

How a Band that Took a Dive helped a Young Man on the Rise.

Guildford, Summer 1969. My would-be girlfriend seems more interested in the visiting German boys she met last summer, so I retire in a dudgeon to listen to the hi-fi. My friend Richard Grogan is raving about the record he is playing, *Tangerine Dream*. It seems he sat in on one of the recording sessions – his father (my chemistry teacher) knew Dick Leahy, I suspect. It was never clear why we hadn't heard it before now. I think he'd only just saved up for it. Us 60's kids wasn't loaded like they are nowadays...

He tells how many takes it took Eddie to get the intro to *Dive into Yesterday* right (hence the slight fluff the second time round). Not that he couldn't play – it was just *hard*. I could tell that, having taken up guitar that year to impress the likes of Richard's gorgeous sister, Elizabeth (*Oh Lizzie Gee, see what you have done to me; you made me just a wide-eyed fool...*). You might get somewhere with a riff like that.

He tells how Peter and Eddie sat in the darkened studio late at night to record *A Lesson, Perhaps...* all alone except for a couple of sound engineers and a lazy fly. He tells of the funny portable organ on *Mr Small*, and the funny guitar on *the Sky Children*. He doesn't know it's a 12-string, but then Richard belongs to the class of guitarists who can only play the bass-line to *Spoonful*. He relies for his *kudos* on having helped record a real band.

And it works, because in some small corner of a Surrey town, there is a youth group that is forever Kaleidoscope. I remember that long, hot, post A-level summer not for some crummy festival in the USA, but for hours spent at friends' houses listening to Jethro Tull's *This Was* and *Tangerine Dream*. Old C60s feature nameless *Spoonful* guitarists diversifying into two other notes, played on harmonics on the top two strings. I, aspiring to greater things, learn to play *All things Bright and Beautiful*. Even Steve Hurdle's mum comments on how clean the group's nails are on the sleeve. She doesn't say the same about Jethro Tull.

Fast-forward to the winter of that year. My first group is jamming *Hang on Sloopy* at Richard's house. The invitation is really an excuse for him to play us the new Kaleidoscope album. Did I realise that Peter sang *Opinion* all in one breath? I didn't. It's good.

Later Richard records the album on to a C120 for me through his *Linear Concord* amplifier. That recording is to be a great comfort and inspiration to me as I go off to university. I manage to ignore the mains hum. Unfortunately, though, Richard has only given me the left channel of the stereo. For 23 years I only have a left-handed version of *Faintly Blowing*. In vain I scour record shops, and later, second-hand shops for a vinyl copy, only to discover at last that it has become a valuable collector's item, beyond the means of a retired musician, and that my "secret" band has acquired cult status.

I finally obtain a stereo pirate by the kindness of one of these young Kaleidophiles, Dave Battersby, in exchange for my precious Fairfield Parlour concert programme. Only in 1998 does the purchase of the remastered CD make an honest man of me.

I do better with *Tangerine Dream*, pirating it myself on to another C120 from Richard's copy. It forms a significant part of my early repertoire. Messrs Pumer and Daltry cannot imagine that *Dear Nellie Goodrich* is being covered at Cambridge University Folk Club, or that *Please Excuse my Face* is winning the heart of the lovely Cynthia, who claps between songs. Messrs Pumer and Daltry could probably use the royalties, though. Some years later, my best man Steve Hurdle, with incredibly clean nails, makes me a present of his copy of the album. That's what friends are for.

Long before this, Richard is raving again about the forthcoming new album, under the new, progressive name of Fairport Convection. We all await it eagerly, and groan audibly when we hear that Dan Bridgman's back injury has delayed either the release or the promotional tour. These guys *matter* in this part of Guildford. I manage to buy the album only one grant-cheque after its release, but by then I have seen the band in the Flesh at the 3 days of Love, Peace and Anarchists that was the I Luv Wight, 1970.

Of course, me and my friends unmask the mystery band at the first Radio 1 playing. I'm looking forward to seeing them more than Jimi Hendrix (but not quite as much as Jethro Tull. But then I was always a sucker for one-legged flautists). Simon Garrett and I sit surrounded by German pot-smokers as the last of the "unofficial" bands disappears, and I recognise in the hazy distance, by his two sticks, the familiar drummer of Fairfield Croydon. I am pleased that the audience applauds his arrival – they appreciate a tryer. They also appreciate the music, short though the set is (if only I'd realised the reason then – I'd have somehow mobilised Danny the Red and his cronies to demand free Fairfield Parlour for the People). But the sound is horrible, because Pink Floyd's PA is not yet on-line. Did Murray Lerner film the set, that's what I want to know.

Later that year, it's the Albert Hall. That's me, about the tenth row, stage left. On my own this time. All that Park Equipment fouling up (is that why I always assumed the band was from Birmingham?); ignorant Pentangle fans slow-handclapping; Symonds holding a mike against Eddie's acoustic. What is it with these guys' luck? Nevertheless, though the band must be hating every moment, things get good from then on. Good and loud by the end. "This song is called *Aries*, but it's for everyone really." Oh, I get it.

Pentangle aren't bad, either. I later saw Danny Thompson on Ipswich station when I was returning from a prestigious gig at the town hall; John Renbourn in Guildford bus station; and Bert Jansch in his shop in Putney when I bought one of Gordon Giltrap's guitars from him. But I never did meet Santeze, Enak, Petra and Frutch (can't seem to remember properly, and I can't check because I succumbed to greed and sold the album to a bloke in Japan). Didn't even know what had happened to them, and why I spent five years fruitlessly searching record shops for *White-faced Lady*, until the Internet revealed that they'd turned inside out and dived into yesterday. It all only seems that long ago.

Jon Garvey, 1998