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LETHBRIDGE-STEWART

THE BAND OF EVIL

Based on the BBC television serials by Mervyn Haisman & Henry Lincoln

Roger J Simmonds & Shaun Russell



CANDY JAR BOOKS • CARDIFF A Russell & Frankham-Allen Series 2016

— CHAPTER ONE —

Totem Pole

re you sure you don't want to go?'
Perfectly sure. I'll see you later at the Burgundy.'

'If you're quite sure. I have a spare ticket if you change your mind.'

'No, it's fine. It's not really my scene.'

'Okay, see you later.'

Lethbridge-Stewart drank the remainder of his whisky as he replaced the receiver. The thought of Sally having a good time pleased him. He was just about to top up the glass when the telephone rang again.

'Colonel Lethbridge-Stewart,' came a slightly crackly voice. 'Hello, sir. General Hamilton has asked me to call you. He needs to see you as soon as possible. He says it's of the utmost importance.'

'Why didn't the general telephone me himself?'

'He's in a meeting, sir. Can I send someone to come and get you?'

'I suppose I don't have a choice,' Lethbridge-Stewart replied, not even attempting to keep the sardonic edge hidden.

'Not really, sir.'

Minutes later, Lethbridge-Stewart waited outside his flat

swagger stick in hand. It was getting dark and the rain had started. He looked at his watch. Eighteen-hundred-hours. It was too late to meet Sally now. As it was a Friday evening the roads were busy with traffic. Lethbridge-Stewart squinted. At the end of the road a set of headlights appeared to be coming towards him. They got nearer and he put his hand over his gun, just in case.

'Colonel Lethbridge-Stewart?' the driver asked, once the car had parked up beside him.

Lethbridge-Stewart nodded and relaxed at the cypress green beret of the Intelligence Corps.

'Captain Younghusband, sir. General Hamilton has asked me to take you to the Empire Pool in Wembley.'

Lethbridge-Stewart jumped into the passenger seat, pondering the coincidence of finding himself sent to the same venue as Sally after all. 'Thank you, Captain.' He stared out through the window and the yellow light emanating from the concrete lampposts streaked across his face.

Just as he was about to nod off, the car halted outside the Empire Pool in one of the car park spaces. Lethbridge-Stewart watched as crowds of youngsters, all dressed in memorabilia from past gigs, congregated outside the building. The rain didn't seem to bother them.

'This way, sir,' Younghusband said, and he opened the rear door. He led Lethbridge-Stewart across the car park towards a large metal entrance that was guarded on each side by two armed soldiers. 'General Hamilton knows we are coming.'

'Ah, Colonel, welcome,' Hamilton said once Lethbridge-

Stewart entered. 'Nice to see you.'

'Likewise, sir.' Lethbridge-Stewart saluted.

'Major Steadman, let me introduce you to Colonel Lethbridge-Stewart.'

'Pleasure to meet you, Colonel,' Major Steadman said with a sharp salute. 'I've heard so much about you.'

'All good I hope,' Lethbridge-Stewart returned. Like Younghusband, Steadman was from the Military Intelligence Corps.

'Yes, sir, of course.'

'We have a bit of a situation, Colonel,' General Hamilton said once the introductions were complete, and he beckoned both men to take a seat. 'Captain Younghusband, roll the film.'

The projector crackled into action.

'This is footage from a concert taken earlier this year in Rio de Janeiro,' Hamilton explained.

'Looks nice there,' Younghusband remarked, and General Hamilton threw him a trenchant glance. 'Sorry, sir.'

'What are we supposed to be looking for?' Lethbridge-Stewart asked.

'Just watch closely.'

Lethbridge-Stewart scrutinised the image on the projector screen. He could see four band members standing on the stage: a drummer, lead guitarist, bass guitarist and a singer. He had never been that interested in music. Although at the sight of the guitar he recalled an incident back in '62 when Sergeant Ruben Hicks had illicitly acquired a guitar and had insisted on teaching him a few chords. Lethbridge-Stewart never did master the instrument though as Hicks

was killed in action a few months later in Kenya.

'There it is. Did you see that?' Hamilton asked.

'See what, sir?' Younghusband replied.

'Run it back to just before the close up. Now keep a close eye on the band.'

They all looked more closely as the clip was replayed, and finally saw it. For a split second the band seemed to turn into something... not exactly human.

'Could it be a trick of the light?' Steadman asked. 'Who is this band anyway?'

'They're called Totem Pole and the chap at the front is Oscar Mamana, half Samoan and half American,' Hamilton explained.

All three nodded, trying to look like they'd heard of him. Lethbridge-Stewart opened his mouth to speak first, only to be interrupted by the general.

'He's probably the biggest star in the world, but what's really strange is that just under a year ago nobody had heard of him.'

'That's not so unusual, General,' Lethbridge-Stewart said. 'There are lots of bands that make it overnight, so to speak,' he added, reminded of Ed Hill and his sudden rise to fame.

'That's as maybe, Colonel, but this is Oscar Mamana's third world tour in just under nine months! In that time nearly one hundred people have gone missing – and tonight he's playing right here.'

Lethbridge-Stewart leapt to his feet.

'What is it, sir?' Younghusband asked, who had also sprung to life.

'Sally is out there somewhere.'

'Don't worry, Colonel,' the general said. 'I have no plans for British citizens to be whisked away under my watch. And besides, I'm sure Corporal Wright can take care of herself.'

— CHAPTER TWO —

Just a Face in the Crowd

Fifteen minutes before the concert was due to start Lethbridge-Stewart made his way backstage, stopping outside the dressing room which had the word 'Band' written on the door. Taking a deep breath, he eased the door open. 'Sorry for interrupting,' he said.

'You have no right to enter our space, man,' said a bearded musician with an incredibly large hat.

Lethbridge-Stewart glanced around the room. He noticed a large wooden crate in the corner. Resting on top of it was a strange looking canister.

'Close the door, man,' the musician said, obviously trying to shield Lethbridge-Stewart from seeing beyond the door.

'Very well, sir,' Lethbridge-Stewart said and he gently closed the door. For a moment he stood there tapping his swagger stick against his knee. On the other side of the corridor was another door, with a battered star fixed arbitrarily to it. This time Lethbridge-Stewart decided to knock. He was greeted by a tall, thin man. Lethbridge-Stewart blinked. Was he seeing things? This fellow's eyes seemed out of proportion to his face.

'Sorry to bother you, sir, but we've had reports that some fans have got backstage. Do you mind if I come in and look around?'

'I'm sorry, Captain, I can't let you do that.' The man's eyes were heavily dilated. 'Oscar has his rules.' He paused again. 'No exceptions.'

'Tell him I'll sign autographs after the show,' came a voice from further inside.

Lethbridge-Stewart jammed his foot in the gap between door and frame, and slowly eased it open. Inside, Oscar Mamana sat with his back to the door, strumming on a guitar. He appeared to have a small square bald patch at the back of his head. Next to him was another crate of canisters.

'There's no one here, Captain.'

'Colonel, actually,' said Lethbridge Stewart. 'Be sure to-'

But before he could finish his sentence the door was slammed shut in his face.

Lethbridge-Stewart stood there, wondering if this was worth being dragged from report writing, when his mind drew his attention to the bald patch on Mamana's head. Square. He'd never seen hair thin out in such a precise way before.

Well, here we go again, he thought.

There was a huge explosion. Smoke billowed from the sides of the stage, lights flashed and alarms sounded. People panicked. Everything went dark. A spotlight searched the darkness: up and down, left and right, until it stopped near the top of the stage. Oscar Mamana was strapped to a jet pack and was coming in to land.

'Hello London!' he shouted. 'It's great to be here.' The crowd went wild and everyone was on their feet. As fast as

it came, the smoke was sucked away and the concert began.

Presumably that's what the canisters had been for, the smoke, Lethbridge-Stewart concluded, although still his mind couldn't shake the odd bald patch. It could all be quite genuine, of course. Mamana could have had his head shaved for a medical operation for all Lethbridge-Stewart knew.

As the show progressed Lethbridge-Stewart noticed that some of audience were not shouting and applauding like the rest. He gave a cursory nod to Captain Younghusband, who had also noticed the change in them. Their eyes seemed glazed over and they were staring directly at Oscar Mamana.

Lethbridge-Stewart edged around the side, and slipped through a door in the stage. With a small torch held between his teeth, he manoeuvered himself through the metal structures that held the stage erect. Heard from below, the cacophony of music and cheers boomed and echoed around him. He attempted to shut the sound out, and instead focused on the row of canisters that stretched along the width of the stage, all attached to an electronic pump. He directed his torch at one of them, and noticed a spray of fine liquid being expelled from it.

On his return to the increasingly electrified crowd, Lethbridge-Stewart spotted that a few of Steadman's men, those that had been standing near the front, had acquired that same glazed-eyed look. For a second he thought about stopping the show, but what would this achieve, apart from annoying thousands of paying customers?

As Oscar Mamana came to the end of the show, he began to shake hands with those seated in the front row. Lethbridge-Stewart watched as each one raised their hands

in a zombie-like motion.

Then it was all over.

The crowd were on their feet, shouting and cheering. Oscar Mamana didn't even come back for an encore. He disappeared the same way as he had appeared, through a cloud of smoke. The huge crowd started making their way to the exits. That is, all except Steadman's men from the front row. They were on their feet and slowly walking towards the stairs, directly down to the dressing rooms.

As they disappeared through the door, Lethbridge-Stewart watched a few other audience members follow, quite probably autograph hunters. To his surprise, he spied Sally and her friends heading the same way. Lethbridge-Stewart called out and managed to catch Sally's attention, but she couldn't make out what he was saying. 'What's going on?' she mouthed.

Lethbridge-Stewart shook his head, and waved her on. She frowned, but nodded slightly and urged her friends forward. He knew she was likely heading into danger, but for her to cause a scene would only attract undue attention. The joys of dating someone in the services, Lethbridge-Stewart considered ruefully.

He ordered the remaining men to guard the door as he and Younghusband followed the last person in.

Younghusband and Lethbridge-Stewart reached the band's room just as the door swung open and the bearded musician poked his head out. He appeared to be looking for someone, such was his surprise at seeing Younghusband and Lethbridge-Stewart. 'Hey, man. Can I help you?'

'It seems like a lot of people have come back stage in the

last few minutes. Can I ask where they've gone?' Lethbridge-Stewart asked.

'Mr Mamana always likes to meet his fans,' the man said, attempting to pull the door shut.

Before he could though Younghusband noticed a reflection in the mirror. It was one of the band members, still wearing his stage outfit. Younghusband looked on, his mouth agape. The musician's head was large, gradually getting thinner towards the chin area, but most frightening of all were the eyes – they were huge!

'Colonel, I think we should go,' Younghusband said, pulling at Lethbridge-Stewart's sleeve, indicating the reflection in the mirror.

'What? Oh yes.' They both turned to leave, but it was too late.

'You're not going anywhere,' hissed the bearded musician who was now holding a gun in his hand. Younghusband watched in horror as the musician's face morphed into the same bulbous features that they had seen in the mirror. 'You've seen too much, man.'

— CHAPTER THREE —

Our Day Will Come

Lethbridge-Stewart and Younghusband were led into the props room and told to sit with their hands on their heads. The room was huge; scenery was stacked against the walls, with lighting and recording equipment piled up on the floor.

'Who are you?' Lethbridge-Stewart asked, keeping his voice calm, mindful of the way Younghusband was looking around. Lethbridge-Stewart couldn't blame him; this was a little out of the way of regular army operations.

'All in good time,' their alien captor said with a hiss. The alien opened the door to leave, and Major Steadman's men were pushed into the room, followed by Sally and her friends. Bringing up the rear was the band's road crew, all carrying weapons. Lethbridge-Stewart estimated that there were around seventy in all, not counting him and Younghusband.

'Alistair, are you all right?' Sally asked, rushing towards him. 'Have they hurt you?'

'No, not really, just my pride,' Lethbridge-Stewart said, who still had his hands on his head.

'You look like a naughty school boy.' Sally gave a nervous laugh.

At that moment the door swung open again and Oscar

Mamana, the thin man, and the rest of his entourage entered the room.

'Good evening, fans. It must be a great honour for you to meet me. There's no need for you to be frightened. No harm will come to you. Unless, of course, anyone tries to escape.'

'What are you planning to do with us?' Sally asked, and inched forward, shielding her friends from any impeding danger.

'That's the fun bit. You'll soon be going on an exciting journey across the universe. You will have everything you've ever dreamed of.'

'What about our freedom?' came a voice from the crowd.

'Freedom! Pah! What's the point of that? When there is Tinclavic to mine,' Oscar said with relish.

'He's bonkers, sir,' Younghusband said.

'That rather goes without saying, Captain.'

'Bring them to me.' Oscar pointed at Lethbridge-Stewart and Younghusband. An alien roadie, dressed in a Black Sabbath t-shirt and jeans, grabbed Lethbridge-Stewart and marched him over to Oscar, while another dragged Younghusband.

'Who are you, military man?' Oscar asked.

'Captain Derek Younghusband, Intelligence Corps, 31 Company.'

'You can't escape,' Lethbridge-Stewart said, turning Oscar's attention on him. 'My men have this building surrounded.'

Oscar screeched with laughter, almost dancing on the spot. 'I don't think so. You can't beat *us*!'

'My God, he's as nutty as a fruitcake,' Younghusband said, then swallowed and added, 'sir.'

The alien roadie swung his rifle into Younghusband's head with a crack and a satisfied smirk. Lethbridge-Stewart prepared himself to be next.

'Leave them alone!' Sally screamed.

'It looks like you have a fan too, Colonel.' Oscar turned to Sally. 'Bring her to me.' He grabbed Sally's bag and emptied the contents onto the floor. 'What do we have here?'

Sally watched in horror as Oscar rifled through her personal belongings. 'Cigarettes. Brush. Hairspray. Chewing gum. And what's this?' Oscar produced Sally's ID from amongst the clutter.

'Lance Corporal Sally Wright. Hah! She can be our first subject.' He looked over at the alien roadie. 'Remove the girl.'

'You'll be well advised to leave her alone,' Lethbridge-Stewart said. 'She isn't important. Take me instead. I'm Colonel Alistair Lethbridge-Stewart of the Fifth Operational Corps.'

Oscar nodded at the roadie to let go of Sally. 'Well done, Colonel. That wasn't hard was it?'

Sally grappled around the floor for her belongings while Lethbridge-Stewart was marched across the room, the rifle jammed under his chin.

'Tell me, Mr Mamana, why the Empire Pool?' he asked.

'Let's say, I'm a born performer,' Oscar replied with a wave of his hand, like a Shakespearean actor. 'And who'd suspect us, Colonel?

'Indeed.'

'We've been hiding in plain sight. We can get away with anything because we are famous.'

'Alien pop stars preying on their fans. That's despicable.'

'Thank you, Colonel, but you're mistaken. I'm not like the others. I'm not alien. I was born—'

'Enough!' the thin man shouted as he entered the room. 'Take them away. Lock Mamana up with them as well. He's served his purpose.'

They had been moved to a small storage room. When Younghusband finally came to, Lethbridge-Stewart was in the process of examining the unconscious Oscar.

'Glad to see you back, Captain. Are you okay?'

'My head hurts like hell, but I'm fine. What happened, sir?'

'We've been press ganged, Captain,' said Lethbridge-Stewart. 'Do you have your radio?'

'No, sir, the roadie confiscated it.'

Lethbridge-Stewart slumped down beside a Fender Champ guitar amplifier and looked around. 'No radio and no weapons. This is fine mess, Captain.'

'It'll be all right, sir. Major Steadman has the place surrounded,'

'I'm not so sure. This chap,' he pointed at Oscar Mamana, 'didn't seem overly concerned when I told him.'

'So what do we do now, sir? We can't let them take all those people. We have to stop them.'

'Let's see if he can help us.' Lethbridge-Stewart grabbed Oscar around the stomach and dragged him across the floor. 'Help me move him over there,' he said. They each took an arm and leaned Oscar on a chair. The back of his head was

exposed and the 'bald' patch had come loose.

'It looks like some sort of implant,' Younghusband said.

Lethbridge-Stewart dug his finger nails underneath the implant and pulled hard. Eventually it popped out. Almost immediately Oscar regained consciousness.

'Where am I?' he asked. He appeared to have a strong American accent. 'Jeeps, my head feels like it's been kicked several times by a mad horse.'

Lethbridge-Stewart and Younghusband exchanged a puzzled look. Something strange had happened. Oscar's eyes were no longer dilated but he still wore the groggy look of someone who'd been suddenly woken from a dream.

'Where have you taken Sally?' Lethbridge-Stewart snapped, having no time to indulge the man.

'Sally?' Oscar looked around, dazed. 'Who?'

'For goodness sake, man. You're in the Empire Pool. You sang here tonight, don't you remember?'

The man began to sob; it was obvious that the rock star remembered nothing.

'Who are you?' Younghusband asked.

Lethbridge-Stewart turned to Younghusband, puzzled.

'Just a hunch, sir,' Younghusband explained.

Lethbridge-Stewart shrugged imperceptibly, and returned his attention to Oscar. No harm in seeing if Younghusband's hunch was right.

Oscar took a deep breath. 'Oscar Martinez,' he said with a whimper.

So, not the name the public knew. But that meant nothing. Look at John Smith, lead singer of The Common Men – the stage name for Aubrey Waites. But Lethbridge-Stewart couldn't deny the evidence of his eyes. He'd seen

enough men traumatised during his years of service. This chap wasn't faking it.

'What *do* you remember?' Lethbridge-Stewart asked. 'How did you get here?'

Mr Martinez was quiet for a moment, his eyes darting about, then he nodded. 'I remember I was in Las Vegas singing in a pretty unpleasant hotel, and I met a very persuasive gentleman. He claimed that he could make me an international singing sensation. Of course, I was doubtful, but I thought what the heck. I met him for dinner the following night.' He squeezed his eyes shut. 'I have no memories after that.'

'What did he look like, this "persuasive gentleman"?'

'He was quite strange looking; tall and thin, with large eyes.'

Sally watched as the alien roadies collected some of the canisters. 'Take them to roof,' said the thin man. 'They can be transferred with the prisoners.'

A girl wearing an 'I Love Oscar' t-shirt began to cry. 'What are you going to do with us?' she asked.

'Nothing to worry your pretty little head about, darling,' the thin man replied, with a sneer.

Sally grabbed the girl's hand, held it tight and offered her a comforting smile. The girl tried to smile back, but her eyes were full of tears.

'Why are you doing this?' Sally asked the thin man, her voice calm. The calmness was due in part to her military training, but also an attempt to comfort the girl. The thin man stopped in his steps, momentarily taken aback by the primal potency of the question. 'Well?' Sally demanded.

The thin man edged back into the room. 'Seeing as you and your colleagues outside will soon die, I will tell you.'

He produced a metal object from his pocket, about the size of lighter, and pressed what looked like a button on the side. Sally watched as piercing rays of light encircled the room and began to coalesce into a three dimensional moving picture. It showed a desert wasteland with two identical moons shining intensely in the sky. Scattered across the blood red earth were thousands of mutilated bodies.

'We've been fighting a bloody war for over a thousand years,' he explained. 'Hope and fear, hatred and humiliation, death and destruction, all have consumed us. Our planet is devoid of life. We needed to find a new world; one with a species that we could put to work. Humans are exactly what we've been looking for.'

'You want us to be your slaves?'

'Yes. Or possibly cannon fodder.' The thin man paused, and smiled with careful consideration. 'We've not quite decided yet.'

The frustration was building in Lethbridge-Stewart. After scouring the room for something to help them escape, all they'd found was a slightly battered Kapa guitar, a penny, a Tyrannosaurus Rex concert ticket and a half-used can of hairspray.

'Okay, so we're all agreed.'

Younghusband and Martinez nodded – although none of them were actually agreed at all.

'Are you sure you can do this, Mr Martinez?' Lethbridge-Stewart asked.

'Not really, but what the heck.'

Lethbridge-Stewart watched as Martinez began to physically change; a transformation that was obviously drawing upon the memories of Oscar Mamana. He took on a more determined air, his posture tightening, his face set in a *faux* confidence unbefitting such a countenance. 'Get me out of here!' he shouted, banging on the door. 'Why have I been locked up? I am a rock music god!'

'It's not working, Colonel,' Younghusband whispered.

'Hang on.' Lethbridge-Stewart picked up the Kapa guitar and plugged it into the amplifier. 'We need a diversion.' He placed the penny between his fingers and began to pluck at the strings, while Martinez continued to scream – what Lethbridge-Stewart guessed was a *Totem Pole* lyric – at the top of his voice. Younghusband stood unwearyingly by the door with the hairspray at the ready.

The interior door swung open and Younghusband immediately sprayed the hairspray into the alien's eyes. Dropping the guitar, Lethbridge-Stewart hurled himself forward and, with two punches, floored the alien. He quickly picked up the alien's weapon. It was the same size as a small revolver but was translucent. Inside a miniature fireball vibrated intensely. At arm's length he fired it at a small stool in the room. A beam of electricity shot out of the gun and the stool was encircled with an intense red light and then disappeared.

'Crikey, sir, that's amazing,' Younghusband said.

'It certainly is, Captain.' Lethbridge-Stewart dropped the alien weapon into his pocket. 'But we haven't got time to waste.'

'Look, sir.' Younghusband pointed at the unconscious

alien on the floor. Its head had completely disintegrated. 'It must be the hairspray. At least we now have a deterrent.'

The three of them dashed out of the room and along the corridor. At the far end was a door, but the shutter was pulled down. Younghusband grabbed the handle and, even though he knew it was pointless, he tried to yank it up.

'What do we do now, sir? We're trapped in here.'

'You're forgetting this, Captain.' Lethbridge-Stewart pulled out the alien gun and aimed it at the shutter. 'Let's just hope it's strong enough.'

— CHAPTER FOUR —

I Want to Be Free

Lethbridge-Stewart sat in his new makeshift office. On the walls all round him were posters of pop stars and sports personalities. He didn't really recognise any of the names, but he was pretty sure that most of them were not aliens, except maybe one – David Bowie. He looked at the singer's poster curiously.

Captain Younghusband walked in carrying a plastic bag. 'Sir, I've managed to...'

'Don't you knock, Captain?' Lethbridge-Stewart asked. He was looking for a captain to lead B Company, which was to be stationed in Salisbury, and he had Younghusband pegged for that role. *If* the man continued to perform well in this current operation, of course.

'Sorry, sir.'

'What is it?'

'Some hairspray, sir. We did a stop and search. It's surprising how many young ladies have it with them.'

'Good job, Captain.'

Younghusband seemed pleased at the praise. He looked around for a moment.

'How do we know the aliens haven't scarpered, Colonel?'

It was a good question, and Lethbridge-Stewart was pleased how easily Younghusband was accepting the idea of aliens. Lots of soldiers wouldn't. 'Mr Martinez tells me there's an alien spaceship up on the roof. I'm sure they won't leave without it.'

'Where is Oscar?'

'I've sent him to Miss Travers for the once-over. She's not a medical doctor, but she's the best we have, and after recent events I imagine she'll be glad of the work. She's none too happy about sitting around at the Barracks waiting.'

Lethbridge-Stewart watched Younghusband carefully. He could see the captain had questions, and was struggling to not ask them. Lethbridge-Stewart smiled slightly.

'What's the plan then, sir?' Younghusband asked instead, keeping to the mission at hand.

Lethbridge-Stewart stood up and brushed himself down. 'We improvise, Captain.'

Sally shuffled along a corridor with all the other prisoners. It was bad enough that a bearded alien creature was pointing a gun at her – her training could help her cope with this – but why did she let Clare talk her into wearing high heels? Her feet were hurting like hell. She looked over at the thin man. He was carrying some kind of electronic beeping gizmo.

'Why didn't anyone ask Oscar where he parked the ship?' the thin man said, clearly agitated.

'Sorry, man,' the bearded alien said.

They turned a corner. It was dead end except for a metal ladder that appeared to go right up into the ceiling. The gizmo began to beep uncontrollably.

'Up there!' the thin man ordered. 'The rest will follow us later.'

One by one the prisoners climbed, but Sally took a step back.

'What, in these heels?'
The thin man raised his gun. 'Now!'

'Right, men, let's go!' Lethbridge-Stewart ordered, and led Steadman's men along a deserted corridor towards a stairwell. The soldiers edged forward, each of them holding a can of hairspray as if it were a grenade. An alien appeared from nowhere, carrying a machine gun. Lethbridge-Stewart dived for cover as a rain of bullets showered over him. The alien was joined by a second combatant. Lethbridge-Stewart released his pistol from his holster and fired a succession of bullets at the aliens, killing them instantly.

Younghusband sidled up beside him. 'At least we know bullets can kill them, sir.'

'True, Captain, but we can't take the risk of hitting civilians. We need to get to the roof before they do.'

'But how, sir?'

'I have an idea.'

'I'm not sure about this, sir,' Younghusband said a short time later. He was now was strapped into Oscar Mamana's jet pack. 'Sally is *your* fiancée after all.'

'You'll be fine, Captain,' Lethbridge-Stewart assured him, passing him a protective helmet. Younghusband placed it on his head and fired up the engine. With a loud blast he hurtled across the car park, shaking violently as his shoes scraped along the top of several parked cars.

'You need to go up!' Lethbridge-Stewart shouted, using his best parade yard volume.

The jet pack flipped over and Younghusband momentarily hung upside down. Seconds later he headed towards the roof with a loud *whoosh!*

Good, Lethbridge-Stewart thought, and looked at the soldiers around him. 'Let's go.'

Sally had suspected that her high heels wouldn't do her any favours and she was right. As she ascended the ladder the thin man followed closely behind her, his bony fingers touching the metal rungs and sometimes her ankles. *Dirty old alien*, she thought. She grabbed hold of the final rung and climbed through the hatch, surprised to find Captain Younghusband busy fighting aliens with a can of hairspray. She looked around for Alistair. If Younghusband had escaped, then there was no doubt in her mind that... She swallowed. All around her on the roof lay dead aliens, their heads disintegrated.

'Behind you!' Younghusband shouted.

Before she could make a run for it, the thin man thrust his weapon into her back. 'I thought this might happen, Captain. Drop your gun!'

Younghusband looked directly into Sally's eyes as he slowly lowered the can to the floor, followed by his pistol. He then nodded his head a bit lower, and Sally frowned. It was a signal, but for what? Her eyes rested on the hairspray, and then she knew.

'That's better. Now if you all would accompany me.' The thin man fired his weapon into the air. 'Everybody!' he shouted.

A group of prisoners emerged from behind the spaceship. Sally discretely tried to fish the hairspray from

her bag, but the thin man was too quick for her. He grabbed her around the neck, forcing her to drop it onto the roof floor.

'Don't try anything like that again,' he whispered, 'or I shall kill your friend. Do you understand?'

Sally nodded and the thin man pushed her forward.

'Which friend are you talking about?' a voice demanded from behind them. Sally smiled; she knew that voice well.

Alistair emerged from the hatch holding an alien gun. The thin man grabbed hold of Sally's arm and shoved her in front of him.

'Maybe I was wrong about these shoes after all,' Sally quipped, and slammed her heel into the thin man's foot. He screamed momentarily and let go of Sally. She ducked under his arm and dashed across the rooftop.

As soon as Sally was a safe distance away, Alistair fired. A beam of electricity shot out and the thin man was encircled with an intense red light. He screamed in agony and then disappeared. With a satisfied nod at the weapon, Alistair placed it back in his pocket. Sally raced across the roof to join him.

'Enjoy the concert?' he asked her.

'Oh, Alistair,' she said, and embraced him. She felt him stiffen, and she pulled away with a sheepish grin, glancing at the soldiers of the Intelligence Corps around them. 'Sorry, sir,' Sally said.

'That's quite all right, Corporal,' Colonel Lethbridge-Stewart said, and looked over at Younghusband.

'I think we've got some cleaning up to do, Captain Younghusband.'

Younghusband saluted and set about issuing orders. Lethbridge-Stewart watched him. Yes, he decided, Younghusband would make a worthy addition to the Fifth.

STANDING ON THE SIDELINES



You may not have heard of him, but Roger J Simmond's story has more famous faces than the cover of *Sergeant Pepper*. One of rock's great nearly men, Roger has released his autobiography detailing the highs and lows of a tumultuous and amazing pop career.

From early days in Wales, Roger's life has been a rock 'n' rollercoaster of a journey. Highlights of his remarkable career include playing the 2is club in Soho at the height of its popularity, being part of the only Welsh group to play The Cavern Club, working alongside the influential record producer Joe Meek, getting drunk with The Krays, and being present when Tom Jones got his name.

We present a free chapter of *Standing on the Sidelines* where Roger talks about the time he spent with the ground-breaking 1960s record producer Joe Meek.

— PREVIEW CHAPTER —

The Genius of Joe Meek

I was on my own once again in the big city. I had my bass guitar and amplifier, and a roof over my head, but for how long I didn't know. After three or four days, I began to feel I had made the wrong decision. I was feeling down and depressed. I missed the boys. I had no money and no job and was considering phoning my parents to send me money for the fare home.

I scoured the music paper ads for work and headed down to Denmark Street to try to find some contacts. I did not venture back to the *2i's*, as I didn't want Tom Littlewood to see that I was back to square one.

One afternoon, I managed to get some recording session work in a studio in Denmark Street. I spotted a group unloading musical instruments, when I asked them if they needed a bass player or singer, I received the reply, 'both.' By coincidence their bass player had just phoned the studio and was unable to make it.

We borrowed a small bass amp and a bass guitar from Selmer's (music shop) and I did the session. It was a simple twelve-bar blues number, and as well as playing the bass line, I sang a harmony with two other members of the band. I didn't even ask their name. All that interested me was the three pounds that they said they would pay me. I had played

on my first record in a London recording studio and, I must admit, it did lift me.

That evening I opened my bass guitar case and took out my bass to practise. I opened the compartment where I kept the strap, and in it was the piece of paper I had taken from *The Honeycombs*. I had found Joe Meek's telephone number. I'd thought I had lost it! Maybe he could give me some work. It must be worth a try.

The following morning I rang the number and a man's voice answered, but it wasn't Joe Meek. I was told later that Joe never answered the phone unless he was expecting a call from someone important. I explained that I was looking for some work as a bass player or singer. The voice told me to hang on and that he would go and speak to Joe. I hung on, and on, and on, and on. Eventually, the voice returned: 'Hello, mate, sorry about that. I had to help Joe with something. He's busy at the moment, mate. Can you ring back in a couple of days?' I told him I would, but just as I was going to put the phone down, I could hear a voice in the background.

'Hang on,' said the voice on the line. 'Joe just asked if you can play guitar as well as bass.'

'I can play rhythm,' I said. 'I'm not too hot on lead.'

I could hear a voice mumbling, somewhere in the background again, and then there was another question, 'Can you sing harmonies?'

I told him I could.

'Joe says to get over here by 12.30.'

'Where are you?' I asked.

'304 Holloway Road,' he replied.

Where is Holloway? I thought. Mimi wasn't around, so I

phoned Irene at her work for directions.

The studio was a hundred or so yards from Holloway tube station. When I arrived, I was expecting a really state-of-theart studio. After all, 'Telstar' had been a number one hit all over the world! This was just a three-storey flat up above a leather shop. The guy who I had spoken to on the phone greeted me. I followed him up the stairs, to the second floor. It didn't look much better than the flat where we had lived in Westbourne Park Road. I remember thinking it was grubby: lots of tape boxes, papers and tape reels strewn everywhere. It smelled musty. Doors were propped open and thick cables were blocking the doorways. There was a bathroom, control room and a larger front room on the floor. The control room to the left was full of racks and equipment covered with dials, switches, sliders and other mysterious gizmos. There were tables buckling with tape recorders and bits of tape everywhere, including the floor. It looked a complete mess. I couldn't believe I was in the recording studio of probably the most inventive, pioneering British record producer of all time. It was a shambles.

As I edged into the room, Joe – I assumed it was Joe; he looked in charge – turned to face me, blurting out, 'I've just been bouncing a track across, so you have a free track to record on, what's your name?'

'Roger,' I replied.

'Roger, Roger, Roger,' he said, with a hint of a West Country accent.

'No, there's only one of me!' came my response.

'He's quick!' said Joe, turning to the guy that had shown me in. 'I'll have to watch him. So, you're the bass player that plays guitar and sings harmonies?'

'I can sing lead voice as well,' I replied.

'Oh, we got a right little star here, haven't we?'

I emphasised once again that I could play a bit of lead but was only comfortable playing rhythm guitar and, of course, bass. Joe explained that he might need a bass player for a few sessions in the near future, and then asked where my guitar was. I told him I didn't have one. I could play guitar, but I didn't own a guitar; I was a bass player. His face changed as he turned to the other guy and snapped, 'Have we got a guitar for the guitarist?' The guy came back with slim semi-acoustic Hofner. 'Do you know how to tune it?' he said sarcastically.

'If you've got a piano,' I replied. 'Oh, and if it's in concert pitch.'

Joe wanted me to put a guitar on three numbers; he said to fill them out a bit, and that he would also be adding a special effect to the guitar afterwards. I didn't ask him what sort of effect; I didn't care; at that point in time all I cared about was getting paid. It was an easy chord structure. Joe went over and over each one with me, while I wrote the chords down. I recall he had some of the written music there but I remember telling him that it would be quicker for me if I did it my way. Joe was always on the go. He bustled in and out of the studio as I tuned, and I heard him clattering about. As he popped in and out, he asked me where I originated from and what I had been doing. When I mentioned *The Cavern* he said that he could have had *The Beatles*.

'For recording?' I asked.

'What else do you think it would be for?' I must have

hit a nerve; everyone in the music business knew Joe was gay, and I believe he thought I was taking the piss. So it wasn't a good start for me. It was a long session, with Joe adjusting the sound, then going over it again and again. He was a perfectionist, all right. He then asked me to put a simple lead part over one of the songs, which I did. I asked him who would be recording the songs I was playing on, and he seemed a bit vague, but he told me later that two were demos (demonstration discs) for future projects for *The Honeycombs* and the other for a solo artiste whose name I'm afraid I can't remember.

However, he firmly stated, 'Don't get any ideas. You're not getting royalties on these.'

I had not expected any. As far as I was concerned, I was hoping to be paid for the session and no more. I had previously listened to some of Joe's records, and was impressed by the vocal sound he achieved. I mentioned this to him after we had finished the session. He smiled and said that the sound was only possible through his own equipment and that other producers couldn't achieve that unique vocal effect. Then he snapped, 'What about the rest of the sound?'

'Oh, that's OK,' I replied.

'OK, only OK?'

'No, I mean you get a great recording sound. Some of the best sounds I have ever heard.'

'I should think so,' Joe said, his voice much calmer now. I was just about to unplug my guitar when he said, 'Just put a few chords down on this one, and a quick harmony part.' It was a whole other song and we went on working for at least another forty-five minutes. The normal session fee in those days was six pounds for three hours. I was there for

over four and a half hours, but not only did Joe say he would pay me only six pounds but that he would have to owe it to me! He did say he was happy with what I had done and that he would use me in future sessions, but I had to explain to him that I was broke and needed the money. After a consultation with the other guy, I was handed a couple of pounds and a further promise of more work.

Over the years, I did a number of sessions for Joe, but it never got any easier to get any money out of him. There was always some excuse why he couldn't pay me the full amount. However, what I did get from Joe was knowledge of the recording industry, which would prove invaluable to me in the future. Joe's recording techniques were unique. Most mixing desks at the time were laid out horizontally in front of you, allowing the sliders, switches and knobs to be easily accessible whilst remaining seated. Joe's mixing desks had these big cooker-style knobs which ran vertically up the wall on metal racks, so he would be standing whilst at the controls. He had his own plate, tape, valve, and reverb echo units. Most reverb units in guitar or PA amplifiers were spring reverb units, usually consisting of a small metal oblong box, around ten or twelve inches long, with a couple of springs stretching the length inside. Sometimes, on stage, if you moved abruptly and yanked on the amplifiers, the reverb springs would clank together and make a horrific sound.

I later found out that Joe achieved some of his unique vocal sounds by using a builder's plank of wood, which was around fifteen feet or maybe longer. Bedsprings were stretched along the length of the board, with nails holding the springs taught. At one end of the board there was a box

of electrics that would take a standard jack lead, then a lead that went into another box placed on the floor, and from there into his vertical mixing units on the wall. Joe was unbelievably inventive, and a true genius in the recording world.

He also had this old upright piano in the studio, which was not that wonderful for recording. Joe wanted a bright honky-tonk sound, so he pushed drawing pins into the hammers. This captured the sound, but there was a problem: when the piano was played, there would be drawing pins flying everywhere. Tin foil was becoming popular, so eventually he scrapped the drawing pins and replaced them with the aluminium foil, another inventive idea.

Joe was eccentric, all right. I popped into his studio one day to see a musician friend of mine. As we were about to leave, Joe appeared dressed in a very nice suit; it was made from a shiny mohair material and, with collar and tie, he looked very smart. However, he was also wearing his carpet slippers. He asked us to hurry up and leave, as he had a meeting to attend somewhere in the West End. As we hurried down the stairs and out of the door, with Joe rushing behind us, I turned to my musician friend and whispered, 'Shall we tell him about the slippers?'

'No, best not to,' he replied. So off went Joe to his meeting wearing his carpet slippers.

In late January 1967, I begun working on a few songs at Joe's with a guitarist from Sydenham named Barry. Barry had known Joe for some time, and had worked on many sessions for him over the years. He had written a few original numbers and roped me in to play and sing

harmonies on the tracks. He also wanted me to record a song entitled 'Kentucky Woman', which had been written and recorded by Neil Diamond and was eventually released in Britain later in 1967. Barry, through his connections, had acquired a copy of the song before its release date. He thought it suited my voice, and wanted me to record it. His idea was to have one of his original songs as the A-side and put me on the B-side – that way we would have two chances to get airplay. If the record companies weren't too keen on his original song, we might get a release on the Neil Diamond number. In those days the B-side would earn 50% of the single so Barry wasn't bothered which song became the A-side. We ran through the song at Joe's to see what he thought of it. Joe was impressed, and we did a quick demo, but for release purposes, he was only interested in recording Barry's original material. Later that day he did say that he might be interested in recording a master, but that we couldn't release it by law until the Neil Diamond version came out in Britain. I don't know if that was true or not.

But we never got a chance to record again with Joe – not the Neil Diamond number, not anything at all. On the day we were to record the master tracks of Barry's song, we turned up at the studio and were refused entry. Joe had shot and killed Mrs Shenton, the owner of the ground floor shop, and then shot himself. Soon the police arrived and the world would shortly learn the truth. It was such a horrific end for such a talented man.

To order *Standing on the Sidelines* please visit https://www.freewebstore.org/Candy-Jar-Store/product/standing-on-the-sidelines

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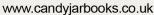




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and is on hand to meet Richards.

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and Russians wish to get their hands on. But the only man

who can truly help Anne, Colonel Lethbridge-Stewart, is

away in Scotland.

It's a game of cat and mouse, as Anne and Bishop seek to

protect the life of an innocent baby - one that holds the

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