

I thought I would write up a fairly brief bio of the years “though not all” of some of the work and bands or experiences I have been fortunate enough to be involved in. What follows is a fairly candid scenario that not even close friends have been aware of.

In the beginning – Loaded Dice this was my first serious outfit writing our own material touring all around the country. We were determined to make some ground for ourselves but after one of a



consecutive run of three gigs in the West Country and with no money, I was sat outside a café in a car park watching the rest of the band, through the glass window, tucking into a breakfast before we all set off for the next show that evening. I realised then that unfortunately we were on very different teams. It wasn't really their fault as they all lived

at home with their parents and I'd had an already complex life even at that point. I had not long before this, concluded my years in care and children's homes. After which at 15 I ended up sleeping in a cardboard box in Soho London or under one the London bridges. These are the formative experiences that eventually led me to becoming a counsellor, working as an outreach youth worker supporting extreme addiction , substance misuse, homelessness, and housing with various charitable associations and mental health teams. Loaded Dice and myself soon after, of course, went our different ways.



A short while later Mark and Steve Owers from the band Fury contacted me and asked me over and then to team up with them. I have to say that these two were some of the most professional musos and still are that I had

ever had the pleasure to work with and we had a few great gigs together.

I then commenced with a number of London Auditions, this was the days when the publication the Melody Maker was still in print and everybody would place their adverts in there for Musicians. Through this I was lucky enough to work with some of the members of Roxy Music-Dave Cousins (The Strawbs) Early rock bands Sampson and Marseille. This was how I managed to audition with Roxy and Dave Cousins. I arrived at the Easy Hire London site where they were holding their auditions, this was a massive complex of buildings that bands would rehearse for their world tours and was greeted by the band as they had just finished checking out a guy that turned out to be a Jazzer. They were just going to take a break and go to the local Pub and asked me to come along.

Being on a school day I declined and waited till they got back. Well a funny thing happened, as they say. At this point I should



mention a previous experience I'd had a couple of years earlier. I managed to get an invite to go backstage during the afternoon at a Scorpions gig at the Mayflower originally called the Gaumont. The band that was opening for them was called Wolf with a particularly, shall we say abrasive type of character on guitar. Whilst In the first row that evening he came up to me on the edge of the stage crotch thrusting /lick busting shred styley as he felt he needed to show me his best moves mmmn.

Anyway back to the Roxy gig while the band were on their break I got nattering to the tea boy and asked him if he could play me some of their music that they were going to



do today, at this point I hadn't mentioned that the band weren't going to physically play. This was unknown to me until day two. We were to play along to recordings of theirs while they sat opposite and watched, he told me he was expressly told not let any of us hear

any of the songs until we were going to play along to them "First listen first take" so to say. After a little gentle persuasion, and it was just me and him there , I managed to get a little blast of a few of the songs they were going to do when they got back. All good then the door flies open and Mr Wolf "afore mentioned guitarist" walks in comes up to me and says I've come for the audition. I told him that that's good then but I'm an audition myself! He didn't quite get it and I had to tell him again that I am here for the audition as well, when he realised he was talking to the enemy he spun round on his stilettos and flounced to the other side of the large rehearsal room and started pulling a birds nest of leads from a 70s type grey cardboard suitcase. I thought this guy is gonna be absolutely brilliant

or hopeless but nothing in between. When the band came back the Jazzer played first (Dire Straits Guitar George he



knows all the chords) and he was exceptional but I kind of knew they didn't want that. Then I had to play. The band at this stage just sat opposite across a long bench Managers/Band/ Roadie's/ Tea Boy etc. Well.... spurred on by Mr Wolf I managed to pull a rabbit from the hat and throw the Bunny at his feet so to speak. When I had finished I looked at the band and kind of shrugged as if to say was that good enough? Within three seconds they all stood up and applauded me, every single person was on their feet and I thought (\$h£^%) Dave Cousins had his arm around me and on the other side the Manager also had his arm around me and they walked me outside and said a lot positive stuff which I kind of mention but they wanted me to come back tomorrow. When we went back in Mr Wolf was getting ready to play so not trying to get in the way I



started to pack my gear up and the tea boy sidles past me and whispers "Talks like a (%\$&%) and plays like a (%\$&%) It's funny

how things come around to you years later and people get seen for what they really are. It doesn't always work as Art is a very fickle friend but personally I always let the nerves do the talking metaphorically speaking, nerves just mean that you wish to do your best anyway and if you keep your ego out of the way the Bunny will make his appearance.....la la la .

I was asked after the second audition with Roxy and Dave Cousins if I would be willing to go on tour with the Animals. To clarify this was at a large complex of studio's called Easy Hire where all the bands would rehearse for their world tours, bands such Robert Plant- Bucks Fizz-Phil

Collins- Madness and lots of other major acts.

Madness did something unusual in that they had the novel situation of a two tier stage with an orchestra on top. A great guitarist called Robin Trower was also playing there. These bands were rehearsing while I was



there doing these auditions. It was great to see experience and hear them over two days. As a young player totally on my own with no Management and coming from the previously mentioned background I started to feel almost totally and completely overwhelmed and had to work hard at pushing those feelings back. You have to understand this was like a Film complex these were Aircraft Hanger size buildings it was for me, just as you might imagine that experience would be for yourselfa teeny bit scary. There was one occasion I asked a friends help (Manfred Spencer) in getting to an audition on the Tube with Marshall 4/12 cabs in tow up and down escalators, very comical really and impossible for me to imagine now. On another I found myself sitting in a room with several other guitarists, waiting for the green light to go on above the



door (Bit Spinal Tap) some I recognised from different music shops round the country. I remember John Sykes (Whitesnake) at one of these auditions, this was basically 150

miles, for ten minutes and NEXT!..... These experiences though, actually culminated in lifting the game a little and giving me a little more intent. I had even known a friend and cool guitarist (Alan Barriffi) that had gone to a supposed audition, when he arrived at the premises they appeared to be empty, door open etc , when he made his way in some aggressive gentlemen surrounded him and tried to mug him and thus relieve him of his equipment. He told me he'd managed to get out in one piece and departed the scene. This was the sort of thing that was happening at the time and made me become a little more careful.

Many Bands ,Gigs, and years later I still had masses of energy and after a show and it didn't matter where it was in the country I would get home and as quick as I could and go straight out on to the town (Southampton). We all used to meet up after gigs with other musicians at the Talking Heads and other pubs or clubs. It was one of these nights that I got the telephone number from (Whispering) Bob Harris for the management of the Chilli Peppers as they were holding auditions for a new guitarist. I called them and we had some conversations about flying over to the States to audition with the band.

To be continued.....