through 2,000 watts in such a beautiful room is something to hear, I can tell you. Our little audience had now started to applaud after each number.

The sound check was over and everyone seemed happy. We asked one of our new cockney friends where we could get changed. "I have got just the room for you my son," our newest fan told us. "I just have to get a special key." We followed him out into the main building and he took a key off the key rack, slipped it into a Yale lock and commented, "Now don't lose that key boys, it's more than my job's worth," finishing the sentence with a knowing wink.

We were shown into a beautifully furnished and freshly decorated room with comfy chairs and two bathrooms at the end, with a wardrobe to hang up our stage clothes. Not at all like the broom cupboards we are usually given to get changed in. "This room was specially kitted out for the Queen Mother's visit last week", he informed us. We all decamped to the Queen's parlour and contemplated what we were going to do for the next three hours.



Our rhythm guitarist dispensed some more warm beer and disappeared into the Queen Mum's bathroom. He emerged five minutes later talking to his wife on the mobile. "Hello luv. I have just had a crap on the Queen Mothers bog" he announced to the room and the cell phone. He might be the Managing Director of one of Nottingham's best known building firms, but he occasionally slips back to his building site days - usually on an auspicious occasion when decorum and dignity would be more appropriate. The next five minutes were full of

hysteria and toilet jokes led by Geoff W.

We knew that thanks to Bryan and his very precise contract that we were due some sandwiches and coffee (part of our fee). 'I bet the sandwiches are cucumber ones', I remember thinking. Not quite Elton John who apparently insists on caviar and Champagne - but I was impressed with Bryan's thoughtfulness. However, that's not for another hour or two so off we tramped into the streets of London. Not paved with gold - just the usual pigeon droppings. So how did Revival celebrate our arrival in the big city? Well in our usual stylish way of course - seven big Macs and coffee please!

Once we had fed and watered it was time for a walk around nearby St Paul's, and then another quick hike to look at the muddy banks of the Thames right underneath that bridge which shakes when you walk on it. So now it was back to the Queen's parlour just in time for the sandwiches. Yes, they had some cucumber in them but were really nice fresh beef and all sorts of other good stuff. The musicians were all getting restless now as we were due on stage in 15 minutes and our 600 guests hadn't received their pudding yet! Then

Revival - from my side of the stage

the security man put us in the picture. There were speeches to follow the coffee and while our contract might have said 10' o'clock, it seemed like we'd do well to get on by eleven – and, by the way, had anybody told us that the license prevented music and dancing after 11.30pm!

I have played in groups that complain if they have to play for more than two half hour spots, but this bunch were so addicted to performing that we often played for two and half to three hours with only short breaks. Having travelled all this way for just 30 minutes was not our idea of a night out. Still, we reminded ourselves that we were getting four times our usual fee.

The clock reached 10.45 and as the speeches finished we decided that if the punters were going to leave their seats and wander into the library we had better go on and play loudly so that they would know we were there. It worked, as first a trickle of lovely young ladies in evening dresses followed by their 'pissed up' husbands came through and within the time it takes to play three songs the floor was full of one of the most appreciative audiences we had had for some time.

For the next 47 minutes it was solid Rock 'n' Roll. The sound was great, the band played well and the audience loved it. Then, at 11.30 on the dot the jobsworth pus the lights on and it was all over. The audience quickly caught onto the fact that it wasn't our fault and came up to the stage to tell us what a great evening they have had. One of them, a gorgeous young lady in an eye-catching evening dress, was holding an envelope containing our enormous fee in fresh crisp £50 notes. She was very happy as were the entire audience, while the band members were as high as kites (on life and adrenaline, nothing stronger as we are all too old for that sort of thing). A splendid time guaranteed for all.

We humped the kit back onto the bus, were back on the M1 by 12.15, and fast asleep by 12.16! We arrived back at our cars at about 3.30am tired but satisfied that we had done a good job. There was a time when we would have gone down to the bowling alley for a free breakfast, but these days it takes all weekend to get over staying up so late. *It's only Rock 'n' Roll but I like it!*



Rock aristocracy surveying the venue

Blowin' in the Wind

I am a musician not a sportsman and I have always been in awe of people who have good hand-eye co-ordination and a determination to win. Having said that, I must admit to having had my moments. For reasons I still don't understand I was fairly good at squash. It's the only sport I have enjoyed playing and the only sport where I could hold my own and not be constantly at the bottom of the league. I was introduced to it late in life and played solidly from the age of 30 until my 40th birthday, which coincided with a knee injury that refused to get better.



I played mainly with work colleagues plus my lifelong friend and sometime musical partner, Mick Whittaker. I became quite a fanatic, playing four times a week and had never been so fit – not even having so much as a cold for eight years. I was good enough to hold my own against the middle ground players, but couldn't live with the really good guys. However, I was happy. The best of the bunch was our financial director, one William Turner, known as Bill to his friends. He was unassailable - not only did he regularly beat the best of our bunch but once, when we had a 24-hour squash session for charity, he gave the county champion a run for his money.

Bill was king of the castle, except for one occasion just before my 39th birthday. I usually managed to take one or two points a game off him, but on this occasion I had got to 5-3 in the first game and was leading for the first time ever. Determination set in and I pushed myself so hard that I nearly had a heart attack - but fate was on my side. This moment in time coincided with me playing at my best and Bill playing a little under par. So I pushed on and took the opening game, a first for me in eight years of trying. My exhilaration was dampened somewhat though by the knowledge that he was angry with me, himself and the whole world for losing a game to a middle-ranking player - and the thought that I still had to play two more games at a time when I could hardly breathe!

To cut a long story short, I ended up beating him by two games to one, which was something I never managed to repeat - but it didn't matter. I had whipped the master! He was a good bloke and took me to the bar to celebrate and it was there over a pint of Stella that I had my road to Damascus moment. It had been a lifelong ambition to play the saxophone, but I had convinced myself I was too old to learn, plus the fact that I couldn't read music and it was very hard instrument to play. However, if I could win a game of squash against the king after eight years of trying, maybe I could learn to play the sax.

Typically I set myself some goals - to buy a sax for my birthday, learn to play it and then to perform with it live on stage with Revival before my 40th. Of course I didn't consult the band, my wife, children or neighbours about this plan, but the decision had been made.

I can't remember where I got the money from or how I persuaded my wife Sonja that this was a good idea, but three weeks later I was the proud owner of a 1950s Conn Pan American Saxophone - the perfect instrument for Rock 'n' Roll. No modern Yamaha stuff for this boy! I didn't tell the band that I was now £500 pounds out of pocket and it was much too early for any kick backs. The next challenge was to find a sax teacher - but being me, it couldn't be any old teacher. I wanted someone who understood that not only was I not interested in learning to read music, but that I wanted to learn the Rock 'n' Roll

Revival - from my side of the stage

riffs straight away. I hadn't got time to learn 'Michael, Row the Boat Ashore' and all that simple stuff. I wanted to dive in at the deep end. Sound familiar?

Not for the first time in my musical life Sonja played a pivotal role as she had a friend with a particularly gifted daughter. She was 16-years-old and already had a reputation as a talented teacher, giving lessons to other would-be horn players. She wore hobnail boots, coloured her hair purple and had jewellery that jangled every time she moved - and boy, could she blow that horn! She understood exactly what I wanted to achieve and helped me score out all of those Rock 'n' Roll riffs that I wanted to learn. I did actually manage to learn to read a bit and after six months I was ready for the next step.

I spent a couple of weeks plucking up the courage to ask the band what they thought of the idea. I can't remember exactly the course of events but first of all I received a lot of encouragement from Richard, our keyboard player, and much to my surprise there was no real resistance from the rest of the guys, just varying degrees of a lack of enthusiasm for the project. I had no commitment to be allowed to play sax with the band and I hadn't told them of my goal to play live in front of an audience before my 40th birthday. But now they knew I was on another of Steve's crazy missions. Then I got some support from an unexpected quarter.

Geoff W and I had become good friends as he and I shared a love of the blues and of types of music that were alien to our fellow Revivalists. He decided to throw a birthday party at Patchings Farm where Revival would play a set. He also wanted to put together an ad hoc blues band for the night. He had a drummer, a singer and guitarist, but no bass player (his brother Bryan was not in the frame presumably because it was a blues night which wasn't Bryan's thing at the time). I was invited to play bass. Oh yes! And, by the way, would you mind if Richard and I play 'Love Me Tender' on the Sax as well. I had a gig!

'Love Me Tender' is not quite 'Michael, Row the Boat Ashore' but it is a fairly simple song. By now Richard had become more than supportive and I will never forget his patience and support helping me take my crude sax skills and polish them up to performance level.

So it was the night I had been working so hard towards - and Revival played their first spot. We now had two rhythm guitarists. I got fed up learning all those songs for just five gigs a year and Geoff W's absences continued, so I became a full-time guitarist and backing singer. I did the first set with Revival as a guitarist and then had to make that big step thing again. Remember me telling you about that big step from the side of the stage to the spotlight. It was ten minutes away from my sax debut and I was suddenly not feeling well. I wanted to go home. However, I managed to play in tune and despite being a bit shaky, I got enough polite applause to encourage me to carry on. Thanks Richard - a magic moment for me!

Then I really got to exercise my ego as I picked up my third instrument of the night and played bass in Geoff W's blues band. I'd never before and haven't since played three different instruments in three different bands all on the same night - but what a night and I'm not even 40 for another six weeks!

It was Netherfield Primary School's fund raiser with Revival top of the bill. Geoff Ellis's two sons, Matt and John and their group were our supporting act and it was two days before my landmark birthday. I had been learning the sax parts to four Revival songs for months and was pretty confident that I could carry it off - boosted by my appearance at Patchings Farm. All I needed was permission from the musical director. So I offered Geoff a deal. Let me do this one time and if I am not up to it and it's not good enough for the guys, I'll drop the whole idea and never ask to play sax with the band again.

Much to my surprise he agreed and I was back there again for another terrifying debut - another big step into the spotlight. This was different from Geoff W's party. These were paying customers. I was on stage playing sax with a drummer for the first time ever and I

Revival - from my side of the stage

had six very good friends standing either side of me all of whom were excellent musicians. I hadn't had any rehearsal, except for playing along to recordings and a few sessions with Richard.

How did it go? Well, I am still playing sax with Revival so I guess it went well. Sadly, since Geoff W's departure from the band I get less opportunity to play now that my rhythm guitar duties are more demanding. Anyhow, that is definitely the last time I tackle a new instrument. I am not going to put myself through that kind of stress ever again! At least, that was how I felt at the time, but then some years later I went into a music shop to buy some guitar strings and came home with a Banjo - but that's another story.....



As for Bill, our king of the squash courts, well we paid him back for helping me on my journey to becoming Revival's sax player. He was a big fan of sixties music and particularly the Everly Brothers. One sunny Saturday evening Bill had invited all his family, friends and work mates to Calverton Golf Club to celebrate his wedding anniversary. I was the only member of the board of directors that couldn't attend because I had a gig with Revival.

We were playing a benefit for Woodborough Village School in Woodborough Village Hall which is just over the hill, a couple of miles from Calverton. I don't know how I persuaded Revival to do this, but I hatched a cunning plan in collusion with the DJ who was organising the entertainment at Bill's party.

Revival came off stage after the first set at Woodborough, still dressed in full drape jackets and brothel creepers, and picked up Geoff's guitar and amplifier along with two acoustic guitars. We then jumped into a car, drove round to the golf club in Calverton and hid outside behind closed curtains by the fire exit. On cue from the DJ we burst through the doors, plugged in and performed two Everly Brothers' songs, wished Bill and his wife well and drove back to Woodborough just in time to change clothes and get back on stage for our second set!

Two gigs at two different venues at the same time - now that's talent! Thanks guys, and best wishes to Bill.



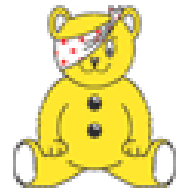
Little Children, why don't you play outside



Newark Palace Theatre

Our good friend Brian Tansley, a BBC Radio presenter had arranged for a very special guest to join us on our 2007 promotional jaunt through a busy market day in Newark Town Centre for our second Children In Need concert. We had stuck our necks out again and hired the Newark Palace Theatre at no little cost to ourselves. Our collective egos told us that we could sell enough tickets not only to cover the initial outlay, but also to raise at least £5,000 for the BBC Children in Need appeal. In 2006 we had sold out and this was going to be a big challenge to follow last year. We were going to need all the publicity we could get to sell tickets in a town some 20 miles away from our usual territory. We were not known in the area at all, and had to put more bums on seats than we had ever done before.

Brian arrived at the theatre with our special guest stowed away in a large canvas bag and a very formal looking manual with the BBC logo printed on the top. These were the rules that all performers must sign up to before sharing the stage with the A list celebrity known as Pudsey Bear. We had the local press lined up outside and were already dressed in our finest drape jackets ready to go walkabout in the bustling market place to promote our first Children in Need concert.



Brian started to read the rules: Pudsey must never be seen in public without his head screwed on properly - something I've been telling Geoff Ellis for years. Pudsey must always have a minimum of two chaperones with him at all times, presumably to fight off the girls (this turned out to be valid an hour later when a drunken farmer's wife tried to 'snog' poor old Pudsey). He needed help with the stairs as well, as he isn't very steady on his feet at the best of times - probably due to the fact that his head is three times larger than the rest of his body and the poor soul has only one eye. There are many other rules, one of which is that I am not allowed to reveal what they are - that's rule 32. So the next time you see Pudsey, 'bear' in mind (sorry) there is far more to him than meets his singular eye.

Oh, by the way it was a scorching summer's day and Pudsey's inner soul gets very hot inside his suit. Now, while I can't reveal the name of Pudsey's assistant - that's rule number 26 - you can imagine the effect Brian had on a roomful of aging rockers when he announced that the only way to survive an hour as Pudsey would be to go virtually naked under the suit. Why should this excite us? Well on the night of the gig we were due to share a changing room with Pudsey when his assistant was going to be a very glamorous young lady from Brian's office at the BBC. Yes, now you know Pudsey is a transsexual!

Thanks to Pudsey we made a lot of new friends on that day, with several people buying tickets on the strength of seeing us and the ensuing publicity. I have to say Pudsey's help was an essential part of the success of this event. The rule book is very much needed though, as Pudsey did attract some very strange people, but on the upside, the looks on the faces of some of the children made up for the few weirdo's who said some very strange things to him.

So thanks to our PR expert we got off to a great start, selling a good number of tickets as a result. Oh - I haven't mentioned this before - apart from being our musical director, Geoff Ellis is our number one publicity machine. He has handled the media and the press and written much of promotional material over the years.

One smart idea to help us sell tickets at the Newark Palace, was to invite the Bingham School of Dance to perform alongside us. Thirty children are worth a potential 120 ticket sales with two parents and two grandparents buying tickets - and we needed to sell hundreds just to break even.

Revival - from my side of the stage

As for the show itself, we had done theatres before and it's very different from our usual gigs where people, come to have a drink, relax and dance. Here we look out from the stage to see hundreds of faces who are silently saying 'go on then - entertain me'. It's a whole different league from playing in a band at a dance. Revival learnt this lesson very early on and we always put something extra into our sets for theatre audiences. This night was no exception as we pushed the boundary's, we took a few risks and went for it big time. One of the most successful parts of the show was when a member of the audience paid a substantial amount of money to the Children In Need Appeal to perform a Cliff Richard song with us.



The ultimate set of wheels

Steve Cooke did a fantastic job with very little opportunity for rehearsal as he nailed the number and appeared as cool as a cucumber. He became a big friend to the band and we would have more adventures with him in the future.

Steve must own the largest collection of Cliff Richard memorabilia in the world. Guitars, gold records, stage clothes you name it he's got it all on display in his place of business, Hardwick Motors. Steve was so committed to the BBC Children in Need cause that he delivered THE CAR to us on the same morning as Pudsey made his first Revival appearance. We all drove it

around for a while to promote the gig but only Allan Woolley had the bottle to go everywhere in it. I can imagine Jim and I turning up for work in this ego trip - NOT.....!!

The girls & boys from Bingham were superb and added a great deal to the occasion, while, of course, our long-time friend and honorary band member Brian Tansley sang a number with us. As did Jims daughter Anna who upstaged us as usual with her wonderful voice.

We sold all but a few tickets, recouped our costs and some. The first year we did it Jim and Bryan Wilkinson, got to appear on the Children in Need TV show handing over a cheque for £4,800.

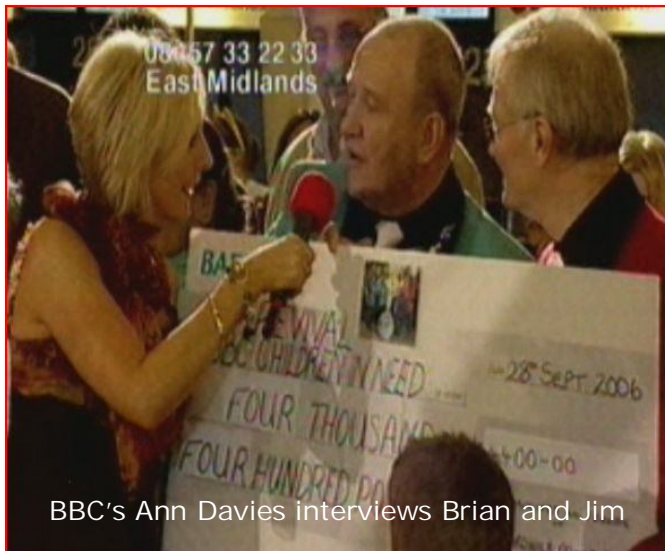
This year we raised even more money, which enabled me to achieve another lifetime's ambition when we got to play music live on the telly. After our second year at the Newark Palace Theatre we got a call, at very short notice, to go along with our instruments to the East Midlands Airport, because the producer wanted us to perform live on air in front of millions of people. Wild horses wouldn't have stopped any of us being there that night - except unfortunately for Bryan, who was Portugal on a golf trip.

Over the years we have had the privilege of working with the BBC on many occasions and it is for good reason, as they have the reputation of being one of the best broadcasting companies in the world. Having said that, to the untrained eye what greeted us when we arrived at the airport looked like chaos. Experience has taught me that what appears to be mayhem is actually a very controlled and tightly run team, so confident in what they are doing that they actually look relaxed when all around appears to be going wrong.

We were greeted by the producer's assistant who re-affirmed that we should be on playing live on national TV at 8.30 and that we would have five minutes to tune up and sound check. Would that be okay? It normally takes us the best part of two hours to do that. All we could do was to sit and wait and get more and more nervous. Remember, this was another of those big steps from the wings to being in front of the cameras. We couldn't have a drum kit so we decided to do 'Putting on the Style' featuring drummer Allan Woolley on his washboard and yours truly on the banjo - not my first instrument and not my second, but the instrument I know how to play the least. There is nothing like a bit of additional stress to add to the stage fright building up inside all of us.

Revival - from my side of the stage

There were two large screens showing the live feed from London where Terry Wogan was doing his thing, and a smaller screen counting down the minutes until the East Midlands would go live on to the main feed, with Revival hitting the airwaves. I swear that as every minute ticked away my heartbeat got faster. All the time people were rushing around, technicians moving lights and sound equipment as they interviewed the clowns and the team from Boots and members of the Army who were cooking some food etc, etc – when we realised that it was our turn in six minutes.



BBC's Ann Davies interviews Brian and Jim

The technicians ran around, we tuned up and stood on the marks on the floor mesmerised by the robot camera on a boom arm that insisted on examining my nasal hair every few minutes. I shouldn't have been surprised at what happened next because I had seen it before where the BBC technicians suddenly pull everything together. Within three minutes we had a brilliant sound and I could hear every word Ken was singing, along with Geoff's guitar and my own instrument. It felt good!

"Forty seconds to going live" announced the director - but where are the presenters? They were still outside interviewing the Army cooks! Just 35

seconds to go and the director announced that we would be interviewed and hand the cheque over before we started playing our song. He selected Geoff Ellis as the spokesmen for the group. That was a good choice because at times like that Geoff is the only one of us who can string a sentence together.

Twenty seconds to go and we could see Ann Davies, the presenter, making her way across the concourse. She arrived in front of Geoff just as the countdown got to zero and we were live on air. Geoff answered a couple of questions and handed over the cheque and we were off into 'Putting on the Style'. We played on thinking that we were live in front of the nation for the whole three and half minutes it takes to do the song.



Who is inside that suit?

The local rent a crowd went nuts at the end and we thought we had done a good job, but what we hadn't realised was that the Army guys overran and the feed switched back to Terry Wogan in London halfway through our first verse! Still, not to worry, we had been there and done it and I wasn't too disappointed. What we didn't know was that some of our most loyal fans were not only disappointed but angry with the BBC.

A week later we got an unexpected bonus after several of our fans had called the BBC in Nottingham to complain that we had been cut off in mid-flow. So good old East Midlands Today screened a recording of us performing the whole song from beginning to end and all hearts were full of pride. It took me at least another three weeks to come back down to earth and another two after that before people stopped recognising me in Tesco. Oh, fame is so fickle.....

*As a footnote, we have been asked if we will do Children in Need again and we may well do so but we decided to give it a rest for a while. It took an enormous effort that drained us all and sometimes it's best to quit while you're ahead. We raised almost £9,000 over the two years which is not bad for a bunch of ageing rocker's.

Ch-Ch-Changes

I was fortunate enough to play the northern clubs for many years in a number of reasonably successful groups a long time before joining Revival. In my early twenties I met some great musicians, but the majority of them were always a bit of an unsavoury bunch. There was always a junkie, always someone who drank too much and always someone who was out on bail or under the threat of a suspended sentence. Not to mention those drawing social security whilst holding down two jobs and also playing in the band - and there was always a guy who was selling off 'hot' items.

I have often stood on stage with my fellow Revival band members reflecting on their careers, a headmaster, a couple of company directors and the church organist. I often ponder which one used to be the junkie or the one out on bail! I have some theories but I have never been able to prove anything. And in case you're wondering, the only drugs you will see in Revival's changing room these days are throat lozenges, blood pressure tablets and Fixodent!

The other thing I learned in those early years is that musicians don't necessarily have to like each other to make good music. It helps, but it isn't essential. My early experiences were those of having to cope with large egos, overloud lead guitar players and left wing drummers who would flare up and verbally abuse anyone at the drop of a hat. Tempers often got frayed as people nicked each other's girlfriend etc - which may be why most of the bands I played in usually only lasted a couple of years. I clearly remember being in a band where I had to pay someone's fine so he could get out of jail in order for us to do a gig - and he then failed to pay me back!

Revival however is different from all of that. From 7.00pm onwards on the very first gig there was a musical bond that has just got stronger over the years. It's hard to describe. I have only experienced it once before, but even then it wasn't as strong as this. It's like a sixth sense. We are all in the zone and on the same page. There is a bond that is impossible to define. We instinctively play as one and everyone in Revival is totally committed to the music and respect and appreciate the audience, be they fans or just one-time visitors.

Socially we are a bunch of friends and like any marriage we have our ups and downs, our niggles and foibles, but Revival is a very special and exclusive club. Evidence of this can be gathered from how few line-up changes we have had over the years.

Our very first drummer, Evan, was a super chap and everyone loved him. He was a good deal younger than us and very committed to his church. When you are in a band you have a commitment to not just one person and not just your fellow band members, but to every one of the hundreds of people who have bought tickets to see you. This kind of responsibility can be a heavy burden. As Revival's performances got slicker and the demand for our time grew more and more, it became clear that Evan was struggling to meet all of his commitments but he was just too nice a guy and he didn't want to let us down, so he battled on.

We then reached a point where he clearly couldn't make some of the gigs that we had in front of us, so following the Geoff W model we had a meeting and decided to find a substitute drummer for the dates that were a problem for Evan. I think at that time we didn't want him to leave so we tried hard to make it easy for him. The very next day Geoff Ellis



Revival - from my side of the stage

walked into a Christian book shop in Netherfield and bumped into Allan Woolley.

Allan had played in a school concert with Geoff and I, and we knew he was a very good drummer. Older than any of us, he had been a professional musician in the sixties and had worked with Wayne Fontana and the Mindbenders along with other stars of the time. But there was a problem. Allan made it very clear that he had retired and he wasn't interested in regular gigging as he was also very committed to his church at the time. Déjà vu. Is this Evan all over again I asked myself. Somehow, Geoff persuaded Allan to help us out for the gigs that Evan couldn't make.

I will never forget the first time Allan played with Revival. The gig was at Lowdham Village Hall and the rest of the band was rightfully nervous as we had two deputising musicians on stage with Geoff W away playing bowls again. However, the minute Allan struck up with 'Walk Don't Run', the first song in the set, it was magic. For me, somehow all of those awkward parts of some songs became easier to navigate and the beat was not only strong but sounded so authentic and sixties-like. By the second set it was clear to me what had happened. Evan was a great drummer but he was too modern for our authentic sound. As soon as a genuine sixties drummer sat on the stool Revival blossomed and the sound you hear today was born.

Now, I was happily playing away thinking about how I was going to share this revelation with Geoff and the gang. No one wanted to fire Evan - least of all me - and anyhow, Allan had made it clear that he only wanted to play the odd gig, so what were we going to do?

Not for the first time that sixth sense kicked in after delivering a blistering first set apparently we were all thinking the same thing. Over the coming weeks we collectively decided that we really needed to find out where Evan actually stood in terms of commitment and whether we could change Allan's mind about retirement. I suspected that Allan would be an easy conversion. As he had such a good time sitting-in with Revival it wouldn't take much to talk him round.

The Revival buzz is easily explained, in as much as the kind of reception we get at 99% of our gigs is something that most bands only get 40% of the time. I have been fortunate enough to play in some really good bands but I have never experienced the love and adulation that we get from our wonderful fans. So Allan was in the bag - but what were we going to do with Evan? That was easy. One of us would have to go and have a chat with him - won't you Geoff! Well we needn't have worried as Evan was relieved to be free to pursue his other commitments. He wished us well and the Revival you hear today was born.

Just to put Allan Woolley's talent into perspective, several years later there was a 24-hour charity drumming event held in Nottingham. Allan invited me to go along with him. We arrived at the venue to find 20 or 30 drummers waiting to play their allocated 20 minutes. We sat there whilst several very talented drummers, mostly younger than Allan, did their thing. Then Allan took over the drum stool and gave them all a lesson in how to play. He blasted off into his Shadows 'Little B' routine and when he was done the whole room erupted into applause as each drummer stood up and applauded in recognition of the king.

With Allan in place on the drum stool our line up stayed the same for many years, with me becoming a permanent member of the band, Geoff W dipping in and out as his social life dictated, and if Richard couldn't make it we went out as a guitar band. We gigged and worked and watched each other's children growing up. There were many Revival family highlights and one in particular comes to mind when Richard's son got married. That was a great musical celebration both in church and at the reception afterwards. Revival played at the reception as a guitar band with the occasional flash of brilliance on keyboards from the father of the groom.

Revival - from my side of the stage

Sometime after that though, Richard dropped his bombshell that he was leaving the band for personal reasons. Being the fine gentlemen that he is, he gave us a year's notice - but where would we find anybody else with such talent? As I explained earlier, Richard was an integral part of the Revival sound and even when he wasn't playing his influence was there in the arrangements.

We were several months into his notice period with no idea what to do about replacing him, when I noticed an old friend in the audience at one of our gigs at the Bonington Theatre in Arnold. Jim Kirby had been a friend since I met him playing the 'Hunting of The Snark' - one of Geoff's more ambitious school summer concerts - when I had played bass in the parents' band and Jim played guitar.



The following year I had the privilege of playing as a stand-in guitarist for Jim's band when one of the members got stuck in Spain due to an air traffic controllers strike. It was at that gig that I witnessed Jim's talent as a keyboard player singer and a fine guitarist. I also knew that Jim was very committed to his band, travelling all over the country with them nearly every weekend. It was at the interval that I caught up with him in the bar only to discover that his band had finally quit due to ill health after being together for many years - and he was available!

When I dropped a few hints about the forthcoming vacancy Revival had, Jim in his modest way declared that Richard's place would be a real challenge for anyone to fill and that he wasn't sure he was up to it. I was flattered that Jim thought Revival was that good but I suspected he would give his right arm to be in the band, as he had seen us several times before and was something of a fan.

We agreed to go away and think about it, 24-hours later, I phoned Geoff to let him know that the chap who had been involved with the 'Snark' project, was a keyboard player with no band at the moment.

If my memory serves me right it took Geoff at least one second to say "now that's interesting!" We arranged for Jim to meet the rest of the guys and the rest is, as they say, history. Revival gained a really good singer, a great keyboard player and another talented guitarist. What most of the world doesn't know, until now, is how many hours Jim put into learning Richard's parts exactly as Richard had played them, so that when he took over no-one could see the join. I would like to take this opportunity to say "Jim that has always been appreciated by the band and fans alike". Needless to say Jim brought his own musical force to the band and we became even stronger - but I acknowledge that it could have been so different, because with a keyboard player like Richard leaving we could have easily gone the other way. Thanks Jim.

Geoff Wilkinson eventually retired from the band and Revival became a six piece. Some time later as several of the band members started to receive their bus passes and their winter heating allowance, we had a band meeting where we discussed bringing Revival's adventures to an end. We had a vote - the outcome of which was the statement "stuff quitting, we are going to rock until we drop!" Unfortunately, that nearly came to pass sooner than we all anticipated, one black fortnight a couple of years ago.

Ken hadn't looked well for some time and he had a couple of frightening headaches which culminated in him having a stroke. On top of this disastrous news, while Ken was still attending hospital and Revival's future was in the balance, Jim's wife had to have major surgery at very short notice. Then to cap it all, in the same week Allan Woolley was told by his doctor that his drumming days were over. It was a very difficult time and for the first time in 18 years we had to cancel some gigs.

Revival - from my side of the stage

I was concerned with two things: number one was Ken. We all love him like a brother and I knew that the thought of not being able to sing in front of an audience would be more of a problem for him than any damage the stroke may have caused to his eyesight. This is the guy who has turned up for gigs through personal tragedy and at one time performed on crutches. I was also concerned for Bryan. Over the years he has faultlessly kept our bookings diary which is an important responsibility that brings with it some stress.



I knew he would find it difficult to cancel gigs as he hated letting people down and one of the gigs was very close to his heart, as we had been booked by someone he knew from work. So I put on my thinking cap on and try to figure out how we could find some kind of solution. For a couple of years Jim and I had been playing with another band in between Revival gigs. The band was called 5rLive and the drummer Alan Yeo was an old friend of mine from years ago, when we had played together in different bands long before Revival.

I was thinking that 5rLive might be able to do the gig that was Bryan's biggest headache, but that plan was thwarted by the fact that Jim's wife was in hospital and the other two members of 5rLive weren't available either that night. So back to the drawing board! It was during these negotiations that Allen Woolley announced his retirement. I needed a plan and I knew that we might be close to the end of the band, but I also knew that when Ken recovered he would want to carry on. So I rang Geoff Ellis and suggested we put Alan Yeo on standby for Ken and Jim's return to active duty.



We told Alan he had only got the job because his name was Alan and at our age that would be easy for us to remember! Just like Jim before him, Alan set about learning our songs, putting many hours of practice in for a band that might never play again.

When the time came, just like Jim, he dropped into Revival seamlessly thanks Alan.

This black period in our history does have a happy ending as Jim's wife recovered and Ken came back after a couple of months like a new man. I don't know what kind of drugs they gave him, but he is looking healthier and singing as well as he has ever done. We are going to carry on rocking for a little longer yet.....

Boy You're Gonna' Carry That Weight

Guitars, amplifiers and drum kits were bundled into the back of three cars as we set off in convoy down the M42 on a very sunny weekday morning in 1994. We had all taken the day off work for a very special day out.

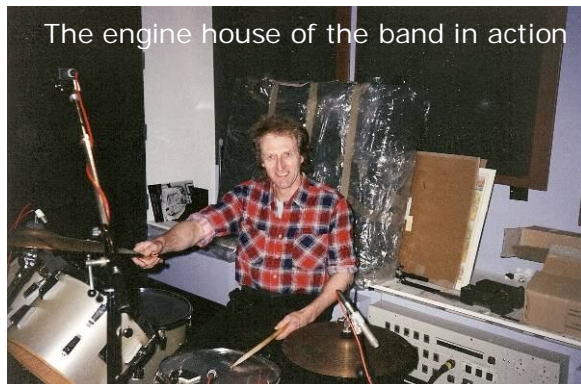
We were going to record at the BBC's Pebble Mill Studios. We had already had a couple of nerve-wracking but none the less successful outings on BBC Radio Nottingham - the first time we even played live on air, scary stuff. Now it's the big time. Between 7.00pm and 9.00pm several large local radio stations combine to broadcast to an audience of several million people and we had been invited to appear live on the John Taynton show.

We were going to be interviewed live on air and the audience would think we were playing live in the studio, but in reality we would have pre-recorded the tracks several weeks before the broadcast - that's show business! I was in pole position because I had been to Birmingham on business the week before and I had had chance to check out the location. As I proudly pulled into the car park, having successfully navigated us around the ring road on this very important day, Bryan leaped out of his car, jumped into my driving seat, and started to play with the indicators. Puzzled by this I was just about to ask him what he was doing when he announced "Just checking to see if they are still working 'coz you never b**** well use them!" he said with a wink in his eye.



In our early years together Bryan and I clashed on occasions because I didn't understand his wicked sense of humour. By the time we had arrived at Pebble Mill I had come to realise he is just trying to take the stress out of the situation and I was the 'butt' of his joke on this particular day. To be fair, Bryan has a go at each one of us in turn. I always said that one day I would repay him so here is a picture of Bryan in drag circa 1996. If you can believe this he is impersonating Olivia Newton John and is trying to sing Summer Loving from the film Grease. What you can't see on this shot is Geoff E doing his "John Travolta" impression, I kid you not.

We turned up at the loading bay with guitars and amplifiers stacked high, and as instructed by an official notice typed on BBC paper, we rang the bell. A very nice BBC chap in a brown smock greeted us with a smile and says 'okay boys, you are in studio two, down that corridor turn left up two flights of stairs past the BBC canteen and it's on the right hand side. Our hearts sank. We have carried this stuff up and down stairs in halls and clubs all over Nottinghamshire and now here we go again. Then our friendly BBC man utters the wonderful words: "just hang on there while I call the porters to carry that heavy equipment for you". That's more like it - star treatment at last. I had been waiting for someone to carry my guitar for me for 20 years. Fame and fortune here I come!



So off we trundled through the hallowed halls of the BBC with four or five young men following discreetly behind with our instruments and equipment in hand. We were all getting more and more nervous as we passed whiteboards outside each studio with the names and times of when famous people were booked in to record, and as we approached studio two, there was Revival's name on the board.

As we walked into studio two I was in heaven, as it looked just like Abbey Road to me. There was a grand piano in the corner, a drum booth for Mr Woolley's drum kit and a control room with lots of expensive recording equipment in it.

Revival - from my side of the stage

Another friendly chap in a white coat this time introduced himself as the studio engineer and announced that as we were a bit early the producer wouldn't be here for half an hour or so. "Set your kit up, relax and have some fun" he said. "I'll order some tea and coffee for you".

Richard sat down at this magnificent Steinway piano and started to play some beautiful classical music, while Allan went off to set up his drum kit in the soundproof booth. I didn't know what to do. The first two hours of any Revival gig are usually a nightmare for me I have to set my own kit up, then the PA, twiddle with knobs and flashing lights, trip over cables and generally get in everyone else's way. Here Mr Browncoat has tested my amplifier, plugged it in and passed me my guitar. I was quite surprised he hadn't tuned it for me as well. Oh, I like the star treatment - I could get used to this!



Richard plays Beethoven

After the coffee and a quick rehearsal we were all feeling more comfortable, if not a little apprehensive, when the "producer" arrived. No brown coat, not even a white coat - this guy was in a suit, which signified where he stood in the pecking order. Not only that, but for five minutes I could swear that he was George Martin, the Beatles' producer. Maybe this was Abbey Road after all. It was probably my imagination but he sure did look the part.

He quickly introduced himself and explained that he was also a music teacher specialising in brass instruments. Against my better judgement and encouraged by the rest of the band, I had brought my saxophone with me. I had been playing it live for only a few months. Now I have to perform in front of this guy. I felt that "I want to go home" feeling coming on again anticipating another giant step from stage left into the spotlight.

Before absolute panic set in, he turned to me and said: "Don't worry Steve, we will do your sax parts at the end. We know how nerve-wracking it can be here in studio two for the first time. We had the London Symphony Orchestra in last night and they took an hour before they could settle down and play in tune". I didn't believe a word of that, but liked this guy already. What's the first song?

To say none of us had been in a big studio before we had our tracks down almost note perfect by midday. We were a bit concerned that we weren't as tight and on the beat as normal because we couldn't see Allan and we could only hear him through the headphones. "Don't worry" said the producer. "You go off to the canteen and come back at two o'clock. By then we will have tightened them up for you". I rightly suspected that they had some magic computer recording technology that I wouldn't get my hands on at home for another five years.

So off we trundled to the canteen - which was nothing special, in fact like any normal works canteen. The only difference was that Frank Carson was in front of me in the queue for the baked beans and I was sure that the very attractive blonde behind me read the nine o'clock news the night before.

After 20 minutes of celebrity-spotting you kind of get used to it. By now I was wondering if they were trying to work out where they'd seen me before.....

At two o'clock we reported back to studio two and for me the day really came alive as we were invited into the control room to observe the mixing process. Recording has always been an interest of mine. Today I have my own studio but up until that moment I had never been inside a proper control room. We were greeted by the producer with a friendly

Revival - from my side of the stage

wave as he 'conducted' the engineer who was operating the largest mixing desk I had ever seen, with patterns on the screen which I knew were the wave forms for each individual instrument track.

I knew enough to see that they had they were now perfectly aligned which meant we were going to sound much tighter than we could ever play in reality. The producer was waving his arms at the engineer and grooving to Geoff's rendition of 'The Rise and Fall of Flingel Bunt'. "A little more depth to the guitar please, a bit more punch on the kick drum, bring the rhythm guitar up a bit more. That's it - that's the mix. What do you think boys - do you like it?" Do we? It sounded fantastic. We had never heard ourselves sound that good and when he played us the first mix of 'True Love Ways' I was nearly in tears it sounded so good. "You know boys, I have had professional musicians in here who don't sound as good as you guys do. I am off now - they only booked me for four hours. Good luck with the broadcast". He disappeared with a flourish and a friendly wave and we were left with the engineer who tidied up a few loose ends. Then it was all over and it was time to leave.

"Just before you go" said the engineer, "We here at the BBC would like you to have a memento of the day". We were each presented with a BBC pen and a BBC mug. I still have mine on display in my studio to this day. You can keep your Blue Peter badge, my mug means more to me than you can ever imagine.

Needles to say we were buzzing for the next couple of weeks. Broadcast night came and we were off to Birmingham again, arriving at Pebble Mill 30 minutes before we were due to go on air. We are shown to the 'green room', an alcove with some uncomfortable seats and a few dog-eared magazines as we awaited our 20 minutes of stardom. After another five minutes we were joined by a very attractive but scruffy looking young girl who we assumed must be famous as she was accompanied by a brutish looking minder. She appeared a bit grumpy but softened up a bit after a couple of Bryan's jokes. I guess even stars get nervous.

Following her successful appearance in the TV series 'The Darling Buds of May', Catherine Zeta-Jones was there to promote her new single. She was on her way to Hollywood - but she would have to wait a bit longer because we are on air first!

I must point out that this was for the radio, so I was wondering why Geoff had insisted that we all wear our full stage costumes - drapes, blue suede shoes, the works. Well I told you earlier he's a PR genius, because as soon as we walked into the studio we had the producers on our side, saying how great we looked and thanks for the effort.

We could see our presenter through the control room window reading the weather forecast and were told that in three minutes we were on. I am in awe of these guys in the producer's pit. There were only three of them but they were managing the link-up to the other five radio stations and broadcasting an Indian language programme on another wavelength all at the same time. As described before, it looks like beautifully choreographed chaos.

We were hustled into the studio while a sixties song was playing which sounded really good - then it hit me that it was one of our tracks. The BBC presenters are all past masters at putting their victims at ease. During that three minutes he relaxed us told us what was going to happen and then the red light was on and he was describing our stage costumes to millions of listeners.

Nice one Geoff! He loved us and we were off on a 25 minute odyssey of jokes, chat and music. It felt more like two minutes and suddenly it was all over. Our three week adventure in radio land was over. There was a wonderful bonus to this story. Not only were we given a master copy of the tracks that we had recorded but we were also given permission to release them as a tape called 'Live Sessions'. This was before CDs became the currency of music. We re-released the tape "Live Sessions" on a CD re-mastered by yours truly a couple of years ago. The BBC has been very good to us over the years and

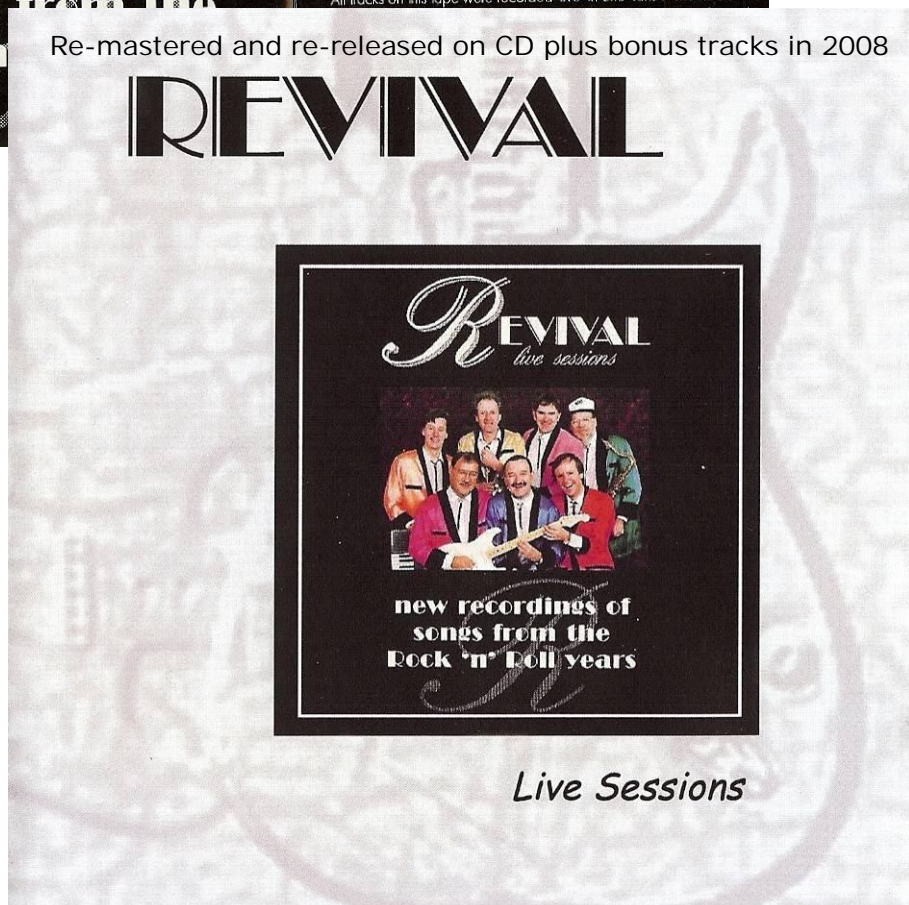
Revival - from my side of the stage

that is one of the reasons why we put so much effort into supporting Children In Need.
Thanks Auntie!

Revivals first recording was on a cassette tape



Re-mastered and re-released on CD plus bonus tracks in 2008



It's Only Make Believe

Following our adventures at Pebble Mill we settled into a great working relationship with BBC Radio Nottingham. We have, over the years, raised hundreds of thousands of pounds for numerous local charities and I can assure you it would have been half that amount if it weren't for the support we have had from our friends Karl Cooper, John Holmes and many others at Radio Nottingham.



Our biggest friend in broadcasting though is without doubt Brian Tansley – who is now an honorary member of the band. One day Brian found himself interviewing sixties legend Vince Eager, who for five years had starred in the Sir Laurence Olivier Award winning West End musical "ELVIS". In 1986 Vince took up residency in Fort Lauderdale, Florida when, for twelve years, he became a Cruise Director on American luxury cruise ships.

When Brian interviewed him he had just returned to Nottingham where he now lives. Vince had a problem. He had a gig lined up with several other sixties stars in Wollaton Park. His challenge was that he hadn't got a backing band available at that time. "No problem", said Mr T. "I am sure Revival will do it if you ask them - they are the best sixties band in Nottingham".

It was 7pm on a sunny Tuesday night in 2005, I was standing in Ken's kitchen waiting to meet my first real life sixties legend. Now I know we are a good band because thousands of people keep telling us that we are. However, playing guitar for fun for a few friends in Mapperley Social Club is one thing. Playing with a professional like Vince Eager is a whole different ball game. I was getting that "I want to be somewhere else" feeling again as the clock raced around to the hour. I was doubly nervous because Bryan was away on holiday and I was standing in for him on bass. Geoff W was off somewhere else which left me, Geoff Ellis and Allan Woolley to provide the music - and no one was quite sure what Ken was going to do!

The big hand hit the top of the hour and in walked the big man (literally he's a big fellow, with a big voice, a big ego and a big heart). Vince was a wonderful guy to work with. He put us all at ease by cracking a few jokes. He told us stories about his friends, many of whom are our heroes - the likes of Marty Wilde, Joe Brown and Sir Cliff. He also made it clear that he expected more than our best and that he was the boss. He was going to rehearse us until he was happy and he would be very demanding. And so he was. He stretched every one of us, got the best out of us, and took us to a musical level that I never thought we could get to.

"Right Ken", he said. "I realise this is your backing band, so thanks for lending them to me. I want you and the boys to open the show for me. So Ken you can get up to do your stuff then you can join my girls as a backing singer for my spot. So that was Ken sorted and we were now on the bill as Revival as well as backing Vince, which sounds good to me.

"Steve" he says (at this point I feel icy fingers crawling up my spine). "I understand you play sax. That's great. I want to do Kansas City. Next rehearsal I want a 24-bar sax solo from you". Gulp. "Yes Vince" I uttered as convincingly as I could. The rest of the rehearsals went really well. Bryan came back and took his rightful place on bass, I practiced my 24-bars for hours and we were ready for show time. Vince did work us hard, but he knew exactly what he wanted and I believe we delivered it on the day.

Wollaton Park, 11 'o'clock Saturday morning and we were sound checking on the makeshift stage. In a couple of hours we were to play to the largest audience we had ever appeared before, you could count the people in thousands rather than hundreds.

Revival - from my side of the stage

Another new experience for me was the great British public. Up to this point we had played to invited audiences who had purchased tickets to come and see us perform. This was an open air festival and quite frankly there were all sorts hanging around.

I remember one guy in particular, who looked like Benny Hill with bottleneck glasses khaki shorts, shirt, and an enormous rucksack with pots and pans dangling beneath. He was walking past the stage and stopped dead in his tracks when he heard Ken start to sing. He then stood there like a soldier to attention with his backpack on for hours. He was even there when nothing was happening on the stage!

I have no idea where he was going or what he was doing and he disappeared almost as suddenly as he had arrived. I also remember observing a couple of dodgy characters hanging around the back of the beer tent, occasionally exchanging handshakes with strangers passing by. This always happened when the police were looking in the other direction. It's amazing what you can see from the stage. I wondered if the guy covered in tattoos realised that although the two thousand people sitting behind him couldn't see what he was doing. I could clearly see the look on his girlfriend's face as he slipped his hand inside her bra!

Not wishing to paint the wrong picture, the majority of the crowd were a great bunch, and as they started to arrive so did the other acts - Mike Berry and the Outlaws, Simon Dupree and the Big Sound, and of course the big man himself, Vince Eager. I am not sure if Vince had believed Brian's assertion that we were "big" in Nottingham, but he soon found out as several hundred Revival fans were in the crowd and had made their way to the front. We started the show with 'Move It'. Allan cranked up his drums, Geoff set fire to the fretboard on his guitar (metaphorically), Ken exercised his tonsils and, led by the Revival fans, the whole crowd erupted.



Big man, Big Voice and a Big Heart

As we hit our third song I could see various members of the other acts milling around at the side of the stage. Follow that, I thought to myself as the crowd stood up and waved, danced and sang along to 'Hi Ho Silver Lining'.

On many occasions Allan had told us stories of how he was pro drummer in the sixties and had worked with many star names. While I always believed him, I often wondered if he may have exaggerated some of it. As we came off stage to thunderous applause Allan was greeted by some of his old mates from those days who were now playing in the Outlaws and the Big Sound.

Vince muttered 'well done lads' and we went off for a beer and a rest before our biggest challenge of the day, backing band to the star of the show. This was a day of high points for me and the biggest thrill I got was not

that Revival were received so well, or that I got to play my 24-bars note perfect for the first and only time since I had started, playing Kansas City. It came from sharing a microphone with Ken and the girls as backing singers to Vince who was singing 'Suspicious Minds'. Ken's got an amazing sense of harmony, the girls were professional singers and I held my own as a backing singer to a big star for a couple of songs. That will be my lasting memory of what was a wonderful experience.

We got to play with Vince again a month or so later and we would soon share an even bigger stage with him.

Starman



Like many people I can remember where I was when President Kennedy was shot. I was sitting in front of a two-bar electric fire in a house that had no telephone, no central heating and a brand new black and white TV. When John Lennon was murdered I was off work nursing my wife Sonja who had a very serious kidney infection. Strangely I can't remember where I was when Elvis died, but I will never forget where I was on the day that would have been his 70th birthday.

Before I joined Revival I was for a short time the Nottingham Evening Post's entertainments correspondent. My close friend Ian was a senior player at the Post and he had a real problem that when Nottingham's Royal Concert Hall opened, he couldn't find enough journalists to cover the numerous shows that were on almost every week. The bottom line was that his fellow journalists got fed up seeing all these acts come and go. So never being one to miss out on anything that's free, we developed an arrangement that whenever he was stuck on a Tuesday night for someone to go and 'review' the acts, he would call me and I would always say yes, irrespective of whether I liked the music or not. Fair enough.

This resulted in me going to see all sorts of people about every six weeks - some I loved, some left me cold. All I had to do was to write down a few insightful notes about the show and I got a free night out. Ian would take my notes and craft them into proper English and rightfully put his name to the article. I was quite flattered once when he changed very little of what I had written and actually credited me with the story. OK I'll own up, it was Showaddywaddy, so I guess I was well qualified to review them.

I saw some great artists walk out onto that wonderful stage; John Denver reduced us all to tears. I saw the Hollies, Paul Rodgers, Dr Hook, Ultravox and some dreadful country acts I would rather forget. Over the years I also paid to see many of my heroes there, including Eric Clapton and Robert Plant. So you can imagine my feelings when again courtesy of Brian Tansley and our friends at the BBC, we are invited to take part in Elvis's 70th birthday party to be staged at the RCH.

Radio Nottingham pulled together the cream of Nottingham's musical talent with our old friend Vince Eager top of the bill. Each act was to represent a different part of Elvis's life. Our job was to represent his film career starting with 'Jailhouse Rock'. We were asked to rehearse about five songs, so this was going to be a big deal.

Now, I didn't realise at the time that we had an advantage over all of the other acts including Vince. We played within 15 miles of Nottingham city centre every other week, so we were able to promote our Elvis slot quite regularly to our growing army of loyal fans. All of the other acts had to travel further afield to get their work. So come the night of the show we had the Revival army out in the audience waiting for the boys to make an appearance. I wish I had realised this at the time as I might not have been so terrified for three days leading up to the event!



Steve's days as a rock correspondent

Revival - from my side of the stage

The first surprise for me was that the concert hall backstage area is like a rabbit warren. Just walking around backstage conjured up memories of all the big names I had seen perform there, and now I was getting the opportunity to see the experience from their perspective.

Standing on that stage looking out at the auditorium is a thrill that will stay with me forever. We arrived in the afternoon at the allocated time to find the dress rehearsal in absolute chaos. The only saving grace was that the stage manager for the event was Tony Sherwood, a well-known figure in the local entertainment business. Tony's wife is a fan of the band and we had worked with him several times before at shows he had put on at the Commodore Banqueting Rooms. We have total faith in Tony. However, the other acts were turning up late and it was taking some of them longer and longer to get it together. It was already an hour past our allocated slot and only two hours before show time.



It reminded me of Revival's first-ever gig - only the chaos was much worse! I started to get my usual "I want to be somewhere else" feeling again and then I got really scared. Radio Nottingham's top engineer turned up and I realised for the first time that this show in front of a couple of thousand people, was also going to be broadcast live, and we are only going to get 10 minutes to sound check - if that. The system sounds awful. Our kit was still backstage and we were all edgy. In fact, this was the only time everyone in the band were all nervous at the same time. Some of the guys may deny it but this is the only time I believe we have all been in the same state of fear together. Our fans never see it because the minute we step on stage all of that disappears as the adrenaline kicks in.

Each band member shows their pre-performance anxiety in different ways. With me I get hyper and grumpy and I can't relax until I know all of the equipment is going to work properly. Bryan is incessantly tidying stuff away - usually before I have finished using it. Geoff gets overly fussy and Allan keeps telling everyone over and over that he never gets nervous. Ken goes quiet and Jim, well he's usually got balls of steel, except for this day. I have never seen all members of Revival in such a quivering mess of pre-show nerves before or since.

Of course by 'witching hour' 7.00pm, everything was sorted - the PA sounded brilliant, everyone had been sound checked and knew where to stand and what to do. Bryan and I sneaked up to the choir stalls to watch last year's Pop Star winners open the show.



The finale of the Elvis 70th Birthday concert

Revival - from my side of the stage

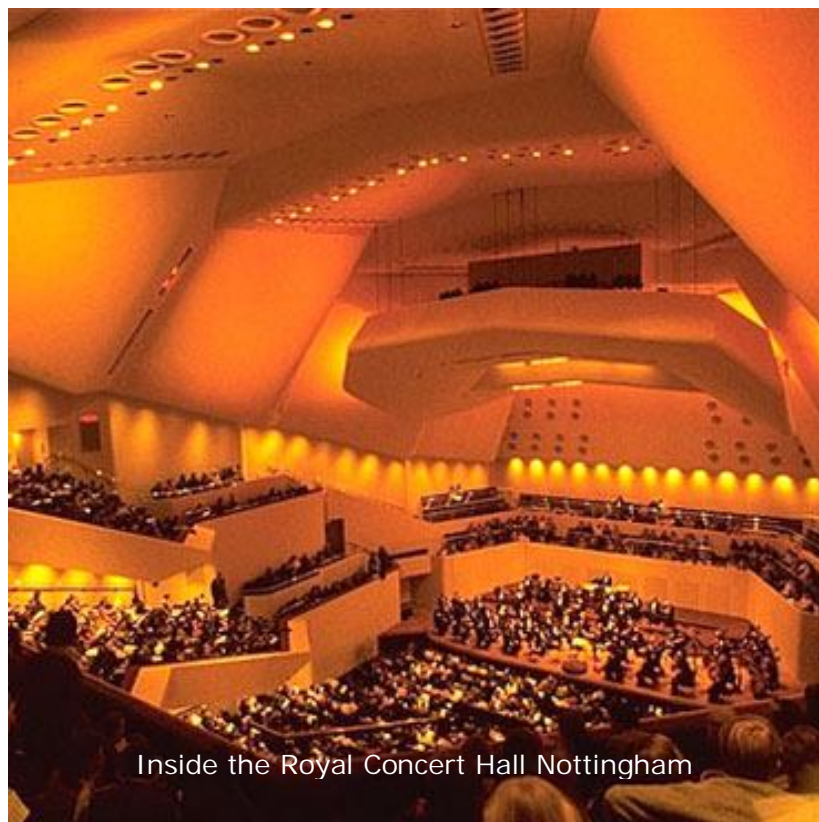
We also caught the next act but then it was time to put on the drapes. Now I like the next bit - star treatment once again! The plan was that with John Holmes and Fraser Hines sitting on the side of the stage under the spotlight narrating a slideshow of Elvis's life story, we were supposed to silently move onto the blacked-out stage, pick up our instruments and then on cue as the lights came on, burst into 'Jailhouse Rock'.

We got the two minute call in the changing room and one of Tony's stage hands lead us through the corridors to stage left followed by a TV crew who were filming the event. My guitar had been tuned up for me and the stage hand silently passed it over and plugged it into the amplifier for me. All my fear instantly disappeared. Finally, I was a Starman! All I needed to do now was to pluck up enough courage to turn round and face those thousands of expectant faces. Just as I did, instinctively in sync with the rest of the band, John Holmes's narration was interrupted by an enormous roar from certain parts of the audience.

The Revival army had spotted our brightly coloured drapes through the gloom of the blacked out stage and decided to welcome us to the show. You see they weren't at the dress rehearsal so they didn't know they should have waited until the lights come on. John Holmes had every right to be annoyed at such an interruption but he told us later he was quite impressed at the welcome we received. Being the pro that he is, he ad-libbed and turned it to his advantage, announcing that here to play the music from Elvis's films were REVIVAL! Follow that Vince, I thought to myself as we launched into 'All Shook Up'.

Of course he did. He finished the show with an amazing climax, performing his famous Elvis act. Vince isn't an Elvis impersonator - for 20 minutes he was Elvis. He called us on stage to take a bow and the Revival army seemed to have got much bigger as we took several bows.

We were all buzzing for weeks after this wonderful evening. Geoff told every audience we played to for the next few months - "you should have been there!" Yes, you should have been there. It was an amazing experience to be a Starman for those 20 minutes.



Inside the Royal Concert Hall Nottingham

In the Summertime When the Weather is High

It was the middle of July and we were standing on the steps of a cricket pavilion with a tent which had no sides and was just a little bit bigger than a caravan awning over our heads. This was our stage - and there were some very threatening thunderclouds massing over the practice nets. I looked straight down the pitch and saw just beyond the far sight screen a police car pulling up to one of the only three houses in sight. The officer knocked on the door and then started his very long walk across the pitch towards us, politely avoiding walking across the wicket. I knew what was coming. We were playing outside and the killjoy at number 21 wasn't invited to the party. I bet he keeps any cricket balls that stray into his front garden as well.

Our policeman arrived at our 'stage' just in time for us to finish off 'Three Steps to Heaven' and to my surprise he announced "the silly old sod is always complaining about the cricket ground. I could hardly hear you on his doorstep. Boys, its sounds great over here, have a great night, but make sure you're done by eleven or else I will have to come back". He didn't need to worry. Long before the curfew the heavens opened up and sent us all diving for cover trying to avoid being electrocuted as we hastily covered our amplifiers with anything we could find. Oh how I love those summertime gigs!

To be fair, that was probably the only miserable summertime gig we've had. For me, summertime with Revival has always been a bit special. That's not withstanding the fact that my wife works in a school, Bryan's wife is a teacher, Richard is a teacher, Geoff is a headmaster married to a teacher, and Allan is a school caretaker. The consequence of this is that my wife and my best friends all get wound up and stressed in sync together at the end of term. Therefore, some of the more unusual outdoor Revival gigs in July offer some much needed release to all of us.

One of the earliest ones was at a farm somewhere in the Nottinghamshire countryside. It was a bizarre day for me, which started with me being uncharacteristically careless. We arrived at the farm at 2.00pm with the intention of setting up, having a quick rehearsal and then returning home for a couple of hours rest before the gig in the evening. I pulled up outside the barn where we were to set up, habitually snapped the crook lock onto my steering wheel and immediately realised I had picked up the wrong set of keys and my car was now immobilised with the keys ten miles away!

I wasn't best pleased at making such a fool of myself and spent the next 40 minutes cursing and swearing at the sound equipment - and anyone who got in my way. We had our rehearsal and I calmed down and hatched a plan. The security was not very good, the barn was near to the roadside and we had by this time amassed quite a lot of equipment and some valuable instruments. So I volunteered to stay behind and guard the gear while Bryan kindly agreed to nip round to my house and fetch the spare keys.

So I settled down in the sun to await the early evening twilight when we would start to Rock 'n' Roll. The people who owned the farm were very pleasant and offered me a cup of tea. I had a walk around their beautiful garden and noticed an outdoor Olympic sized swimming pool next to the garage where the two Mercedes and the BMW were parked.

Bryan arrived first with my keys and seeing that I was now more relaxed started to rib me mercilessly about being so forgetful. The rest of the guys turned up and we asked if there was anywhere we could change into our stage gear. We were shown to a lean-to greenhouse at the side of the pool where there were many convenient clothes pegs and a few bath towels hanging up. It wasn't very private but it would do.

We made it to the stage and launched into the obligatory opening number of the time 'Move It'. It was going well with a very good sized crowd for a private party and everyone seemed to be having a good time. You may remember earlier I described how we often see things from the stage that are quite surprising, well it's usually Bryan and I who spot

Revival - from my side of the stage

the pretty girls on the dance floor first. I guess that makes us both the voyeurs in the band - well we got more than we bargained for on this occasion!

It didn't take long for us to spot her. She was stunning and like many girls that jive, her skirt rode up high as she danced to our music. Bryan and I are used to catching an eyeful of underwear from time to time – it's one of the perks of the job. However, through the glare of the stage lights and in the darkened room, we both become more and more convinced she wasn't wearing any.

You can imagine the debate this caused back in the changing room. Nobody would jive without wearing underwear. You two must be wrong - you pair of perverts. As it so happens, we played a lot of jiving songs that night and after three sets the band was split down the middle - three of us thought she wasn't and three of us thought she was. We came off stage at midnight and staggered back to the changing room dripping with sweat, exhausted and contemplating the thrill of lifting all of that heavy gear off the stage and into the cars.

Bryan had just dropped his trousers as our girl walked in and announced "we are all going for a swim now boys. I hope you don't mind if a few of us share the changing room with you". Three or four of her friends and their boyfriends joined her and before we could answer she had whipped off her dress and, yes, you have guessed correctly, no knickers! They were now all stark naked and ran off to frolic in the pool. Well, I can't ever remember it taking so long to pack the equipment away and leave the venue. Some of my band mates just didn't want to go home. Geoff W, never being shy, even sat down on a sun lounger at the side of the pool to watch and would probably have stayed there if he hadn't been invited to strip off and join them, at which point he thankfully decided it was time to leave.



The Moorgreen Show has been running for years. It started as a coal mining gala but by the time we were invited to play there the pits had long since closed down. We arrived one sunny afternoon in August 2001 looking forward to being the support act to one of our sixties heroes - Gerry and the Pacemakers. We drove across the field past Fred Dibnah and one of his fantastic steam engines and finally, after carefully navigating our way through hundreds of screaming children, we arrived backstage. No sign of Gerry yet, but an assortment of Pacemakers were milling around, all looking too young to be the

original band - and none of them looked very happy.

Playing on stage was a really good country duo and while I'm not a country fan these guys sounded great, and the lead singer looked vaguely familiar. I was sure I had met him as a younger man, but couldn't for the life of me remember where.

When I was 16 I lived in Carlton and in those days you didn't leave home on a weekend night unless you wore a leather jacket. All my friends were bikers. They were all older than me and we used to meet up every Friday night at the Carlton pub to see the resident biker band, Carl's Fables. Although I was only 15, I had matured early and had long bushy sideburns just like my hero Neil Young. This not only enabled me to get into places I shouldn't, but I could also pass as 18 and get served at the bar.

Carl's Fables were simply brilliant. They played 'Born to be Wild', songs by Cream and Black Sabbath and they finished every night with 'Why don't we sing this song all together' by the Rolling Stones. At which point the bikers would be up on the dance floor,

Revival - from my side of the stage

arms around each other, pints in hand, singing their hearts out. There was never any trouble - not necessarily because they were good lads, but more likely because the pub was run by Fred Reacher, a former policeman and soon to be chairman of Nottingham Forest. No one messed with Fred. Carl's Fables had an enormous influence on me and are one of the main reasons I started to play guitar. So you can imagine my delight when the country band finished their spot and joined us backstage where I realised that the guy singing was my boyhood hero Carl Abrams.

I spent the best part of an hour chatting to him reminiscing about the Carlton pub and other venues. Sometimes when you meet your heroes it can be disappointing, but not on this occasion as Carl was a really nice chap. I discovered that he had spent the last 30 years as a pro musician forming Karl and the Heidelbergers after the demise of the Fables, and that he had gone on to write songs and perform in public as a country artist. After Revival's set he said some pretty nice stuff about our act which made me walk on air for days to come. Approval from the guy that kicked it all off in my mind - how good can that be? Keep rocking Carl, and thanks for the inspiration.

As we came off stage it was clear Gerry had arrived and he was mooching about backstage grumbling and complaining at anyone who got in his way. When he got on stage he grumbled at the audience and screamed at the children running around in front of the stage and then proceeded to sing his hits using an out of tune guitar supported by a band that clearly wanted to be somewhere else.

We had a great day. Since then we have done pig roasts at the Boat Club at Trent Bridge, played in a barn at Morton for the Air Ambulance, played at the Yacht club down by the river at Radcliffe-on-Soar, and at numerous summer events.

We have also done five gigs for the Volvo Owners Club, visiting Stratford-upon-Avon, York, Newark Showground and a lovely stately home where I clearly remember a vintage air display flying overhead as we arrived. We usually play in a large marquee with dodgy electricity and nowhere to change.

These rallies were populated by lovely people wearing woolly jumpers and obsessing over twenty-year-old cars: "Oh look, there's the one that Simon Templar drove, oh and another and another etc, etc.....!" It's fun to walk amongst the crowd and keep your ears open, you will hear earnest discussions about the cars that they clearly love with a passion. "I have the 1967 model which is the one with the rectangular indicators; of course they were changed to be two millimetres wider in the August of that year, that's how you can tell if the engine is an XK91 or an XK92b!" And so it goes on.

The Volvo Owners Club was probably top of my lists for summertime events until very recently when we were invited to play for the Morgan Owners Club. Before I go on I



should state that Jim, our keyboard player and all-round musician, drives a canary yellow Morgan - yes that's him you might have seen breezing through the villages of north Nottinghamshire on a nice day (he doesn't take it out in the rain).

There were no tents, caravans or any form of camping out for these guys though, they had taken over the whole of the Buxton Palace Hotel - a magnificent Victorian building in the heart of the Peak District. We knew straight away it was going to be a five star gig. All the girls were decked out in their finest jewellery and the boys all had that entrepreneurial look about them.

Revival - from my side of the stage

It didn't start off too well as we were faced with a long drive from Nottingham and we had been warned that we would have to carry our equipment a good distance to the stage. The car park in front of the hotel had been completely taken over by the most impressive collection of hand-built cars that I have ever seen – a truly magnificent sight. Unfortunately, we had with us the usual collection of vintage instruments, heavy speaker cabinets and more stage clothes than Danny La Rue

I carefully threaded my way through the car park trying not to run into any of these precious vehicles, slowly manoeuvring my way to the nearest entrance and then up the steps, through the reception, down the corridor, turn right.... I was just thinking we would be halfway back to Matlock when I was shown into a magnificent ballroom with tables laid out for what I guessed to be about three hundred black tie diners.

With the help of our three best roadies Mo, Peg and Elaine (thanks girls), we eventually got all the gear into the room. The next challenge though was to find somewhere to park. Now if this had been the Volvo Owners Club that would have been easy. It would have been in the field behind the tent and, boys mind the cow pats! Not for these guys though. They had arranged for the local university to open up a special area for us to park our cars and we got CCTV, a locked gate and a security guard to look after them. I began to suspect that this gig was going to be a bit different from the norm.

After a leisurely and confidence-building sound check, I wandered off on my own to look at these beautiful cars. The sun was shining and the vehicles gleamed. Not too surprisingly though, the conversations were largely the same as the Volvo drivers. "I have the 1984 six cylinder with the back draft amplifier. Of course, it was changed in the April of that year to include a modified Subaru converter". I also observed that they referred to each other as MOGs. As the club is much older than "our Tel" I wondered if TOG Wogan drives one of these things and has stolen the nomenclature. I spent the rest of the night looking out for him but he didn't show up.

We had several hours to kill while our hosts had their black tie dinner, and as we discovered later, copious bottles of wine. I had forgotten that Jim had booked a table in the restaurant so I was pleasantly surprised when we all went off to have a five star meal ourselves. With such superb service and great food I was now feeling so relaxed that I was thinking more about finding a place to sleep rather than indulge in some high energy Rock 'n' Roll.

However, about thirty minutes before show time I could feel the usual pre-show nerves kicking in, with the usual questions starting to fill my head: Would they like us? Did I tune up my guitar properly? Where did I leave my tie? I shouldn't have worried though, as from the first bar of the first song the floor was full of rocking MOGies having the time of their lives. We did three full sets with only short breaks in-between, and were called back for two encores as once again a splendid time was had by all.

We packed up the gear, drove home down empty country roads and I got into bed just as the dawn broke. Thanks to Jim and the MOGs for a wonderful night.

For several years we were top of the bill at the festivals held in Arnold Park and it was at one of these that I learned the power one can hold over an audience. We arrived at 6pm as Rob Cotton; the Vicar from Arnold Methodist Church was conducting the Sunday service. Rob was known as the Rocking Rev because he had on occasion sung 'Blue Suede Shoes' with Revival.

As I arrived, everyone was standing up - even those in the beer tent, and if they weren't singing along to the hymns they were gently swaying in the breeze. "Please be seated" commanded Rob and approximately fifteen hundred people sat down. After a couple of prayers Rob asked everyone to stand and again they all complied with his request,

Revival - from my side of the stage

including most of the drinkers in the beer tent. I was fascinated by this collective behaviour and began to wonder if this was due to Rob's commanding presence, whether it was divine intervention or something more tribal. Hmm, I must find out.....

As it was getting dark we hit the stage and I looked out over a mass of people who were sitting drinking, enjoying the music and have a good time. As we launched into 'Pretty Women' I sensed it was time to test my theory. "I want everyone to stand up and clap your hands" I command over Geoff's sizzling intro to the song. Everyone rose to their feet and I could feel the hairs rise on the back of my neck. I couldn't resist it "You can sit down for the next one" I commanded – and they did! Just as the power started to go to my head I remembered the words of my very first employer - "with power comes responsibility". So I decided to behave myself for the rest of the set only commanding them one more time to stand up for 'Hi Ho Silver Lining'.

The Methodist Church has played an important part in my musical journey it was in the scouts at Mapperley Methodist church that I first got the urge to blow a horn. Many years later thanks to our very good friend Councillor Rod Kempster we would play many dances for the Arnold Methodist. We were even nominated for a Rotary Club Citizens of the Year Award in recognition of the all the money we have helped raise for charity, which amounts to hundreds of thousands of pounds, thanks Rod

No Summertime Blues for Revival. Bring out the beer tent, let's get down and play some Rock 'n' Roll in the fresh air!



This Old Guitar

Elaine was one of the most dynamic, successful, and challenging people I have ever had the privilege to employ. She had quite a few boyfriends - none of whom could keep up with her; she was a real livewire until one day she was out for a Sunday lunchtime drink, when she happened to walk into the bar where AC/DC's road crew were having a pre-show pint. They were appearing just down the road at the Donington Monsters of Rock Festival and had found what they thought was a nice quiet pub. Then Elaine walked in and to cut a long story short she hit it off with Geoff Banks, Malcolm Young's guitar technician.



Jeff Beck's Strat

The first we knew about it at work was when two weeks later Elaine announced at short notice that she was going to New York for the weekend. After a transatlantic courtship Elaine and Geoff B settled into a relationship that would produce three children. Geoff would spend several months on tour and return to Long Eaton for a few weeks before he would be off again. I was dying to meet him and talk about his adventures in rock star land.

My patience was rewarded when Elaine invited Sonja and I round to meet her new man. I was a little apprehensive, as Elaine and I had an unwritten agreement not to talk about our work when out socially and Geoff B probably wouldn't want to talk about his work either. I needn't have worried as Geoff and I became instant friends. All he wanted to do was talk about guitars all night and I was enthralled by his stories of working with Led Zeppelin and Genesis. It also turned out that Geoff had been backstage at many of the concerts I had been to over the years.

"Elaine tells me you play in a band. What guitars do you play?" he asked. I had a couple of nice basses, but because at this time I was only standing in for Geoff W now and again I didn't own a really good six string guitar. I had been borrowing a lovely SG from another work colleague who never played it but I couldn't get him to sell it to me. I explained this to Geoff and he asked me what my dream guitar would be. I explained that I had always fancied a Gibson E335 as played by famous Nottingham guitarist and a hero of mine, Alvin Lee of Ten Years After. "Nice guitars" Geoff said. "I have three or four of those in my collection of about a hundred guitars at the moment! Do you fancy another beer Steve?" I remember mumbling yes please as I contemplated the logistics of owning a hundred guitars.

Geoff was gone for a few minutes and when he returned, instead of two cans of beer he was holding a Gibson E335 in each hand. "Try these" he said "and tell me which one feels the best". I bashfully played a few licks and grunted that this one felt pretty good. "Look Steve", he said knowingly, "you won't be able to tell if it's the right guitar for you until you have played it on at least three or four different gigs. I'm off on tour for the next three months why don't you take this one, gig it for a bit and we will talk prices when you come back. I had only just met this guy and he trusted me with a vintage guitar that was probably worth more than I could afford. Wow, what a great guy!

Three months later we meet up again and I have discovered that he was right - I couldn't get on with the 335, it just didn't suit my style. Geoff wasn't surprised and said "what you really need for Revival is a classic Stratocaster. I have just the one for you upstairs - be back in a minute". When he returned, Geoff was holding a beautiful blue Custom Shop Stratocaster that used to belong to Jeff Beck. He had given the guitar to Geoff after a tour and Geoff was now offering to sell it to me for half its current market value. The minute I picked this wonderful instrument up it was love at first sight. I often reflect on this story when we play 'Hi Ho Silver Lining' at the end of the night. I play the number on a guitar once owned by the man who wrote the song - how cool is that?

Revival - from my side of the stage

This was the beginning of a long friendship that produced some more guitars from the stars. Geoff E's blue Stratocaster was previously owned by the Corrs guitarist and Geoff W's Stratocaster was once owned by one of Boyzone - all of them coming from the Geoff Banks collection.

There is one more instrument of note in the Revival arsenal of guitars. Our good friend Steve Cooke is an ardent collector of Cliff Richard memorabilia. One day at rehearsal he handed over a beautiful Yamaha twelve string to Geoff E complete with a certificate confirming that the guitar was once owned and played on stage by Sir Cliff himself!



There Are Places I Remember

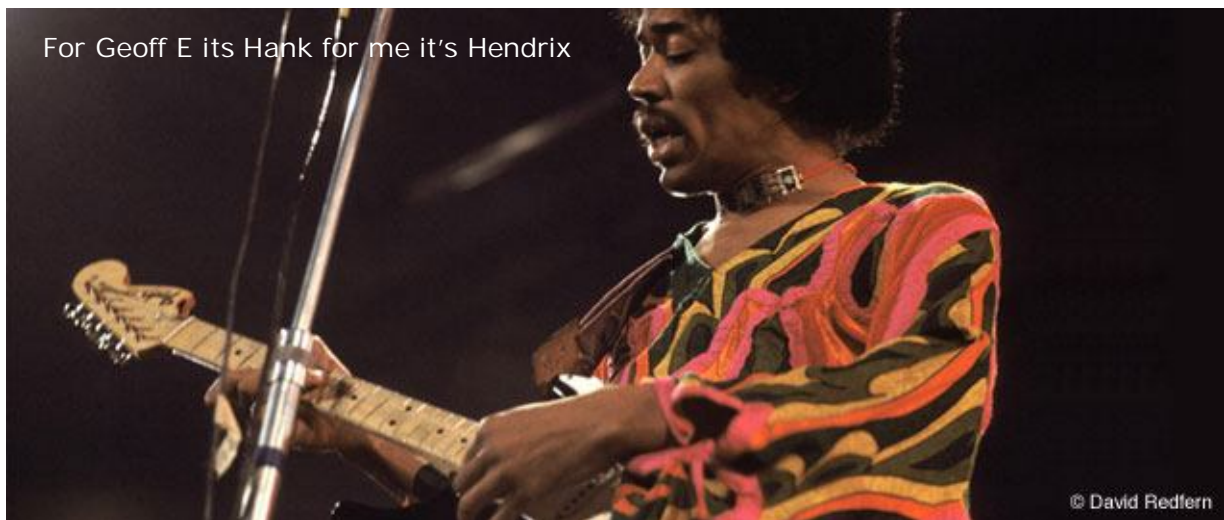


Wight for a life-changing weekend.

I left school at the tender age of sixteen in 1969 with only one ambition in mind - that was to become Eric Clapton's bass player. To say I was obsessed with music would be an understatement. I couldn't play any instrument; I had no singing voice, just a deep desire to be involved in music. The closest I came to performing was as a DJ on Monday nights at the local youth club. However, my life was changed for ever the next summer when I hitch-hiked with some friends to the Isle of

Sleeping in haystacks and hedge bottoms we finally arrived after two days of haphazard travelling. I was bombarded with new experiences. I saw many naked women, tasted funny cigarettes (first and last time....!) and nearly got beaten up by Hells Angles. Most important of all, I watched The Doors, Ten Years After, The Groundhogs, Free, ELP, The Who, John Sebastian and many more performing the most amazing music live on stage. It all reached a cosmic climax as Jimi Hendrix blasted Voodoo Chile out of his massive Marshall stack into the night sky.

This is no exaggeration - that weekend changed my life forever. I became even more obsessed with live music and, having started work, I at last had money in my pocket. Every Friday night Keith Fordyce would announce "The weekend starts here!" For me, that was a trip to Gedling Miners' Welfare (nee Mapperley Social Club), where I would pursue my love of music and hope to find a like-minded girl who wouldn't mind getting naked!



In those days, Friday nights at the welfare was a heaving mass of unfulfilled adolescent lust. All the pretty girls were there along with the lads from the pit, who always appeared to have more money than us middle class boys. I quickly got into a routine of ogling the girls, far too shy to approach one, getting depressed then getting drunk, and finally settling down on whichever side of the stage the bass player was standing so I could learn just how they did it. I had a plan you see - learn to play, get in a band and then the girls would find me.

There were some great groups around in those days: Gaffa, whose bass player had a bass in the shape of a frog, while my favourite band was the splendidly named Magnum Opus, whose guitarist wore a black top hat years before Slash was even born. Another favourite of mine was Lefty, so called because all members of the band were left handed - even the drummer! I became good friends with the rhythm guitarist, Graham Neale, who went on to become a presenter at BBC Radio Nottingham and Radio Trent. He was a great guy

Revival - from my side of the stage

who was even more obsessed with rock music than I was. Sadly his life came to a tragic end a few years later.

If you had told me in those days that one day I would be appearing at Mapperley Plains SC regularly on that hallowed stage with a guitarist who can play Eric Clapton riffs "almost" as well as Eric, I would have asked you what you were smoking!

Another venue that was to play an important part in my life was the Nottingham Albert Hall. In the 1970s they had rock bands on every six weeks and I was there at every concert still in search of my musical home. We saw some great bands there like Uriah Heap, Wishbone Ash, The Groundhogs and Sha-Na-Na, who were famous for their appearance at Woodstock. This band was a departure for me, as unlike the rest of the guys in Revival, I was a bit younger so hadn't heard all of that great Rock 'n' Roll music the first time around. I heard such songs as 'Teenager in Love', 'Tell Laura I Love Her', and 'Rock 'n' Roll is Here to Stay' for the first time at this Methodist mission. I was exposed to Doo Wop and Rock 'n' Roll saxophone for the first time and instantly fell in love with it all.



I went home that night dreaming of what it must be like to stand on that stage singing 'shoo wop bop' harmonies and playing saxophone in front of an audience at that wonderful venue.

Moving forward 20 years or so and I have since found a lovely lady to share my life with; settled for Geoff Ellis rather than Eric Clapton, and here I am standing on that very same stage wishing I was somewhere else, and asking myself why I keep putting myself through this stress over and over again!

It was a Saturday afternoon and sound check time. I was on stage with Revival surrounded by the Henley Farrell Big Band's drummers, percussionist, several real saxophone players, trumpet players, trombone players, keyboards etc.



The Henley Farrell Big Band

Once I got wind of this gig I became very nervous. Not because it was at the Albert Hall as by this time we had played there on several occasions previously with such as the Lace City Singers and with the Carlton Male Voice Choir. I was nervous because these guys were serious musicians who could read music. I played a few bits of bluesy sax and got away with it. But I wouldn't tonight. Not alongside these boys and girls. I would be found out for what I was - a musician whose ambition exceeded his talent. So I decided there and then to leave my sax at home for this gig.

However, much to my surprise, my fellow band members insisted that I played sax as usual and I had to call Sonja my wife and ask her to bring it down to the rehearsal. Had I been smart I would have taken that as a compliment. Instead, I just got even worse stage fright than I already had.

We had decided that for the finale we would get both acts on stage and play one of their songs and one of ours. Their song was going to be Mack the Knife with Ken taking the vocal. Now this is a fabulous song with many chords and on top of that it changes key with each verse. It's fairly impossible to commit it to memory - but if you read music that's no problem. However, I don't, and this meant I had to sit down in front of a music stand with my guitar and follow a chord sheet, completely alien and guaranteed to get the heart beating even quicker come show time.

Boy - suddenly I'm on a different planet! Ken's tremendous rendition of the song, which is a completely different style of music to anything we have done before, blew me away, and

Revival - from my side of the stage

then the band kicked in with some of the most amazing brass sounds I have ever heard. I knew it sounded good sitting in the audience - but sitting in the middle of that great band on stage was something else.

Now though it was time for my comeuppance. We were going to do the Rock 'n' Roll medley with Tony Farrell, the band's leader, in charge. It was decided that when we got to the guitar solo, Geoff E would do his usual thing and then Tony would signal to the next soloist, such as Jim on keyboards, one of his own musicians or even yours truly sheepishly holding my saxophone trying to look like I knew what to do with it. The plan was that Tony would read the audience reaction and keep it going for as long as he felt appropriate. The theory was that we would know when to finish because he would signal control back to Geoff E to finish off the section.

I was just trying to compute this terrifying news when he added: "Steve, if it goes well I might ask you to play your solo twice so make sure you play exactly the same notes the second time as the first please". He didn't explain why, but I swear I saw him wink at the real saxophone player standing next to me. Now I was absolutely bugged! I tend to make it up as I go along and therefore my solos are different every night. Jazz musicians call it improvisation. I call it necessity.

The audience hadn't arrived yet but my adrenaline levels had gone sky high. Off we went into familiar territory as Ken launched into our usual routine - only this time with this fabulous band embellishing every nuisance of the chords. Geoff E did his solo, Tony pointed to Jim who did his, and then it was my turn. "Okay Steve", I told myself, "keep it simple, keep it in tune and try to remember what you play". Suddenly it was all over; it was in tune on the beat and Tony smiled at me and pointed to the trumpet player who blasted out an amazing solo.

Then, having heard from someone else in the band, it was time for me again. Only this time, as I blew into my horn, so did the real sax player standing next to me - playing note for note what I was, but in harmony. At bar four, someone else joined in and I can tell you it felt so good to be part of this amazing sound. It was most definitely as case of: "Look mum, it's me playing in a big swing band!"

Tony brought the solo back to Geoff and we were done. Tony announced: "That was great guys. Loved the solo Steve - see you all this evening". I was feeling giddy, relieved and elated all at the same time. I was in awe of the guys who learned my solo "on the hoof" and then played along with me in harmony. Just as I was contemplating all of this, the real saxophone player turned to me and said: "I enjoyed that Steve. I've not played that kind of music before. Some of those Rock 'n' Roll riffs are trickier than I had imagined. See you later pal!" I don't know whether he was being generous or sarcastic, but I didn't care. I had survived seven minutes or so with these guys, the band leader was happy and I hadn't disgraced myself, so I settled for that.

I was now really up for the show – and what a night we had. Allan Woolley joined the big band for a two drummer drum solo, our set went really well and I couldn't wait to get on stage with the big band at the end of the night. It was even better than at the sound check. I got to play my solo three times - once on my own and twice with the guys. The audience went nuts! Thanks Tony- it was a privilege and a pleasure to play with your band. For just a few minutes I actually fulfilled my boyhood ambition of playing in a big swing band.



That wasn't the only musical highlight we have enjoyed at the Albert Hall as, again courtesy of our friends at the BBC, in May 2000 we were invited to be the support act to the Fab Four, Nottingham's own tribute band to the Beatles.

Revival - from my side of the stage

"The Rolling truck Stones thing was parked outside", is a line from the Deep Purple song 'Smoke on the Water' and I never imagined it, or its BBC equivalent, would one day be parked outside one of our gigs

We arrived at Saturday lunchtime for the obligatory sound check and rehearsal, and it was good to know that the Fab Four had agreed to let us use their professional sound system which was a monster compared to ours. Our rig isn't for beginners, but with this one Allan's drums sounded like a thunderstorm and the sound quality was excellent - plus they had a professional sound engineer and I could have the night off from knobs and flashing lights.

Stage fright kicked in as soon as I arrived and saw the BBC outside broadcast truck parked on the pavement outside the Albert Hall, with a great snake of cables feeding off through the gent's toilet window. I clearly remember thinking for a split second, "oh it looks like some famous act is playing here tonight" - and then I realised it was us! As usual there were the men in brown coats fussing around setting up microphones completely ignoring us and at the same time professionally keeping out of the way of the talent (that's slang for us lot).

I wasn't unduly concerned as I thought they were recording the gig and would edit out any mistakes and broadcast it later in the week. This was what normally happened. No one ever broadcast a whole gig due to time restrictions. The two bands would be on stage for over two hours so I expected them to pick the best songs from each band and put a one hour show together.

Just as I was feeling more comfortable and tuning up my guitar, Mr Browncoat said: "Excuse me sir. I am sorry for all this fuss but we want the microphones in the right place because this will be a LIVE broadcast tonight". He was winding me up or they had changed their plans because it wasn't broadcast live it was edited (just a little) and broadcast the following Monday.

"What"! I said to myself. Not only would we have just under a thousand people in the hall but potentially hundreds of thousands - and my mum - listening live on the air. It was all right for the Fab Four as they play professionally four or five nights a week. We are a bunch of teachers, company directors and church organists with families and high pressure jobs and commitments, who only play live once or twice a month for fun, when it can be a real struggle to be match fit and note perfect every night. This meant we had to play twenty or more songs without making a single mistake, getting all the words right as well as being in tune and on the beat for one hundred percent of the time...Gulp!



We weren't the only people under pressure though. When we have been in the studio there are eight microphones on the drum kit, one for each instrument and one for each singer - each going to a separate track on the recording desk. Then when we have recorded the song the producer could spend weeks mixing the sound to get it just right. On previous occasions our BBC producer would be doing all of this in real time and deliver a perfectly mixed stereo signal to a couple of hundred thousand people, 'live' as it was being played. I am in awe of these guys. It's team work. We play the right notes (maybe) and they deliver it on air to the audience. Simple!

We went ahead with the sound check and I began to feel a little more comfortable because the Fab Four's rig sounded so good and, for once, I didn't have to worry about

Revival - from my side of the stage

the sound. Then the Fab Four did their sound check and I have to say what a great bunch of musicians they were. I normally don't like tribute bands - they get their hair cut like the artist they are trying to parody, and then make a sound that is inferior to the original. The Fab Four are the exception to the rule. They don't try to look like the Beatles but they sure do sound like them. Indeed one of the things that struck me was that as familiar as I am with the Beatles repertoire, I had never heard it live, so these guys gave me a real insight into what it must have been like. It also made me realise for the first time how much the Beatles "rocked".

Apart from being great musicians, the Fab Four were also very generous and after our sound check their leader was very complimentary about our sound. That meant a lot to me as these guys are professionals and we were apparently holding our own. I was also delighted to hear that we had been invited back on stage for the finale which would be 'Hey Jude' with Revival joining in on the chorus.

Brian Tansley presented the show with his usual flair; we did a blistering opening set without any discernable "mistakes" and then the Fab Four blew us and the audience away with an astounding set. On top of that, the finale turned out to be one of the most memorable moments I have had on stage as we joined in on 'Hey Jude', with the guys in the truck getting the mix just right.

How can I be so sure the gig was so good? Well good old Auntie yet again gave us a tape of the broadcast and with their permission, several tracks made it onto our next CD 'Ten Years On' - live renditions of 'Move It', 'Chantilly Lace', 'Oh Boy', 'Pretty Woman' 'Wonderful Tonight' (featuring 'Eric' Ellis on guitar) and 'Running Scared'. All of them in tune and on the beat - indeed for once we played all of the right notes in the right order!

Before I become overwhelmed with nostalgia and retire for the evening, I feel I must share with you one other great place we have had the privilege of playing many times. The Bonington theatre in Arnold seats about two hundred people and is situated over a swimming pool, which made it a very hot venue to play until air conditioning was fitted a few years ago.

It has two diverse characteristics. On the positive side, for the fifteen or so years we have played there, we have had the privilege of working with "professor" Bob Massey, who has presided over the lights and made us look far better and more entertaining than we are. The second is the ghost...! Now I don't believe in ghosts but over the years there have been many strange happenings with our equipment - none of them destructive, more playful and, of course, they always add to the stage fright. The very last time we played there during the afternoon sound check I was pretty vocal and scornful about Geoff E's assertion that the place was haunted.

I was feeling very relaxed about playing and the afternoon followed the usual drill - we set up, sound checked, rehearsed the show and the guys then went home to fetch their wives while I stayed behind to guard the equipment. An excuse really as I needed to generally fuss around and double-check the sound system. On this occasion Jim stayed with me and he Bob and I had a bit of fun jamming and playing some blues music (a genre that Revival doesn't dabble in). While Jim and I were indulging ourselves Bob was practicing his moves with the light show and we were all very happy.

I put my guitar on the stand, turned the volume control down and left the amplifier switched on, happy in the knowledge that the guitar and my in-ear monitors were not only working perfectly, but sounded particularly good, meaning that hopefully I would be able to sing in tune confidently.

Off we went to have a cup of tea and before long it was show time. I confidently wandered over to my guitar, strapped it on and off we went into the opening number. Nothing! Not only was my guitar as dead as a Dodo but I couldn't hear anything in my monitors. The guys carried on but were aware that I was struggling.

Revival - from my side of the stage

Being a technical sort of person I dropped into fault-finding mode and I couldn't for the life of me figure out why I couldn't hear anything. The amp was turned on, the guitar was plugged in, the battery was new and it had worked just half an hour before. I was just about to run off stage and go home when suddenly, without explanation, it all burst into life. At the end of the song Geoff explained to the audience that the ghost had struck again, while I smiled and tried to look confident.

Now I still don't believe in ghosts, but when we play at the theatre again I will be keeping my big mouth shut at the sound check!



Bob Massey's fabulous light show



Bryan's Elvis impersonation which believe me is far better than his Mick Jagger

Millennium

I didn't realise it at the time, but New Year's Eve 2000 turned out to be one of life's crossroads for me. I had been part of Revival for ten years, which was nine years, eleven months and thirty days longer than I had expected to be. I had also worked for the same company since leaving school some 31 years previously. I couldn't at that point have imagined that the company would cease to exist as I knew it before the next Hogmanay.

Early in 1999 there was speculation that entertainers would be earning a lot of money on Millennium's Eve, but it didn't cross my mind that Revival would get such a gig. We had only done a couple of New Year's Eves during our first ten years, so my expectations were fairly low. We had often played for the lovely people at Coxmoor Golf Club, and despite not having a proper stage, we always enjoyed playing there.

So I was delighted when Bryan announced that they had booked us for the big night and even more pleased when he announced the fee he had negotiated. Now I have to say at this point that Revival isn't about the money - but it helps. This was to be the biggest fee for playing my guitar I would ever receive and I can't imagine it being surpassed. I can't tell you how much we were paid, but my share was considerably more than my first year's salary when I first started work.

Being paid so much and it being such a special night, added to the fact it was for a bunch of people who had been so good to us, in a way added to the pressure to put on a good show. We arrived early in the afternoon and sound checked and rehearsed, as it was going to be a long haul with an extra couple of hours added onto the evening. We had therefore rehearsed additional material and planned to do four sets instead of the usual three.

The first set sounded good and we got a good reception and after changing we all retired to the putting green to see the fireworks that had been laid on. I didn't notice that Bryan was nowhere to be seen. When we got back to the changing room to get ready for our second set of the evening, we found Bryan lying down curled up in agony clutching his stomach. He was shaking, very hot and throwing up all over the place. I wasn't sure if he needed an ambulance because he had been as right as rain some twenty minutes previously. He assured us that if he could just lie still for a while he would be okay.

Fine - but we were due on stage five minutes ago! The Dunkirk spirit kicked in as Geoff E and I did a quick edit of the set list to pull out some of the more difficult songs and I suddenly found myself playing bass guitar! I had played bass with Revival previously with several weeks rehearsal time beforehand, but that had been a couple of years ago. It wasn't my instrument and I remember struggling to find out which knob was the volume control. Bryan's bass was also very heavy and the strap was too long for me.

The next 35 minutes are etched into my memory forever. I kind of went into a strange place shutting out everything but the next note. I can't recall having to concentrate on anything as hard as I had to on that night. It was a big emotional and intellectual challenge, supported by my band mates who were encouraging and helpful at every step of the way. I am very proud that not only did we get through the set without anything going wrong, but I don't think the audience were aware of what had happened. While we missed Bryan's vocals and harmonies, we did our job and justified our enormous fee.

Much to my relief when we returned to changing room Bryan was sitting up and looking much better - his mystery illness had subsided and he went on to perform fine during the final two sets.

We have been very fortunate to play at some great venues The Royal Concert Hall, The Albert Hall, The Guildhall in the City of London, Newark Palace Theatre, The Bonington

Revival - from my side of the stage

Theatre, the BBC Pebble Mill studios and many others, but one humble village hall will stick in my memory forever.

Very early in Revival's career was had played at Woodborough Village Hall a couple of times, and in the audience was a lovely lady who was on the social committee for the Village of Painswick in the Cotswolds. She had been invited to come and see Revival while visiting friends in Nottingham and enjoyed it so much she timed her next visit to coincide with our next appearance.

It was on this occasion she hatched a plot to get us to play at a New Year's Eve party in her own village hall. Now at this point in our musical journey, the furthest we had travelled was just a few miles, so a trip down to the Cotswolds with all of our gear, guitars and loved ones, sounded like a world tour to us. So we stuck fifty quid on our usual fee to cover the petrol and committed to the gig. Then, having looked at the map and realised we would be on stage past midnight, we decided that driving home might be a bridge too far. 'No problem', said our sponsor. Apparently there were lots of bed and breakfast houses in the village who would be only too pleased to cater for us and our wives – in all, a party of 14 people.

A couple of months later, on New Year' Eve morning, we were ready to set off to the other end of the country. It was cold but dry - but the forecast was for snow. Hmmm!

After an uneventful journey we arrived in the village just as the snow started to fall. I clearly remember Geoff E's car sliding sideways down the gentle slope up to the hall. It took us all several attempts to navigate the entrance to the car park and I remember thinking it was a good job we were staying the night because we were unlikely to get out again due to the weather.

The hall was small but friendly and our host and the committee were lovely people. After the sound check we were split up and handed over to our hosts - four of us in one cottage, six of us in another and two more couples elsewhere.

Now I have to admit here to being a bit of a snob as at this time in my life I was travelling the world on company expenses and had got used to five star hotels and first class travel. I also had some grim memories of bed and breakfast holidays in Mablethorpe as a child which had just about put me off such establishments for life.

However, I was pleasantly surprised and then delighted as we pulled up outside of a beautiful cottage. We were first shown into a magnificent lounge which had some of the most amazing Christmas decorations I have ever seen, crowned by a trumpet and a trombone artistically laid out in front of the log fire, with tinsel wrapped around to create a truly musical greeting. Those of you who have been to my house might be dropping a few pennies right now.....!

After being shown where the "swimming pool" and the breakfast room were, we were booked in formally and offered a cup of tea or something stronger. Sonja and I were then shown to our room, which was complete with four poster bed. On the coffee table was a strategically placed designer magazine with a picture on the cover of our room and the headline, "Painswick cottage wins an award" - for being the best accommodation in the South West of England. It transpires that the cottage was the former home of the actor who played Walter Gabriel in the Archers. And were staying there as guests for free! All I had got to do was play guitar and sing a bit - what a great way to start the New Year!

It was still a couple of hours until show time when we all met up at the village teashop. It had stopped snowing but it was bitterly cold and there appeared to be no-one in town but us! I suspected that they had opened up especially for us. As the members of the band arrived it becomes clear that we are all staying in top notch accommodation and were being spoilt something rotten and made to feel very welcome indeed.

Revival - from my side of the stage

After tea and scones it was off to work as we put on the drapes and brothel creepers and set about entertaining our audience, which I suspect was the whole population of the village. It was an outstanding night playing our music to some of the nicest people I have ever met. We welcomed in the New Year, left the gear on stage and staggered off to our respective four poster beds. We awoke to a hearty full English breakfast, much praise and solicitations from our hosts. Then we leisurely loaded up the gear and set off home, concluding one of the most civilised gigs I have ever known. Beautiful memories.

My journey with Revival has been full of ambitions fulfilled, fear, excitement, achievement and some real ego-boosting moments, which include being stopped and asked for my autograph in ASDA and recently being recognised as a "pop star" by a waitress who was serving us at a table where I was entertaining a business client.

However, the best part about it for me over the years has been the wonderful people we have met. I get a kick out of messing around with all of the equipment; I get satisfaction from playing my instruments in tune and on the beat (occasionally). It's a thrill to sing with these guys, I love being in a gang and we are all addicted to applause.

However, none of this compares with the moments when I see someone in the audience smiling, clapping their hands or singing along and dancing - having the time of their lives. It's clear they have put their cares and woes aside for few minutes to enjoy this great music which has brought us all together. I feel privileged to be part of a generation that has enjoyed such a rich culture and so honoured to have found five other like-minded musicians who have allowed me to share it with them.

Steve Potts, June 2010



The Revivalists past and present

Name	Instrument played	Comment
Geoff Ellis	Lead Guitar/Vocals	Permanent member since 1990
Ken Pritchett	Lead vocals	Permanent member since 1990
Bryan Wilkinson	Bass Guitar/vocals	Permanent member since 1990
Steve Potts	Guitar/Banjo/Saxophone/Vocals	Permanent member since 1990
Jim Kirby	Guitar/Keyboards/Vocals	Permanent member since 2004
Alan Yeo	Drums/Vocals	Permanent member since 2008
Allen Woolley	Drums	Retired
Geoff Wilkinson	Guitar/Vocals	Retired
Richard Marsden	Keyboards/Vocals	Retired
Evan Thompson	Drums	Retired

Guest Artists

Name	Instrument played	Comment
Vince Eager	Vocals	Well actually we appeared with him
Matt Ellis	Vocals	Stole the show and upstaged us
Susan Woolley	Brass	Sue brightened many a Christmas gig
Sylvia Woolley	Vocals	Sylvia sang so loud you couldn't here the band
Brian Tansley	Vocals and on one occasion guitar	Honorary band member
Steve Cooke	Vocals	Paid for the privilege
Alan Sears	Keyboards	Deputised for Richard
Ray	Lead guitar	Stood in for Geoff Ellis
Anna Kirby	Vocals	Fabulous singer another one who always upstages us

Song Lists

Song title	Made famous by the artist we covered
Bright Eyes	Art Garfunkel
Nut Rocker	B. Bumble and the Stingers
Rock Around The Clock	Bill Haley and the comets
Half Way To Paradise	Billy Fury
Bad To Me	Billy J. Kramer & The Dakotas
Dream Lover	Bobby Darin
Time Is Tight	Booker T and The MG's
Dead Or Alive	Bon Jovi
Everyday	Buddy Holly
Heartbeat	Buddy Holly
Loves Made A Fool Of You	Buddy Holly
Maybe Baby	Buddy Holly
Oh Boy	Buddy Holly
Peggy Sue	Buddy Holly
Rave On	Buddy Holly
True Love Ways	Buddy Holly
Words Of Love	Buddy Holly
Raining In My heart	Buddy Holly
Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow	Carol King
Lets Dance	Chris Montez
Johnny B Goode	Chuck Berry
Memphis Tennessee	Chuck Berry
Roll Over Beethoven	Chuck Berry
Route Sixty Six	Chuck Berry
Sweet little Sixteen	Chuck Berry
Do You Wanna Dance	Cliff Richard
Gee Wiz Its You	Cliff Richard
Livin Doll	Cliff Richard
Move It	Cliff Richard
Please Don't Tease	Cliff Richard
Travelling light	Cliff Richard
Runaway	Del Shannon
Run-around Sue	Dion and The Belmont's
Teenager In Love	Dion and The Belmont's
The Wanderer	Dion and The Belmont's
Walk Of Life	Dire Straits
Sea Of Heartbreak	Don Gibson
Come On Everybody	Eddie Cochran
Something Else	Eddie Cochran
Summertime Blues	Eddie Cochran
Three Steps To Heaven	Eddie Cochran
Knock On Your door	Eddie Hodges
All Shook Up	Elvis Presley
Baby I Don't Care	Elvis Presley
Blue Suede Shoes	Elvis Presley
Falling In Love With You	Elvis Presley
Jailhouse Rock	Elvis Presley
Latest Flame	Elvis Presley
Suspicious Minds	Elvis Presley
Your So Square	Elvis Presley
Wonderful Tonight	Eric Clapton
Don't Stop	Fleetwood Mac
Mac The Knife	Frank Sinatra
Sea Cruise	Frankie Ford

Revival - from my side of the stage

If You Gotta Make Fool Of Somebody	Freddie and The Dreamers
Rock N Roll Christmas	Gary Glitter
Sitting On The Ice	George Formby
How Do You Do It	Gerry and The Pacemakers
I Like It	Gerry and The Pacemakers
You'll Never Walk Alone	Gerry and The Pacemakers
When You Walk In The Room	Jackie DeShannon
Hi Ho Silver Lining	Jeff Beck
What did I Say	Jerry Lee Lewis
Whole Lotta Shakin	Jerry Lee Lewis
Hello Mary Lou	Joe Brown
Souvenir d'Alvito	Joe brown
That's What Love Will Do	Joe Brown & The Bruvvers
Summer Nights	John Travolta & Olivia Newton John
Your Sixteen	Johnny Burnette
Ill Never Get Over You	Johnny Kidd and the Pirates
Shakin' All Over	Johnny Kidd and the Pirates
Running Bear	Johnny Preston
Poetry In Motion	Johnny Tilitson
Bony Maroney	Larry Williams
Lucille	Little Richard
Putting on The Style	Lonnie Donegan
Do Wa Diddy	Manfred Mann
Pretty Flamingo	Manfred Mann
When I'm dead and Gone	McGuinness Flint
Whiter Shade Of Pale	Procol Harem
Donna	Ritchie Valens
When You say Nothing At All	Ronan Keating
Pretty Woman	Roy Orbison
Running Scared	Roy Orbison
You Got It	Roy Orbison
Another Saturday Night	Sam Cooke
Merry Christmas Everybody	Slade
Sha La la la lee	Small Faces
Rockin All Over The World	Status Quo
Whatever You Want	Status Quo
House Of The Rising Sun	The Animals
And I Love Her	The Beatles
Do You Wanna Know A Secret	The Beatles
Eight Days A Week	The Beatles
Here There and Everywhere	The Beatles
Hey Jude	The Beatles
I Saw Her Standing There	The Beatles
If I Fell	The Beatles
Money	The Beatles
Things We said Today	The Beatles
Twist and Shout	The Beatles
Yesterday	The Beatles
You Cant Do That	The Beatles
Chantilly Lace	The Big Bopper
Poison Ivy	The Coasters
Do You love Me	The Contours
Da Do Ron Ron	The Crystals
Santa Clause Is Coming To town	The Crystals
Then I Kissed Her	The Crystals
Save The Last Dance For Me	The Drifters
Peaceful Easy Feeling	The Eagles
Baby Come back	The Equals

Revival - from my side of the stage

Bird Dog	The Everly Brothers
Bye Bye Love	The Everly Brothers
Claudette	The Everly Brothers
Devoted To You	The Everly Brothers
Let It Be Me	The Everly Brothers
Take A Message To Mary	The Everly Brothers
Wake Up Little Susie	The Everly Brothers
December 63	The Four Seasons
The Air That I Breathe	The Hollies
Yes I will	The Hollies
Dedicated Follower Of Fashion	The Kinks
You Really Got Me	The Kinks
Feel The Love Tonight	The Lion King
Dance The Night Away	The Mavericks
Hang On Sloopy	The McCoy's
Its All Over Now	The Rolling Stones
Satisfaction	The Rolling Stones
Wipe Out	The Safaris
Needles And Pins	The Searchers
Sugar and Spice	The Searchers
Sweets For My Sweets	The Searchers
The Carnival Is Over	The Seekers
Apache'	The Shadows
FBI	The Shadows
Flingal Bunt	The Shadows
Little B	The Shadows
Midnight	The Shadows
Peace Pipe	The Shadows
Sleepwalk	The Shadows
The Rise And Fall Of Flingel Bunt	The Shadows
Theme For Young Lovers	The Shadows
Wonderful Land	The Shadows
Edelweiss	The Sound Of Music
Hiipy Hippy Shake	The Swinging Blue Jeans
Telstar	The Tornadoes
Wild Thing	The Troggs
Walk Don't Run	The Ventures
Sheila	Tommy Roe
Love is All Around	Troggs/Wet, Wet, Wet

- **Most Played songs.** The song probably played the most is Move It which I am 99% sure has been played at EVERY gig, followed closely by Oh Boy. Hi Ho Silver Lining and Wonderful Tonight have closed the show more than any other song. All Over Now is probably the one played the most as an encore
- **Least Played Songs.** The song played the least was Achy Breaky Heart which I haven't included on the list. We played it "almost" once, I am not sure what we were thinking when we learnt that one. Followed by You Got It by Roy Orbison and December 63 by The Four Seasons which we found difficult to play live (at the time).
- **Most Covered artist.** Some surprises here:-
 - The Beatles (12)
 - The Shadows (10)
 - Buddy Holly (9)
 - Elvis and The Everly Brothers with (7) each
 - Cliff Richard (6)
- **Hardest Song to Play.** Mac the Knife (37) chords plus 6 key changes
- **Easiest Song to Play.** Dance the Night Away (2) chords
- **Newest Song.** When You Say Nothing At All Ronan Keating (1999) followed closely by Dance the Night Away by The Mavericks (1998)
- **Oldest Song.** Sitting on the Ice George Formby(1933)

Answers to the quiz

- 🎵 I'll Go Where The Music Takes Me -
This was a seventies Disco hit for Tina Charles
- 🎵 Aftermath - the title of a very early Rolling Stones Album
- 🎵 Day Tripper - The Beatles
- 🎵 Each Night I Ask the Stars Up Above
A line from Teenager in Love - Dion and The Belmont's
- 🎵 Lost In Music - Sister Sledge
- 🎵 On The Road Again – Canned Heat
- 🎵 Blowin' in the Wind – Bob Dylan
- 🎵 Little Children, why don't you play outside
A line from Little Children - Billy J Kramer and the Dakotas
- 🎵 Ch-Ch-Changes – David Bowie
- 🎵 Boy You're Gonna Carry That Weight
A line from side two of the Beatles Abbey Road Album
- 🎵 Its Only Make Believe – A Conway Twitty song made famous by Elvis
- 🎵 Starman – David Bowie
- 🎵 In the Summertime when the weather is high
A line from In the Summertime – Mungo Jerry
- 🎵 This Old Guitar – John Denver
- 🎵 There are places I remember
A line from In My Life – The Beatles
- 🎵 Millennium - Robbie Williams

