

FOREWORD



My friends have often said- "You should write that down". Usually after a few drinks the subject of a particular band crops up and I will say I've seen them. "Great, yeah 84- Troubadour". Or "Long Beach-85". There is a story around these gigs and I just happened to be there at the time. As a child or teenager you go where your folks go and I've great memories from my "formative" years.

This is a story of a boy growing up in late 70's England and a life journey set to the sound of Rock. The path follows a Rocky Road from the A666 in Lancashire to the 405 freeway in L.A. and back. Due to my easy going disposition I have managed to navigate the journey with a smile on my face. My glass is always half-full and I often found it interesting to observe the various characters and events through rose-tinted spectacles.

It starts in 1978 (aged 11) with the first inklings of musical interest beginning with Trad Jazz and soon followed by Heavy Rock. Negotiating the adolescent years in a crash course in growing up, the tale throws up a swift life learning curve. As the 80's progressed, those all-important formative experiences are moulded by Californian life and learning.

This journey involves the love of music, a Metal education, moving to Sunny California, illegal aliens, repatriation to Blighty and the soundtrack of Rock.

The ups and downs of the journey provided a life affirming experience. Lack of parental guidance being a bonus allowing for a rather fortunate adolescence.

In about 1984 I stated my undying love for the British Steel album (by Judas Priest) by making a (probably alcohol induced) statement- "I'll still be listening to this when I'm 40". To which my friends laughed- "Nobody will be listening to this - you'll be married with kids listening to Phil Collins!" Thirty years later I'm still listening and proud of it!

From Lancashire to L.A. and back again- the following starts from the start and ends when it ends. Which is probably a fair bit yet- well at least until Judas Priest stop touring!

NB- that's about 400 words done! I'm not going to investigate all the musical facts. So if the dates and facts are a bit out- please feel free to check for yourself- I've got plenty of facts, but not necessarily in the right order!

CHAPTER 1 - DJANGO, GILLAN AND ANGUS



In the beginning, back in 1978... or the beginning of my musical interest. We lived in a new build semi-detached house on a large housing estate in Bolton, Lancashire, England. This was typical suburbia and the estate was the confines of my world. It was a self-contained existence including my school, football teams and scout troop. I was 11 and my Dad was a traditional (trad) jazz fan, so we had Charlie Parker, Ella Fitzgerald, Fats Waller, and Bessie Smith as a soundtrack in the house. I can thank him for my musical awakening. We seemed to have Django Reinhardt on when dinner was ready at night which made my subconscious connect Django with food which was a bit weird. Dad seemed to turn it up during meals. Django's frenzied mellow guitar shredding made for a bit of an uneasy digestive process. Dad wasn't a big conversationalist so it was probably just as well, but cheers for the tunes.

So even though I probably didn't realise at the time, this was my introduction to various soloing maestros. Later I would have John Bonham (drums), Richie Blackmore (guitars) and Steve Harris (bass). For now, it was Charlie Parker (saxophone), Stephan Grappelli (violin), Art Blakey (drums), and Django (guitar). Dad was a bit of a dreamer. I think half the time he was sat in a Jazz club on Bourbon Street in New Orleans listening to a creole band rather than living in North West England.

I subsequently inherited Dad's jazz books which make for fascinating reading. The weighty toms include Jazz Records 1897-1942 (Vol. 1 & 2). Nearly 1000 pages each. This is serious stuff. Teach Yourself Jazz- which is very short. Not surprisingly jazz wasn't generally taught – it was in the blood. Also The Jazz Series- which is 11 books and incomplete. I also have an old Cornet which he randomly blew into every so often. The Jazz Series has several Birmingham Corporation bus tickets from the late 50's used as book marks. I can imagine he was a beatnik type, underground music fan. He was probably a thrash metallor of his day! As most people know, jazz musicians were generally free spirited hustlers trying to make a dime, self-taught and high on anything on offer – a bit like Guns n Roses!

Birmingham City Centre in the late 50's was being re-developed into a 60's concrete edifice, not the most inspiring locations for free-spirit. Dad probably rode the bus with newly purchased Dixieland tunes a million miles away from his reality. The music that developed from the West Midlands tended to reflect the pounding industrial orchestras of the Black Country steel mills and Birmingham motor plants. Ideal influence for Judas Priest's early metal and Black Sabbath's primal blues.