

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

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By Chris James

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Early Years.....	4
My First Band.....	12
Caerphilly Mountain.....	14
Bewegung.....	19
Country Boy 1972.....	22
Touring the UK.....	24
Touring Denmark.....	27
Back in Wales.....	29
Roy Fox & Felicity Jane.....	30
Bob Barry & The Wild Ones.....	38
Steve Phillips to the rescue.....	49
On Tour in Europe with the Jesus People.....	59
Arrival in Amsterdam.....	67
Life in Noddy Land.....	74
The Shades.....	79
The Sisters & Etersheim.....	93
Dicky & The Fruitcakes.....	99
Songwriting at Rick & Reina's.....	99
Working in America.....	99
Four Months in China & Tibet.....	99
Dylan Christian James.....	99
Portugal.....	100
Musician & Songwriter or Computer Programmer.....	100
Stuttgart and Boeblingen.....	100
Lakeside Stories - Singer Songwriter Collective.....	100

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

Sailor's and Musicians.....	100
Song Catalogue.....	100
All Alone 1997.....	100
Building Bridges 1997.....	101
Cardiff Re-visited 1997.....	103
Caribbean Greetings 1983.....	105
Change Team Blues 1987.....	106
Child Suicide 1989.....	107
Communist Orphans 1990.....	108
Dylan Christian James 1987.....	109
Gameboy 1995.....	110
Help 1989.....	111
If Not For You 1996.....	112
In My Car 1989.....	113
Jamie's Birthday 1996.....	114
Jig 1998.....	116
Lullaby 2000.....	117
Mystical Myrthe 1999.....	118
Nervous Breakdown 1990.....	118
One Population 1990.....	120
One Hundred Oange Balloons 2001.....	121
Though for another time 1992.....	122

Introduction

This book is a biography, a chronicle of my musical journey through life. It includes stories and anecdotes of my adventures and friendships that became part of this exciting experience, starting at an early age and continuing right up until the present.

I would like to dedicate this book to my son Dylan Christian James and to my family and friends who have all been part of this musical experience, in particular Steve Phillips and the late Ian Moffatt who accompanied me along the way.

It may also be of interest to other musicians and Singer/Songwriters, hungry for information and real life experiences regarding the mystical art of songwriting, and the less mystical, but highly eventful activity, of hanging out in bands.

This book will provide an insight into my personal experiences, and how some of them have contributed and shaped my catalog of songs which are listed in the latter section of this book. It will also describe how you can gain access to rough and ready recordings, lyrics, foto's and newspaper clippings, legally and free of charge.

These resources will be posted on the Internet via www.chrisjames.nl to which you are invited to submit any relevant contributions you may have lying around somewhere collecting dust.

Early Years

I was born on the South Wales peninsular known as the Gower on the 3rd of June 1956. My unmarried mother Margaret, who lived in the Llanelli area, had become pregnant from an older German man who was working in South Wales for a company performing mineral exploration in the area. Apparently my father had found much more interesting things to explore in the Welsh valleys than just coal seams and minerals.

Pregnancy at the tender age of nineteen was not exactly what Margaret's mother had had in mind for her daughter. Hence she decided to take control of the situation and enlist the help of her local MP.

Together with the help of the MP, Margaret's mum lobbied my father's company pressing them to take appropriate action against the perpetrator. As a result my father, Josef was soon transferred to another location somewhere in the Southern Hemisphere. My Grandmother also made suitable arrangements for Margaret who was discretely sent off to a nursing home for young women, many of which found themselves in similar circumstances. The nursing home was to become home for Margaret during the latter stages of her pregnancy until my birth and subsequent adoption, which was arranged in partnership with an adoption agency.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

The nursing home was situated a few miles away from the hustle and bustle of Llanelli town in the beautiful surroundings of the Gower coast which was, and still is, renowned for its beauty and tranquility. Not too many prying eyes there! Even so, it must have been a terribly traumatic experience for her. That is, to be away from home for a long period and then after giving birth to have to forfeit her baby to someone she would never even get to meet. For me, on the other hand, it wasn't such a bad thing. Looking back in hindsight, I guess I should consider myself lucky to be born in such a beautiful place as the Gower with all that fresh sea air around.

As fate determined, I grew up in Cardiff with my new mum Dorothy Elisabeth Kate James completely oblivious to the circumstances surrounding how I had entered the world. Dorothy was a great mum and gave me all the love and affection that a child could have ever dreamt for. Although Dorothy did actually inform me about my adoption when I was about 4 or 5 years old, I never felt as if I didn't belong with her. In fact we were very close and I was her only child.

Dorothy fulfilled the role of mother perfectly, and I never had to doubt her validity as mum. I guess I also wasn't too curious about my biological mum until much later on in life. In fact Dorothy was the only mum I ever really needed, well except for all those girl friends then!

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

We lived in the Roath district of Cardiff in Cottrell Road and 'we' consisted of my mum, dad Stan and my mother's father, my grandfather Harry. He was at the grand old age of eighty two years old when I was born, but extremely active and healthy. This despite the four packets of Woodbines cigarettes he would smoke almost every day.

I could have only been a few months old when my first recallable life experience was logged in my memory. By some freak of nature I can clearly remember myself as a baby lying in my pram while a few of my mothers friends or neighbours were peering down into to the pram to admire her newly acquired baby. I'm sure that they were all very friendly and meant no harm. However, they were much too close with their huge heads and had most definitely entered too far into my comfort zone. It was then that I must have first discovered that I could make a lot of noise with my Welsh voice, screaming continually until they had retreated to their previous positions. They were probably saying 'oh poor thing, he must be having stomach pains' or words to that effect, but no, they themselves, with their high pitched voices, were the sole cause of my distress.

As a very young child I was also very fond of my Dad Stan too, but then he ran off with another women, which sort of severed our bond as he rarely came to visit me. It wasn't that he was living with another women which forced us apart, but due to the strained relationship with my mum, we saw less and

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

less of each other until his visits were down to about once or twice a year when he would pick me up from school in his car and embarrass me in front of my friends, none of which knew that I even had a father. I think I used to invent stories about him in an attempt to save my face at School. In fact I even believe that I once told some friends that he had been knocked down and killed by a city bus or died in a plane crash. Strangely enough around about the same time my biological father was soon to really die in a plane crash in South America or at least that is what I was later told. Perhaps my fantasy story about the accident was some kind of psychic premonition.

At the tender age of six years old I first became interested in the piano as one of my neighbours, and good friend, David Pough, had just taken up piano lessons. David was able to play a few tunes and that impressed me to no end. In fact I asked him if he would teach me what he had learned, and that is how I got started off on the piano.

Living together with my mum and grandpa Harry, we were not too well off and we could not really afford expensive piano lessons. My mum was also able to play a few tunes on the piano herself and was very excited at the idea that I had taken an interest in the instrument. She soon bought me a piano and asked a local pub pianist, Mrs Malluwish, if she could teach me the raw basics. This worked out wonderfully well as I deeply admired her

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

playing and marveled at the pub style glissando's that she would play when she let her hair down now and again. Her repertoire of pub standards was breathtaking and endless. Also she could play the piano and hold a conversation at the same time and best of all, she was able to play almost any song without the aid of sheet music. Despite all this natural talent, she did actually teach me to read music too, but wasn't very strict and would never reprimanded me for improvising instead of playing what was on the sheet music. .

I guess this is as good a start as any musician could hope for, and as a result, my progress was fast. My goal in life had changed from wanting to play like David Pough to wanting to play like Mrs Malluwish even though it seemed impossible at the time that anyone could ever equal her or get anywhere near her magical touch.

I quickly followed Mrs.Malluwish's fingers up and down the piano keyboard and became her most talented prodigy. After just two years, Mrs.Malluwish decided she couldn't teach me any longer and that my talent would be best developed elsewhere, for example under the close supervision of a well established pianoforte tutor. My mother and I reluctantly agreed to try someone that she had recommended and I was enrolled with a piano tutor near Roath Park Lake, which was, lets say, in the posh area of Cardiff. When my new teacher asked me what type of music I liked playing the most, I gave her a round of 'Roll out the Barrel' which completely disgusted her.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

My recital was immediately aborted and I was strictly forbidden to play any more of that 'horribly vile and tasteless pub music'. 'If you really want to become a concert pianist you will heed my advice', she sternly snapped.

The lessons were tediously boring and subsequently there was no real connection with Mrs. Lewis and her style of teaching. The only thing that I can remember well about the lessons was the strange smell in her house. I believe she had scented the house with lavender or some other herb. Although the smell was not grotesque, it didn't smell like a normal house that I was used to being in. In fact I began to associate the smell with the kind of non-music I was learning there. It was in fact symbolizing things like; piano etudes deprived of melody, discipline, sitting upright and worst of all, only playing what was on the sheet music in front of me instead of what was in my head and what sounded nice. 'Christopher your improvising again', she would moan as I played my own variations on Chopin's Waltzes. "Thou shalt not improvise" was her eleventh commandment. I'm sure that Chopin would have loved to see a young kid improvising or jamming away on one of his Waltzes or Etudes, but not she.

Over a period of 3-4 years I started taking my exams and progressed quite fast, passing my Royal College of Music Piano grades with ease. At least up to grade five or six. At the age of ten I couldn't take any more and quit my

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

piano lessons with no real desire to ever start again.

No sooner than I had stopped with the piano I started to try my luck with other instruments. Violin, Glockenspiel, Recorder, Flugel horn and Organ to mention just a few. One of the most interesting instrument was the Church Organ which I learnt to play at St .Annes Church in Croft Street where I was a member of the choir. Having been patient enough, I soon graduated to become deputy head boy as the older boys voices broke one by one. The head boy's name was David Hallot and we became the best of friends. David had a great voice and his older brother Paul was a very talented pianist and organist. He was also the leader of the church choir. Often we would play at David's house which was near the St.Annes church and every now and again his brother Paul would teach me some new pieces to play on the organ. Soon I became proficient on the church organ and after Paul had taught me to play with both hands and feet and, at the same time, keep a watchful eye on the devilish choirboys below through a mirror that was mounted above my head, I became his stand-in for Church services and sometimes a wedding or funeral at St.Annes Church.

The choir practices and organ playing revived my interest in music and also triggered an interest in musical arrangement.

My church career ended abruptly when the local priest caught me upstairs in the organ loft

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

with a girl from the choir. I was busy practicing the organ for the following Sunday's Mass when one of the choir girl's had passed by and found her way up into the organ loft. She had come with a mission, and it wasn't just to turn the pages of Bach's Fugue in D minor. After seducing me into kissing and groping her, we were suddenly surprised and busted by the priest, who just by chance had stopped by. His discovery that church had become a multifunctional location for romance did not amuse him in the least. In fact he sacked me on the spot and my career as an church organist was over, just like that. This experience I used decades later in my song Cardiff Re-visited.

At this point in life I decided that I had had enough with churches, choirs, priests and piano's and decided to teach myself to play guitar. I wasn't very good at it, but I did manage to learn a few chords and before I knew it, I was giving guitar lessons myself to three blushing sisters just around the corner from the St. Annes Church where I was no longer welcome.

Although my church going days seemed over and done with at the time, it had become a profound influence on me musically as I would later re-discover while writing songs and arranging vocal harmonies.

After all those years of nerve racking piano lessons and church organ performances, playing guitar seemed like a piece of cake, and

with immediate results to show for it. The three giggle-prone sisters, all much more interested in me, than in learning to play guitar where to become my first real music students. What more reward could a musician in puberty ask for?

This represented an important turning point I guess. Not just with regard to music but also the kind of people I hung out with, not to mention the dubious types of activities I would soon start to indulge in.

My First Band

During my teens I started a band at school so that we could enter a school competition. It was a very poor attempt, but we had our three minutes of fame in the grand school hall at Howardian High School trying to attempt cover a McGuinness Flint number called 'When I'm Dead and Gone'. We soon noticed that we had achieved our goal when some girls from the adjacent Lady Margaret School became noticeably interested in us due to our newly acquired status as a "rock band".

This was the start of a new era in which I would start to hang out with the 'wrong types of people' as my mother would call them. What she meant was people who would be able to influence me, and I suspect I was very easy prey at the time.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

During this period I started smoking cigarettes and experimenting with other things that would affect my behavior and thoughts.

It was around this time that I reunited my friendship with Steve Phillips, We had met years earlier living quite close to each other in Roath, Cardiff. However Steve attended a different school than I and we lost sight of each other for a few years. At the age of thirteen we found ourselves in the same School. Howardian High School for Boys only at the time. Steve was to become my life long friend and companion.

Steve and I first met when we were quite young, on Christmas day in fact. Santa Claus or Father Christmas as my mum called him, had brought us both football gear. Steve was all dossed out in his West Ham outfit which was in the colours of claret and blue and I can't remember what mine looked like, probably the blue of Chelsea.

It was a strange way to strike up an acquaintance, two kids on their own in the middle of a field 'The Rec' which is how everybody called Roath Park Recreation Ground in Roath, Cardiff. It was Christmas day and we both were wearing new football gear and both had nobody to play with. After kicking a ball around for a while we carefully started a conversation up and probably found out soon that we had more than just the football gear in common.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

Although this was a brief and uneventful meeting, it would become the first of many, some more exciting than others.

Some years later when we found ourselves frequenting the same school, we started to hang out more often together. Steve had also taught himself to play guitar and in fact had even build his own electric guitar using the facilities of his dad's workshop. No sooner than he could play he started a school band consisting of his mates Kevin Richards on drums and Dave Cogan on bass and himself on guitar. None of them could play exceptionally well, but they really had the arrogant rock star attitude that accompanied a band and were considered quite trendy by our school peers.

Caerphilly Mountain

One of my most memorable experiences with Steve was on Caerphilly Mountain. Steve, Dave Cogan and myself had decided to bike it up to Caerphilly Mountain on a Saturday afternoon. I took a small garden tent with me so that we could pitch it on the top of the mountain and use it as a base from where we could play.

It was a very destructive afternoon as I can recall. We spent most of it smoking menthol flavoured cigarettes in the tent and then when we got fed up of that, we discovered how we could wreck our bikes by free-wheeling them

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

down the mountain without rider to see how far they would go before they crashed below. By the time we had finished that little game the bikes were in need of serious repair.

Our bikes more or less destroyed, we got the idea to camp out on the mountain in that little tent of mine. There were however some practical problems facing us. For example; the tent didn't have a ground sheet and we also had no sleeping bags and no mattress or blankets. This didn't seem to deter us at all and so we set off to find the nearest telephone booth to call our parents and inform them of our daring plan.

My mum, although very sceptical about the idea, did consent but only after I had lied that my friends parents had already agreed.

This was of course wishfull thinking, and Dave 's parents were not so easily persuaded and ordered him to come home immediately. Steve's dad took the same decision, and before the hour was through, Steve's dad had arrived on the mountain in the car to collect Steve, Dave and me. We were to leave our bikes on the mountain until they could be recoverd the next morning.

Dave seemed quite relieved to know he would be spending the night at home instead of on the mountain. Steve on the other hand was incredibly disappointed that his parents wouldn't let him stay as my mother had done. Needless to say I had no plans to camp out on that mountain all on my own and was planning

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

on getting into the car together with Dave and Steve. To my horror Steve started pleading with me not to get into his Fathers car and to stay behind on my own just to demonstrate to his parents that there was no justification for their cautiousness. He also promised me that he would be up on the mountain early the next morning to meet me. I was petrified at the idea of staying on that mountain all alone and in the dark. It was a kind of wilderness up there with no houses, people or other buildings within miles.

Steve wanted desperately to prove to his father that it could be done and I was the only person who could do it. After some hefty discussions at the roadside I reluctantly agreed and as a result saw Dave & Steve whisked away back to Cardiff in the car.

Shortly after they left I climbed back up the mountain top where my tent was pitched. With dusk drawing in, it no longer felt the same as when Steve and Dave were around. Instead it became cold, dark, damp and deserted. It got even worse when thick mist descended down on the mountain and visibility was totally gone. The mist then turned into mist and rain and then complete darkness.

Shivering, I got into my tent, but soon discovered that without a groundsheet, the tent floor which had been dry grass was rapidly becoming damp, then wet, then wetter and finally soaked as it continued to rain. After just two hours I was no longer able to sit on the

grass but had to huddle up into a position half standing and half scooping down in order to stay relatively dry.

There was a sense of eeriness, and I felt like I was lost on the moors and that the hound of the baskevilles was about to get his next meal. It was getting colder and grimmer and I was very scarred but not yet panic-stricken. The mist had become fog and it was so thick that I dare not venture out of the tent as as would probably never find it again. The idea of trying to get down the steep mountain face in the fog was also not very inviting.

Minutes seemed to pass like hours and hours like days. At about 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning I had resigned myself to my ill-fate and that my safety was best served by staying put and not venturing outside the tent when all of a sudden I thought I could hear something like a faint voice shouting in the distance. This scared the living daylights out of me. Who the hell would be out on the mountain top in the damp fog at this time in the night. My heart started pumping at triple speed as the voice became louder. Could it be a ripper or a tramp. Now I really was starting to panic. Then all of a sudden I heard that it was my name that was being called out. And after some shouting back and forth Steve emerged out of the fog, completely soaked to the skin and exhausted.

Apparently Steve had been feeling a bit guilty about leaving me there on the mountain and quite rightly so, God bless him. In order to ease

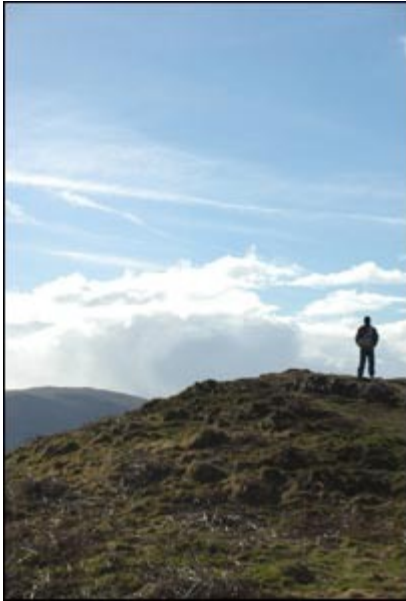
Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

his conscience he had planned a great escape from his house as soon as his parents had gone to sleep. After breaking out of the house, he started to hike back up to the mountain which was over 8 miles or so. Even after reaching the mountain he still had to get up to the top where the tent was. This must have been very treacherous in the thick fog, so it was really quite amazing that he managed to find me.

Unfortunately for Steve the tent couldn't offer him any more shelter than it was offering me, and after a half-hour we decided to climb down the other side of the mountain and head for the next town, Caerphilly. Not that there would be anything open or anything to do there. It was just a way of passing the time, waiting for the Sun to rise.

It took us an hour or so to walk down and when we arrived at four or five in the morning the town was completely deserted, except for a police patrol who did stop us but we were not detained. When the dawn had finally broken, we got ourselves back up the mountain and at about 8 or 9 o'clock Steve's dad was back up in the car after discovering Steve's disappearance. He was not amused and took us back into Cardiff where we were happy to sleep off our ordeal during the day.

Cearphilly Mountain in broad daylight!



Bewegung

A few weeks afterwards, Steve asked if he could practice with his band in my front room. I had a very large front room that overlooked the shopping district of Albany Road in Cardiff. We lived above a doctor's surgery where my mum worked as the receptionist and caretaker. I agreed and Steve arrived with his band and all their gear. Kevin Richards was the drummer and had some very heavy duty equipment, Dave Cogan played the bass guitar and Steve was on lead guitar. They invited me to play along on my acoustic piano, but you couldn't hear much piano against the racket they were making.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

Steve's band called themselves BEWEGUNG which is German for 'Movement'. This seemed like the real thing and although Steve and his friends did not have a musical background like me, they were definitely 'cool' and more into the scene than I was. My grandfather was well into his 90's at the time and could not hear too well. He was in the room reading his beloved newspaper when Steve and his mates set up their equipment comprising of a drum kit and a Marschal stack amplifier. My grandfather didn't seem too concerned until Bewegung started to play their grungy music as loud as they possibly could. My grandfather finally left the room he so loved and retired to the back-room to continue with his newspaper in the relative peace and quite. In the meantime, the 'music' had not escaped the attention of the shoppers and shop-keepers below in Albany Road. Some of which started to hurl abuse up at us, some where becoming hostile as we were noticeably attracting the attention of their customers.

I was a bit concerned about the trouble I was about to get myself into with the neighbours, when Steve pointed out that across the road, the female staff of Boots the Chemist had also been drawn from their counters to listen to our racket. Their waves of encouragement was exactly the sign we were looking for.

Fuck the shop-keepers, we're on our way to fame and fortune, that was our quick analysis of the situation.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

This was the start of the band era for me and I soon became involved in a thriving music scene and found myself playing with two older guys Dereck Morgan and Gordon Keer. They were both very proficient musicians. Dereck was a multi-instrumentalist, playing guitar, bass, piano, organ and other instruments while Gordon Keer was an excellent guitarist. They were both very mystical people and encouraged others in the same direction. Dereck was the organizer and was always seeming and up to something or other. Gordon had remained ever loyal to his first guitar, which I believe he purchased at Woolworth's. It had a fret action that made it look more like a steel guitar than a normal one. Gordon was the only person in the world who could play that wretched instrument and as a result he had his own sound. He could have easily passed for Jan Akkerman as far as guitar ability goes. He did not use conventional plectrums but he would cut his own out of used plastic Squeezy washing-up liquid. The plectrums were incredibly light weight but well-suited for his style of playing which could be best characterised as "fucking fast".

Our new band was called Dunmow Fritch and we were mostly inspired by folk-music and bands like Fairport Convention. Our repertoire consisted of a selection of Jigs and we started experimenting with music that Dereck Morgan had written with Gordon's guitar ability in mind. Many years later I wrote my own Gig, but at a

much more comfortable speed and unfortunately without Gordon Keer on guitar.

Country Boy 1972

It was during this period that I had my first bash at composing my own music. My first composition was called 'Country Boy' and it was in the key of E major.

Messing around on my guitar I believed I had stumbled upon a new chord sequence and consequently I based my song around that.. This method of songwriting is quite common for novices and in fact was quite common in the more professional band scene around that period let's say 1971. First you create a riff on the guitar or bass, then you put a melody line to it, and then finally you write some stupid lyrics to fit on top. Believe me, this must be the most uncreative way to go about songwriting but I guess that's how many people start and some of which never progress any further.

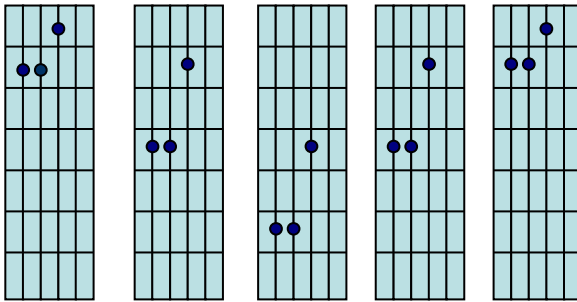
Although the chords were not actually as weird as they seemed to me at the time, I guess you could also say that it's not the kind of chord sequence that you would expect someone to use for their very first composition. Whatever, this **was** my first song and I called it Country Boy.

The lyrics were pretty cheesy and to be quite honest I really didn't know what I was trying to

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

say in my song. But it was a song, and I had written it.

Country Boy Guitar Chords



The lyrics went something like;

I am just a little country boy and there's a lotta
nice people hanging round
I don't plan on stayin too long
Cause I don't think I can stand my ground.
I wanna go, I wanna show
You the place that I came from

I had never attempted to record this first song
until now and would probably have never done
so had it not been for this book for which I
wanted to provide a sound snippet.

Touring the UK

While playing with Dereck Morgan in Dunmow Flitch he came into contact with a band called The Sin of Igor who were a well established professional band playing covers and doing the social clubs and night club circuits up and down the country. They were looking for a bass guitarist and a rythem guitarist. Dereck was a multi-instrumentalist like myself but unlike me he was proficient on all his instruments. Dereck didn't really like the idea of joining The Sin of Igor alone and asked me if I would come along as the rythem guitarist. I had taught myself to play guitar a few years earlier but wasn't very good. However I was good enough for The Sin of Igor, in fact Emile Vodden the lead guitarist of the band and one to the two Vodden brothers in the band was so bad himself, that he was quite pleased to have someone in the band who was worse than himself. Hence Dereck and I joined the Sin of Igor.

After a few gigs in South Wales, the band was off to Manchester for a few weeks playing every night of the week in Social Clubs and Night Clubs and earning a decent living from it. At the time I was still in Howardian High School in Cardiff having finished my GCE exam's in November after a re-take. This meant I had to wait until next September before I could start University. My mum's dreams of her son going off to Oxford or Cambridge took a turn for the worse when I left school during the Easter

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

vacation and disappeared to Manchester with the band. Needless to say I never did get to Oxford or Cambridge and that was the end of my academic life.

My mum was very disappointed but saw that I was doing something that I really liked and reluctantly accepted my choice.

The Sin of Egor were playing all over the UK, but mostly in the areas surrounding Manchester where our agent Barry Helmes was situated. This meant we were usually staying in guest houses in Manchester, Sunderland or Blackpool. The guest-house in Manchester where we stayed was something else. It was run by a German Lady known to her customers and residents as Ma. Her house was situated in the Wally Range district of Moss Side, a very rough area of Manchester, notorious for its street prostitutes, pimps and drug addicts.

Ma ran a guest house which specifically catered for people working in the entertainment industry. This meant in practical terms that you could get breakfast at 1 pm in the afternoon and come back at 3 am in the morning and have a bevy and a chat with the other bands and artists also staying there.

During the period we stayed at Ma's we had regular contact with nationally famous bands like Mud and Desmond Dekker and the Aces who preferred to stay at Ma's for 1 pound a night, rather than check in to a regular and expensive Hotel. Being at Ma's was like being at home

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

with both the advantages and the disadvantages. For example, my mum used to call Ma on the phone and feed her with information about me and ask her to keep an eye on me and make sure I didn't get into trouble. Now that was the kind of mission that Ma was looking for in life and she certainly gave me a hard time if she felt I had been drinking or smoking too much. There were no loose women or drugs allowed on the premises and Ma was notorious as a vigilante in fighting the prostitution business on her doorstep. If she suspected a car of curb-crawling. She would stand in the middle of the road and when the car had been stopped she would rock it back and forth cursing the driving and threatening to trace his registration so she could inform his wife and employer.

Her house rules were enforced with vigor and she didn't care who she was dealing with. She once literally booted Desmond Dekker out of the house in the middle of the night for being disobedient to her rules.

One of my most warm memories of being at Ma's was watching BBC's Top of The Pop's while sitting on the settee together with the band Mud, our house mates who just happened to have a number 1 hit at the time. Top of the Pops was presented by Tony Blackburn and was not live. Mud's singer stood next to the television set and mimicked himself while the band looked on almost uninterested. At this point I was almost certain that within a year or so, we would also be there on Top of

the Pops and could do the same thing at Ma's with our pre-recorded Top of The Pops appearance.

Touring Denmark

After playing in Sin of Egor for a few months our agent Barry Helms tipped us off about an audition to be held near Bath in England. It was organised by a Danish agent who was booking bands to play in top venues in Copenhagen, Denmark. At that time there was some crazy law in Denmark which made it cheaper for clubs to contract live bands instead of paying for a license to play recorded music. Very strange!

We passed the audition in Bath and we were one of the few bands that were selected to play in the top venue in Copenhagen. We signed a contract to play for the complete month of July in 1972, playing every night of the week without one day off during the whole month. In the weekend there was a local band that would play in between our sets. Both bands playing 4 sets between 20:00 and 04:00.

It was a grueling schedule but it also had it's advantages as our equipment stayed put in one place for the whole month, and we did not have the hassle of traveling, that is except from our hotel to the club. The club was very exclusive and situated in a location called The Circus right opposite the main entrance to the

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

Copenhagen Tivoli Gardens. There was no place more central than that in the whole of Denmark and we sure did have a lot of fun there.

Our predecessors where a band called Sweet Sensation, a black soul band from Liverpool with a number of hits in the UK, a bit reminiscent of the Jackson 5, except there were about ten of them! We were not in the same league as Sweet Sensation, and we did notice that certain sections of our regular audience were a little bit disappointed with us at first, but after a week or so we were packing in the crowds and the audience seemed to accept us.

Our first night was really strange, when we had finished our last set and the club was closing down on a Monday night, I noticed that a number of young ladies had begun to assemble near the rear entrance. I asked the girl behind the bar if they work there or what they were waiting for and she said. They're waiting for you guys from the band of course.

These are your groupies. 'Ven you and your band are ready, they vil take you back to your hotel and you vil get a fucky fucky.' I didn't believe her at first but her prediction was spot on. The only detail she missed was that they first took us to an all-night liquor-store to stock up on drinks. After that it was back to the hotel in a taxi. When we tried to explain to the taxi driver where our hotel was, he said I know, everybody knows, and sure enough we arrived

at our comfortable hotel on the Vesterbrogarde without saying much more.

Well I'm not sure whether what happened next was to influence my songwriting or not, but I can remember running down the street early the next morning leaping into the air with joy and knowing that finally, at the tender age of seventeen, I was no longer a virgin. As it happened I ended up sleeping with two Danish girls at one of the girls parents apartment just a short work from our Hotel.

Back in Wales

After our successful and sexually exhausting month in Copenhagen we returned to Cardiff. The two wives of the Vodden brothers were on the war path. Apparently one of the Vodden brothers was daft enough to give his home address to some of his new female Danish acquaintances. Before the boys returned home they were preceded by postcards and love-letters from their Danish admirers explicitly revealing the details which the Vodden boys had been keeping secret from their spouses.

Luckily Dereck and myself were happy, free and single and did not have the same hostile reception when we returned home We

considered ourselves damned lucky that we didn't need to see the doctor or receive the dreaded umbrella treatment that Emile Vodden, the older brother, had been frightening us with. Emile was an ex-ambulance driver and loved to talk about disasters such as car crash scenes and suicides, especially when driving the van late at night. He claimed his wife was psychic and had regular encounters with ghosts and other spirits. If only he could have played guitar with the same kind of passion and fantasy as his far fetched horror stories then we surely would have been on Top of the Pops.

After a week back in Wales we were back in the social clubs and night club scene playing about five nights a week. Shortly after returning I can remember picking up a female admirer at one of our gigs. We went out for a walk and I immediately proposed we do it in the van. She was visibly shocked and ran back inside. At this point I really knew for certain that our Danish trip was over and done with and that we were now back in Wales where flirtation was primarily what the girls indulged in.

Roy Fox & Felicity Jane

Just prior to our tour in Denmark we had acquired ourselves a new manager for the band. His name was Roy Fox and he was assisted by his charming blond wife Cynthia.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

They lived in a tiny miners cottage up in the Tonypandy area of the Welsh valleys. Roy however was not a local boy, and came from London where he used to drive a Hackney cab. Having now being downgraded to a Welsh Valley taxi cab, he was looking hard for a way to escape the uneventful life of the Welsh Valleys that would await him as Cynthia's husband in Tonypandy.

Roy had invested in a smart briefcase and a white suit, and using his London accent, he could put on quite an impressive show bluffing his way around the band scene. Depending how gullible you were, he could convince you that he had turned down The Rolling Stones because he saw more potential in our band.

Roy and Cynthia did not get on too well with the Vodden brothers. Dereck and I also found them much too dominating for our liking. In close conspiracy with Roy we decided to quit Sin of Igor and start up our own band under the name Felicity Jane. Roy put up some venture capital and we got ourselves a PA and a Ford Transit van. The two essential ingredients you needed then in order to get a band on the road.

We needed a Singer, a guitarist and a new drummer to complete the band line-up. Dereck suggested asking 'Moff' the nickname of a guy at School who's real name was Ian Moffatt.

I think I only found out that he actually had real name, after a year or so of playing with him. Moff was a Londoner like Roy, so they hit it off

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

straight away and our otherwise Welsh 'Taffy' band all of a sudden had a certain cosmopolitan air about it.

Moff had been playing with a "black" band called Messiah, in the Tiger Bay dockland area of Cardiff and had earned a reputation and respect from his peers at Howardian High School. Most of them, in fact most people in general, didn't even dare to venture into that lawless part of town of fear of what might happen, and that including the local police force. Hence there was a lot of stuff going on down there, including lots of music.

Moff and Dereck already knew each other so now we just needed a guitarist and a singer. I don't know how and where we found Hayden Ward, but all of a sudden he was playing guitar for us and he was pretty good at it too. Hayden had a very melodic guitar style and was greatly admired by us all. Hayden also had his disadvantages and revelled in being outrageously disgusting especially in the mornings.

Breakfast could be quite embarrassing with Hayden around. He would sometimes take up acrobatic positions around the breakfast table, which he claimed would enhance the sound and volume of his farts. Needless to say, not all the hotel guests were so appreciative of his talents and he could clear the breakfast room quicker than any kitchen maid could even dream of. Whatever the case he was as good as they get as a guitarist or at least as good as

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

we could get and he slotted well into our band. Besides that he was good fun too, and as Moff later pointed out to me, I was probably his greatest fan.

We never did get ourselves a singer and before I knew it I was singing. Although I didn't have much experience as singer in a band I could sing, and my days in St. Annes choir certainly helped me to adapt my voice so that I could sing lead vocals.

Felicity Jane was put together in one week I recall and subsequently we were contracted up North in Sunderland and Newcastle area for about a month or more.

During that period I purchased an organ so I could switch from playing rhythm guitar to organ or just sing. Hayden was so good we didn't really need a rhythm guitar anymore.

One night we were playing a classy night club in Sunderland called Wetherals. The bouncers wore yellow and brown striped suits and they looked like Butlins Red Coats, only yellow and brown.

We were waiting for Moff to show up and we asked the bouncers if they would bounce him when he showed up, just for fun. Shortly after he arrived and was immediately set on by two of the yellow-brown bouncers. They got him outside within about 20 seconds and his feet didn't even touch the ground. We were all very

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

impressed, even Moff said at the time, Christ these guys are real professionals.

Later that evening Moff and I spotted two ladies who seemed interested in having some fun. They were not from Sunderland but came from the County Durham area, about 20 miles outside of Sunderland. One of them told me that her parents were on holiday and that they were both staying in the house without parental supervision. They invited us back for some drinks, but really they were just looking for a lift home instead of forking out on a taxi.

Dereck was the only person in the band who could drive and who had a driving license, but Dereck was not in for any fun that night and left for our guest house as soon as our last set was done. Moff and I continued to pursue our luck with the ladies and we really wanted to take up their offer to drive them home. However we didn't have the money for a taxi for such a long ride. As the night went on we had more and more to drink, then suddenly I had an idea. What if I were to drive? I had never driven a car let alone a van before and had also never had any driving lessons.

We put the plan into action and went back into the guest house and removed the car keys from Derecks coat while he gently snored away. It must have been about 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning and there was absolutely no traffic. After a stalling the engine a few times, I got the van into gear and we were off on our joy-ride to Durham with the girls laughing away and very impressed at my first attempt at

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

driving. We were all very chuffed that our plan had worked and we had a pleasant evening at the girls house. Next morning was a different story. It was Monday morning and the traffic was very heavy getting back in to Sunderland. How I managed to drive the van back I still don't know, but I can remember pulling up at a traffic light next to a police car and then stalling the van when the light changed to green. Believe it or not, somehow we got back with the van safely, but Dereck Morgan was certainly not amused and that was my first and last driving lesson in the van.

While we are on the subject of Moff, another little adventure I experienced together with Moff was up in the valleys at Roy & Cynthia's home. For some reason we had decided to go up and visit them probably to discuss some business with Roy. However after a few cans of beer, we headed down to the pub to continue our discussions while doing some serious drinking. Roy always loved to take us down to his local so he could brag about 'his boys' and how we would soon become mega stars under his expert management. After a few beers and some Gin and Oranges for Cynth, Roy started talking to some local girls. This had caught Cynthia's attention so she had decided to have her own little flirt too with me and Moff. She had done this quite often, but as she got more and more drunk the tone became more serious and she suggested some kind of orgy. Moff and I were not really into that kind of thing and we also saw some obvious practical

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

obstacles, like how to deal with Roy for example.

We knew Cynthia was serious when she suggested spiking Roy's drink. Now Roy had already had quite a bit to drink which was reflected in his loud conversations with the local girls at the bar, and we guessed he would not need too much more to drop off into oblivion.

However we were wrong. Roy seemed to go on for ever drinking all kinds of concoctions and cocktails that we were ordering for him getting more and more potent as the evening went on. Due to the large rounds with double vodka's mixed with gin and fruitjuices our money was running out fast, and come closing time, Moff and I were beginning to wonder whether this was such a good idea after all. Then the bell rang for last orders and Cynthia went to the bar to get Roy the ultimate night-cap. I don't know what went in it but it looked pretty deadly. 'There you are darling' she said with a wicked look in her eye and smiling at us as if to say 'now it won't be long'.

We walked back from the pub our arms linked together and singing and shouting as we made our way back up the mountain side where Roy and Cynthia lived in a little terraced cottage. It was a very basic dwelling probably previously belonging to a coal miner. There was no toilet in the house. The toilet in fact was on the other side of the street up some steps and there situated on the top of a kind terrace was a small

shed with two entrances. One for the outside toilet and one for the winter coal supply.

No sooner had we entered the house and opened our first can of beer, when Roy stood up and headed for the toilet across the road. Cynthia had a big smile on her face as she eyed us both up. Don't worry about him she joked, he wont be back for a while. Moff and I didn't feel very comfortable as Cynthia made her advances towards us, teasing us and letting us feel various parts of her anatomy. After a half an hour Roy still hadn't come back from the toilet and I started to become suspicious. Cynthia did not want to stop our little game and said oh leave him he's probably puking up, "and he doesn't like company when he's puking you know", she added.

Despite her attempts to play down the situation, I decided to take a look for myself. I carefully approached the shed, half expecting Roy to be angry or hanging over the toilet, but to my surprise there was no Roy.

I was just about to run back into the house to report Roy missing when I heard a groan coming from the shed next door, and yes Roy was still there alright only he had gone into the wrong entrance and was lying facedown in the coal bunker in what had been his fancy white suit. The suit wasn't looking too fancy anymore covered in vomit and black coal and Roy was barely conscious. I helped him stand-up and down the steps and into the house. Where he immediately went upstairs and continued to

throw up for about an hour until everything went silent.

In the meantime Moff and I were having a jolly good time down stairs with Cynthia who was showing us a trick or two. This went on until the early hours until we had all exhausted ourselves and indulged at the expense of poor old Roy. I never saw him again in that white suit.

Bob Barry & The Wild Ones

I can't recall why or how Felicity Jane split up but it was as if we were gone as fast as we had come onto the scene. After a few weeks at home, we started putting a new band together. This time Dereck Morgan was no longer part of the setup and I replaced him playing bass guitar. Moff and I were the only remaining members of Felicity Jane. This time we hooked up with a greasy motor mechanic from Shroud near Bristol. His name was Bob and his stage name was Bobby Barry. At thirty-four years old he was twice our our age and I guess you could say that there was quite a big clove between him and the band. Bob was a crooner who put on loads of brillcream in his hair. He wore a shinny glittering gold sequin suit in a futile attempt to impress the audience with his 50's style performance.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

This was Bob's come-back as he put it and he needed a band crazy enough to back him. We found two longhaired guitarists Steve Mitchel and Ricky to complete the line-up. Cynthia came up with the name Bobby Barry & The Wild Ones and after a few days of practicing we were ready to go out on the road again.

After a few local gigs we were back up North touring the night-club scene known as the Baileys Circuit and doubling up with gigs at nearby social clubs. In this manner it was possible to play all the weekdays at social clubs and to double up on the weekends first doing a short set at a social club, followed by a frantic race across town to continue at a night club. Playing 9 or 10 gigs a week we were able to make a reasonable living from our music. If we were lucky we would also get booked for the Sunday afternoon bingo matinee at the social club which was a men's only event. The reason being that the event was usually graced by the presence of a local stripper, and not for the women folk. Quite often we would have to share the same dressing room with the stripper which was hilarious. The audience saw how the stripper took off all her clothes. We saw how she put it all back on again and left, twenty quid richer.

After a few weeks up in Manchester we were off for our next German Tour in which we would be playing in various US military bases in the South and West of Germany.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

It was nearing Christmas and we had been practicing a week in Wales before we left for a few more days near Bristol at Bob's house. My mum had been quite ill in that period, in fact she had been diagnosed as having breast cancer and I discussed the tour with her as it would involve me not being at home for Christmas. She must have known she was nearing the end, but she insisted that I go on the tour. She had been into hospital quite a few times and every time she seemed to get better so I was not too concerned that it would be any different this time. I left her on 20th December and we spent two days in Shroud near Bristol at Bob's house. Bob lived with his wife. We used to call her Violent Violet as they were always fighting and arguing.

Just before we left for Germany Cynthia Fox called me up to tell me that my mum had taken a turn for the worse and possibly I should not go to Germany but return home. I called my mum immediately but she re-assured me that she would be fine and that I should go to Germany as planned.

At that time 1972 it wasn't common to call home from abroad and there weren't any telephones at hospital bedsides, hence I never spoke to her again.

We had been in Frankfurt leading up to Christmas and had some free time while we were awaiting our first assignment at a US base. We finally got the news late on Boxing day that we were to drive to Nuremberg to play at

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

a large US base for the first month. We set off late in the afternoon and at about 12:00 o'clock we decided to go and look for a Hotel in a small place called Erlangen. This had not been planned but, we reckoned we had more chance of finding a Hotel at 12:00 rather than at 02:00 when we had reached Nûrenberg.

We pulled off the motorway and after about ten kilometers we came across a small simple hotel. The lady was not very friendly and could also not speak English. Being in the middle of the woods, there was nothing else to do but to get some sleep before we continued our journey the next morning.

The next morning we were woken up by the lady of the Hotel who said that there was somebody on the phone and they wanted to speak to Christopher James.

I knew something was wrong as nobody knew that we were staying at that Hotel, in fact nobody knew where we were apart from somewhere between Frankfurt and Nurenberg.

The news was delivered immediately and professionally by the US Millatary Intelligence Agency. My mother had passed away on boxing day.

I was devastated and spent about a half an hour crying on my bed while the other members of the band waited outside. When I finally emerged, they tried their best to comfort me and they were as good they could have

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

been under those circumstances. The US Intelligence Agency that had located our whereabouts had given us instructions to proceed to a US military base near Nûrenberg where we were due to play for the US soldiers Christmas ball that very same evening.

The US military were very good to us and provided me with a free telephone connection so I could call my cousin who was making arrangements for my mother's funeral. The first flight out didn't leave until the next day and hence I had to spend the evening at the US base where we had been booked to play.

In the meantime the US military had assigned one of their chaplains to look after me. He was a black man and had a lot of empathy with me, he also did a great job of getting me back on my feet again still shocked by what had happened. The master of entertainment had found a bass guitar replacement who could fill in for me while I went back to Wales for the funeral, however the minister was keen for me to play that evening instead of just have me sit around and be miserable, and unbelievably so I even managed to enjoy the evening between all the emotions.

The next day I was off to Nurenberg airport where I would fly back to London Heathrow. Not having much money, I decided to hitchhike a lift back to Cardiff on the M4 motorway.

When I got home my Aunty Vera had closed all the curtains of the house as this was the

customary thing to do when someone dies. The place now looked horribly empty as my grandfather had also died just 2 months earlier and now there was nobody except me left in this big dark house.

I couldn't deal with the curtains closed and opened them all up to the disgust of my Aunt Vera. 'Haven't you even got any respect for the dead' she angrily snapped when confronted with daylight in the house. I couldn't give a damn what her motive was. The curtains were going to remain open for the rest of the week.

The house where we had lived belonged to the Doctor's surgery below and it was part parcel of the job my mum had as Doctor's secretary and receptionist. Now that my Mum had gone there was nobody to deal with the out-of-hours calls which was part of her job.

On my first day back I was told that I had one month to move out. However now I was touring in Germany which effectively meant that I had the week of the funeral to vacate what had been our family home for the last 12 years or more. I decided that I would use that week to move all my stuff and my mum's valuables to my Aunt Vera's house and sell off or give away the furniture and larger things that my Aunty wouldn't be able to store.

It was quite an undertaking, but I organized it very efficiently together with my good friend Eric Kitchen.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

Eric's father had once lived at our house as a lodger before permanently moving down to Cardiff from Manchester with his family. Eric was very business like and handled that side of the sale very professionally.

After the funeral we auctioned off the rest of the stuff at ridiculously low prices and spent my last night in Cardiff cleaning the house out and all sorting out the various bits and pieces. Now the house was empty. All of a sudden everything had evaporated,..gone, my mum, my grandfather, our possessions and finally our house.

This was quite a daunting thought knowing I was now completely on my own at the tender age of seventeen without anywhere to go should my musical career not take off. Lucky for me the adrenaline produced by the situation gave me the energy to pull through and deal with the situation head-on. Strangely enough I was raring to go, full of ideas and lots of positive energy. It was a very strange experience a kind of "high" which lasted for about six months before I finally started to understand the consequences of my situation.

After staying up all night with Eric at my house, I closed the door behind me for the last time, said goodbye and thanked Eric for all his help and support and set off back to London, hitchhiking my way to Heathrow Airport. Our agent in Germany had given me exactly one week off to settle everything in Cardiff. Everything went fine and the whole band

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

picked me up at Frankfurt Airport, as we were playing somewhere in the vicinity that very same evening.

After a few weeks in the Nurenberg area near Fürth we headed down to Ludwidshaven near Stuttgart where we were booked to play for a month until the end of February 1973.

We were very happy to play in one place for a month as this meant less traveling and no humping equipment around. Also it provided us with lots of time to practice in the day and enhance our repertoire. When you're playing seven nights a week and practicing in the daytime then it's not surprising that the band starts to sound tight after a while. Not only did we polish up our sound as a band, but we also Polish(ed) up the band's appearance by engaging the services of three young Polish girls living in Ludwigsburg as East Block refugees. These three "girls from cold war" were an instant hit with the America GI's, most of which had been completely fucked fighting in Vietnam. The girls were interesting enough to attract the GI's attention for a while by moving their hips both synchronously and asynchronously to rhythm of the music.

Although the band was getting better and better we were getting more and more pissed off with Bob Barry. He was no fun, twice our age and came from a completely different background to us. Basically we didn't really like him very much, I guess that was what it boiled down to although our lives had become

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

intertwined. Later on our detest of Bob Barry started to take on strange forms, like it became a “sport” to play nasty childish tricks on him like starting a song in the wrong key just to put him off and make a fool of him on stage.

As our residency in Ludwidsburg Germany neared its close we started looking for more sinister and perverse ways of taking the piss out of poor old Bob.

One day when Bob was out in town, and having nothing better to do, we had a brainstorming session on what we could possibly do to inflict the ultimate insult and embarrassment for his evening performance.

The ideas were flying around the room like wild-fire and became more and more dark and daring. Before the hour had past, we had collectively drawn up a very mischievous plan. We had decided to draw lots to select a candidate who would masturbate and ejaculate into Bob’s bottle of Brillcream. Bob used to put on great amounts of his Brillcream just before going on stage every evening and the big question was. Would he notice or not?.

The draw was made and one unlucky band member had to retire into the bathroom with the dreaded bottle of brillcream. The two creamy elements did not mix too well which resulted in the top part of the brillcream turning into an unstable gooey substance. Half liquid and half cream.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

Before we could mix it in further we heard Bob drive into the parking lot below our residency in the Army barracks. Without finishing the mix, the lid was quickly screwed on and we just hoped for the best, or the worst, however you look at it!

The rest of the day seemed to last for an eternity as we were so excited about our devious little plan and couldn't wait to see the end result.

Finally, our patience was rewarded and we were in our dressing room at the army barracks and just about to go on stage for our evening performance. Needless to say, all eyes were focussed on Bob and on his bottle of Brillcream. I think he even commented in his West Country accent. "Hey you guys seem chummy tonight, what's up?". "Nothing Bob, it's almost time to go on, are you ready?". As he blindly reached for his Brillcream bottle a deadly silence fell on the dressing room. He must have sensed something and I was almost expecting him to inspect the bottle before use, but no. He just took the lid off and plunged his middle three fingers into what had become spunk-cream instead of Brillcream and without even looking he was massaging it all into his greasy half length black hair.

There was a big sigh of relief, our mission had been successful and we were all eyes on him. Unusually complimenting him for his Rock 'n Roll crooner look.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

As it happened we were not the only ones to know, we had informed most of our regular military audience in the meantime so this was a real gig to remember and Bob was the laughing stock of the gig without actually realising himself. I think I did tell him some weeks later. Completely humiliated he grabbed a kitchen knife and held it close to my throat threatening to cut out my voice. Ricky and the other lads had to rescue me from being butchered by Bob, but even that didn't cause any feeling of remorse.

After a month in Ludwigsburg we headed further North to play our last month in Worms am Rhein. All these places we played in were US military bases with differing levels of security. This move of location did not turn out so well for our three Polish backing singers. We were politely asked to get rid of them as they posed a security threat to our new Army base. Apparently they were regarded as potential East Block spy threat. The soldiers did not agree with their commander and they tried desperately to make an exception for them but trying to exclude Poland from the Warsaw Pact was a bridge too far and so we reluctantly had to send them packing and back to Ludwigsburg.

The German tour slowly came to an end after another month at the American military base in Worms am Rein. It was a strange experience playing every night to the same fucked up American GI's. Most of them had just returned from Vietnam and had seen and done some

horrific things and lost a lot of their fellow soldiers. All they wanted was to get home and forget the whole episode. Also there was a lot of racial tension between the black and white soldiers. Around that same period the American “Black Power Movement” was very prominent and ready to retaliate at the least sign of white aggression. Often this would flare up in the night club over minor things like whether the band was playing red-neck country music or soul.

Luckily we were Rock ‘n Roll and hence somewhere in the middle. Not always the best place to be when knives are being brandished. Not only gang violence but also real Russian Roulette games were not uncommon as some soldiers had very little self esteem left and were prepared to gamble their lives for a few hundred dollars. I can recall a number of incidents in which the black GI community would arrive in large numbers sporting red, green and gold colored walking sticks with a sharp iron point attached. Quite a scary experience even by Cardiff street life standards. Fortunately for us they didn’t seem intent on harming the band.

Steve Phillips to the rescue

After the successful tour of Germany we returned to England and went up North again. This time we were booked in Liverpool, Blackpool and Newcastle. Instead of just the working mens clubs we were now also booked

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

for an up-market night club chain called the Baileys Circuit.

In Blackpool we did two weeks in Paddy McGuinty's Goat Nightclub. It was a disco come nightclub and swarming with young women, most of which were on vacation in Blackpool and looking for fun. I think we all had our fair share of female acquaintances in those weeks. I had hitched up with two girls from Leeds and we had a great time wandering around Blackpool in the day, then playing in the evening. Ricky our guitarist met a local girl from Blackpool and to everyone's astonishedment only having been with her a few days, he decided to quit the band and his wife so he could move in with her. Her name was Lynn which was also his wife's name by coincidence.

Ricky's departure was all very sudden which meant we needed to find a replacement at very short notice as we were playing in a Sunderland night club the very next week.

After discussing who we could call in Cardiff to help us out I mentioned Steve Phillip's name who, at the time, was working for British Steel in Cardiff. I called him on the phone from Sunderland and Steve literally jumped at the chance. He immediately quit his job the next day and took the first train up to Sunderland where we started practicing with him. We had a few social club gigs in between the night club weekly residence and slowly Steve began to learn the numbers. Steve did not have much

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

musical experience outside of his first band Bewegung, but managed to hold his own and soon integrated into the band.

Before Steve was in the band strangely enough we had not been doing much drinking during all our tours and certainly not at gigs, but that was all about to change with Steve's entrance to the band.

I can remember one of our first gigs with Steve, we were playing at the British Legion Club in Runcorn near Liverpool. During the first break between sets Steve invited me for a beer drinking competition which we would continue in between the remaining 3 sets which we were playing. Things got totally out of hand and before we knew it, we were drunk and fighting in the dressing room. It was not a real fist fight but more like fooling around squirting each other with talcum powder which Steve used to massage the neck of his guitar. The dressing room was totally wrecked and covered all over in talcum powder which was bad enough, but then Steve redirected his destructive attention towards the plaster work on the toilet wall. While standing and urinating Steve's other hand was busy picking off the plaster from the wall, this was just the start of a complete demolition job which reduced the toilet wall into a pile of rubble. Quite an impressive demolition job without the need for heavy duty equipment.

I believe it all got too much for me and I went for a drive in our van inbetween the second and third set. When I arrived back Steve had

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

literally finished off the toilet wall and it had been discovered. All of the fiftyone British Legion committee members were on the war path. During our fourth and final set it became clear to the club that one of the band members was responsible for the Wall job and so we faced an interrogation at the end of our set.

We strongly denied any involvement with the destruction work Steve had meticulously performed, however somebody had seen Steve at work and had reported it. To make things even worse before we left the club I believe that we accidentally took one of the clubs microphones mistaking it for one of ours.

This was the last straw for the club and they got in touch with the press and with our Agent Barry Helms in Manchester. Needless to say, Barry was not amused and confronted us with the newspaper clippings and the damage we had done to his reputation as “sleazy booking agent”.

As a consequence of our misbehavior Barry saw very little future for us in the UK as we would undoubtedly get blacklisted as punishment for our vandalism. We called him later to explain that Bob Barry had taken the microphone and that he was most probably the cause of the “wall problem”.

Without hesitating Barry the agent said ‘If Bob is causing the problems then you have to dump him’, get rid of him somehow and maybe I can

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

get you some work over in Germany under another name.

This was the kind of news we had been waiting to hear for ages. Finally we had created a quasi valid and supported reason to ditch Bob.

Bob was not aware of our sinister plan until one evening on our way back from Manchester to Wales we stopped at a Motorway Petrol station to fill up. Bob got out of the van to go and pay for the fuel. When he had paid inside we slowly drove off leaving him stranded behind. When he caught on that we weren't joking, we could see him in the distance with his fists tightly clenched making threatening gestures at us as we drove off into the sunset. None of us would ever see Bob Barry again.

In hindsight some of the things we did were really terrible, so Bob should you ever happen to read any of this story, then....sorry mate!

After regrouping in Wales we had about a week before our gig started in Germany. The problem was that our other Guitarist Steve Mitchell had had enough and was not coming on the German Tour. The other problem was that we didn't really have a lead singer.

We auditioned an older lady in Cardiff but all she had to offer was sex and no voice, so Steve came up with the not so brilliant idea of asking his very shy girlfriend Lindsey into joining the band. Lindsey could not sing a single note and her dancing wasn't too hot

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

either. She finally ended up just playing a bit of tambourine but did attract the attention of all the lonely GI Joe's in the audience.

The standard of our band had just dropped to the worst level ever and soon we realized that Lindsey was not going to make it as our front lady which meant I would have to take on that role and start signing and presenting the band.

After just two weeks of playing in Nurenburg we were fired by our agent after various bad reports had been filed with regard to our poor performance and bad behavior. . Lindsey was an asset though, as she diverted the attention of all those lonely GI's away from our pathetic sounding band. Quite a few of the GI's took pity on us and treated us to champagne after our gigs just to cheer us up a bit. After just two weeks it was all over and we were on our way home back to Cardiff with no future as band and for me personally no home to go to.

It had been more than a half a year since my mother had died and this was the first real time that I began to feel insecure and worried about what I would do and where I would stay. The serious nature of my circumstances really started to hit home as we drove across Germany from Nurenburg via Frankfurt and Cologne towards Belgium where we had planned to take the ferry boat later that night.

When we arrived in Cologne at about six o'clock in the evening the stress had become much too much for me to bear. Without a doubt

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

in my mind I decided that I was not going home and would hitch-hike to Denmark instead.

Neither I or the band had any money, apart from the money the band were given by our agent to pay for the petrol and ferry crossing to get home. Although the Steve and Moff tried hard to persuade me otherwise, I left them and the van in Cologne with just a small backpack, my acoustic guitar and two West German Deutschmarks in my pocket.

I spend the 2DM immediately on a packet of cigarettes and set off slowly walking out of town towards the motorway on a road running adjacent to the river embankment of the Rhine on the outskirts of Cologne.

It was certainly not a good place to hitchhike as there was no real place to stop. In fact it took hours for me to get my first lift. By that time it had gotten dark and the river embankment was swarming with rats. I was getting quite scared when I finally got a lift. The German man was not going too far but he could take me to a better place where I could get a lift in the general direction heading towards Hamburg and ultimately Denmark.

By the time I got my next lift it was well into the night and I was hungry and thirsty. The next car to stop was a Mercedes Benz and the driver turned out to be gay and tried to sexually assault me. This was all I needed to drive home my precarious position. After surviving all his groping and advances, he finally dropped

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

me off at an Autobahn Raststätte, a highway truckstop. Having no money I looked around the self-service café for food that had not be completely consumed and for the first time in my life, I started to eat the left-overs of someone else's meal.

I reckoned now I had stooped this far, then I might just as well have jerked the guy off in the car for the 10 marks that he had offered me. I was clearly getting myself into the "survival mode" which one most certainly has to do in one wants to pull through for a significant amount of time without money or friends. .

After hitchhiking all through the night and the best part of the next day, I finally arrived in Putgarten, from where the German ferry boat leaves for Rodby Havn in Denmark. I quickly pulled out my guitar which I have taken with me and started to play some Bob Dylan songs at the ferry terminal. The ticket fare was very quickly collected and after 4 or 5 songs I had exactly the amount I needed for a one-way ticket to Rodbyhavn in Denmark.

It was only a short crossing and I was very tired not having slept the previous evening. My plan was to be the first passenger off the boat, so that I could get through the Danish immigration and customs in time to start hitchhiking before all the cars had departed from the boat. I had planned to arrive in Copenhagen before midnight and look up my former girlfriend there. Never doubting for one

second whether she would be able to offer me shelter and food or even want to see me.

When the boat docked, I was off down the foot-passengers exit like the shot of a gun, only to find myself getting singled out at the Danish customs and immigration desk. 'How much moneys do you have and vat are you planning on doing in Denmark', the guard sternly growled. I confidently replied 'I have a total of 10 pfennigs and I plan on busking in the streets of Copenhagen and will stay with a nice blond Danish girl I met when I was last in Denmark with my band'. I must have been so naieve aninnocent back then!

The immigration officer just laughed. I thought he had approved my credible reason to enter the country, and said I was in a bit of a hurry in order to get a good lift all the way to Copenhagen before all the cars had disembarked, but he had other plans for me. He told me that I could take the same boat back to Germany at the courtesy of the Danish government. He subsequently stamped my UK visitors passport with a big red stamp with AFVISTE on it which I imagine it means refused of rejected and before I knew it I was back on the boat waiting for it to return back to Germany

To get so far and then be turned back was completely contrary to the script I had written for my adventure. I was literally devastated and morally at an all-time low. Such an anti-climax after putting in all that effort. I trudged back into

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

the ships lounge and just sat down at a table and cried my heart out.

After about a half an hour the boat started to fill up again with people traveling in the other direction. I had no idea what I would do, but I was determined that I needed to get into Denmark somehow and away from Germany where I had not had such a great experience travelling.

While still in the lounge seat and feeling pretty bloody miserable, a long tall Swedish guy called Christer came up and sat down next to me. He was very cheerful and spoke excellent English. He asked me where I was going to and where I came from. First I thought it was another gay man homing in for the kill. Then he told me that he was from a religious group of musicians who were embarking on an European Tour, starting on the Island of Sicily in Southern Italy.

I told Christer that I had just came from Puttgarten and that I was on my way back there as a result of being refused entry to Denmark, then the rest of my story slowly emerged as Christer asked more and more questions. He seemed quite sincere and emotionally moved by my story. Especially when I told him that I had no family left in Wales to go back to.

After about 20 minutes he said, just wait a minute let me talk to my traveling companions, maybe we can give you a lift. At least we can

give you some food and you can sleep a little. I saw no reason not to accept his kind offer and the thought of food and sleep seemed like a bloody good idea wherever direction they may be going.

When the boat docked, I walked back through customs and immigration together with Christer. Once again I was picked out, this time by the German Immigration officer who noticed that my passport had been stamped with AFVISTE. saw no more reason to accept me than his Danish counterpart on the other side of the water.

On Tour in Europe with the Jesus People

After spending what must have been at least ninety minutes in the custody of the German border guards, I was finally released. I had expected Christer and his Swedish colleagues to have driven off to continue their long journey to Italy. However, to my dismay the bus was still there waiting patiently for me. Apparently they had been very busy praying to their "Gud" for my release! So when I finally got on the bus instead of being very irritated and pissed off at the long wait, they were all excited and started singing and thanking Gud for answering their prayers and ensuring my safe release from the nasty looking border guards.

It was all a bit too much for me to take in at the

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

time. I had gone without sleep for about 40 hours and was at the end of my tether. Despite the fatigue, it was great to receive such a warm welcome after feeling so desperate and so unwanted on both sides of the Baltic Sea.

First I was politely encouraged to get washed and freshened up. I bet I was stinking like a dockers armpit after been on the road for so long, then they gave me some Swedish food until I could eat no more. Soon afterwards I was sound asleep in the back of the bus as they drove off in a Southerly direction through Germany. Before I passed out, they told me that I was welcome to drive with them for a day or so until I was in good enough shape to carry on my journey alone.

The next morning I was awoken to the sound of Scandinavian gospel music and a great breakfast Swedish style. Probably I wouldn't have dreamt of eating that kind of food just a few weeks ago. However now I had experienced just a taste of what it is like to be hungry, even only for a short time, and so after a life-time history of eating disorders all of a sudden anything with any kind of nutritional value tasted excellent.

The Christianity thing was not exactly how I had planned to pursue my Rock n Roll lifestyle having just dropped out of a rock n roll band, but I had previously had some pleasant experiences with the Church of England as a

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

child and therefore it wasn't too much of a shock for me. .

One thing I did notice was that these people seemed to take their religion very seriously indeed, some of which were praying, singing or speaking in strange tongues for a good part of the day. With strange tongues I don't mean Swedish, which I couldn't understand but which I could reckonize. No these were tongues inspired by spirits or something like that. One guy would get up and almost like having a seizure would start to bellow away in a mumbo jumbo like language then another guy would get up and translate back into earthly languages what the first guy had been saying. Very strange, but interesting to observe!

I was expecting the group to drop me off the next day, but instead they asked me to leave the bus at a truckstop for a while so they could have a private meeting. I assumed it would be a spiritual gathering or something like that. After an hour I was invited back into the bus. The leader immediately asked me to listen to his proposition on which they had just discussed. He said that they had unanimously agreed that I was welcome to accompany them on their European Tour which was due to formally start on the Island of Sicily in Italy just a few days later. The Tour would cover 10 countries over a 4 month period. The only thing they asked in return from me was that I would respect their religious beliefs and adhere to their house 'rules', which basically meant no drugs and no fucking around. Further they

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

asked whether I would like to participate in their musical production and play along with them in their street performances on my guitar.

This seemed like a reasonable deal, and it didn't take me too long to say YES!

I had never visited Italy before this trip and the journey was very long but also interesting. The group had acquired an old Swedish city bus which had been discarded when Sweden changed from driving on the lefthand side of the road to the right side like the rest of Europe and hence the steering wheel of the bus was on the "English" side.

They had done a great job in converting the bus into a traveling home which had a kitchen at the front end, about 20 seats in the middle and six bunkbeds at the rear end. Due to the limited amount of space and beds we had to take shifts to get some sleep while we were traveling, however this problem had been overcome as the trip had been well planned and every town we were due to visit we were welcomed into the homes of local people who happened to share their same Pentacost beliefs.

After about three days travelling through Germany, Switzerland and Italy we finally arrived at the Straight of Messina where we boarded a ferryboat to Sicily. I can remember being quite distressed that the boat was being followed by a large group of sharks who fed off the food being thrown overboard. I had really been looking forward to getting of the bus and

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

into that deep blue sea and swimming around but the hungry sharks were giving me second thoughts. The idea of stepping into shark infested waters was no longer topping my list of activities.

Our first port of call in Sicily was Catania which lies at the foot of the Mount Etna Volcano. It was amazing to view the snowcapped summit of the volcano from sea level and in the heat of 33°C.

We spent a full month in Sicily and traveled all over the island. The local people were incredibly hospitable and generous. Because we were such a large group we were usually split up into smaller groups so we could be accommodated at the various locations by families and local people.

The Italian cooking made a big impression on me and I managed to eat mountains of Pasta dishes. Apparently in Sicily the more you eat at someone's house the bigger the compliment for the cook, usually the Mama of the house. I was not aware of this tradition and as a result I would just carry on eating as long as there was food on the table. Quite often the host would have to cook more pasta so I could enjoy my 5th helping!

One of the smaller towns we visited in Sicily was Enna which is pitched at the top of a steep mountain in the interior of the Island. The sister village is just a few kilometers away also at the same height, so you can look from one village

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

to the other. Yet if you want to get there you first have to go down to ground level and go back up again. If ever I should go back to Sicily then it would be certainly on my list of places to visit, this time as a tourist.

As the trip progressed and I became better acquainted with the group, I started to become curious and interested in all the spiritual going on's and rituals of their Pentacost religion, and although declining to join in, I was very impressed at some of the stuff that happened. It would appear that everytime we were in need of something they would collectively pray and within hours, sometimes only minutes our needs would somehow be answered, just like magic!

After a month of annoying the local catholic mafia who were eager to see us leave Sicily, we headed up north of Rome to Grosseto where we stayed another 3 weeks. It was here that I finally did give in, and concede to being baptized as one of the group. I was serious at the time but in hindsight I guess I must have given in to a sense of wanting to belong to something or a group. Whatever the reason I guess you could say I gave Christianity a second try and it lasted about four months before finally becoming disillusioned by it all as I was earlier on in my life where I had been brought up in a Church environment in Wales. The Pentacost thing was much more serious and spiritual as opposed to St-Annes in Cardiff.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

After about two months in Italy we finally made our way to Switzerland where a ten day vacation had been planned so everyone could relax. We stayed at a small camping ground in Vevey on the great lake Lemon in the French speaking part of Switzerland. While the other group members went swimming in the lake and sightseeing. I was off every day to busk with my guitar in the streets of Geneva, Lausanne and Montreux. I soon discovered that this part of Switzerland was heaving with rich old ladies and that if they like your music could leave very generous donations as they went about their shopping activities. Before I knew it I was making about 300 Swiss Francs for about two hours work.

The amount of money depended not so much on the place I chose to play but more by the time I was allowed to play before the police would arrive and arrest me. They didn't move people on like in London and Paris but they would take me down to the police station where they meticulously counted out all the proceeds, took a short statement then solemnly warned me to get out of town or risk being deported out of the country. This led me to a different town every day and after a few days in Vevey, Montreaux, Lausanne and Geneva, I had earned a significant amount of money, like more than a thousand Swiss francs.

I decided to give the money to Bjorn who was the group's leader as he and the group had basically paid everything for me from food to clothes and more. He took the money to keep

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

safe, but said that he would return it when I left the group a few months later.

After the vacation we went on to “play and pray” in Austria, Germany, Luxembourg, France, Belgium and Holland before making our way back to Denmark to do our last few weeks in Arhus in Jutland, Denmark.

This time I was sleeping in the back of the bus when we actually crossed the Danish border and luckily, neither the German nor the Danish authorities had any problem with my entrance to Denmark. So finally four months and eight countries later I had successfully made it back into Denmark where I had originally intended to go. I left the group in Arhus and thanked them graciously for taking me in and looking after me during what was nothing less than a severe crisis.

Bjorn gave me back the money that I had earned busking and I was off on my way to Copenhagen.

The girlfriend I had earlier planned on visiting was not so pleased to see me, and was now living with another guy, who also was not too pleased to see me.

I didn't make 'too much of it and ended up in a nightclub bar where I met some other shady characters. By this time I was making up for lost time of being a Christian and was drinking an spendy money like there was no tomorrow.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

My stay in Copenhagen didn't last too long. In fact after just a few days, my pockets were empty again and it was time to pick up the guitar to earn the next meal.

Being broke once again, I decided it was time to go back to Wales and opted to hitchhike back through Germany to Amsterdam and Holland where I would take the ferry back home to the UK.

As I had no money for the ferry back home, I had planned on doing some busking in the streets of Amsterdam until I had enough money to pay my passage back home via Hoek of Holland – Harwich.

Arrival in Amsterdam

After a long sequence of lifts from Copenhagen to Holland, I finally arrived in the middle of the night right in the city centre of Amsterdam.

Having no money and no place to sleep, I headed towards the Central Station where I decided I would sleep rough outside lying on my guitar to protect it from thieves.

I must have slept very well because when I woke at about 07.00 amidst the hustle and bustle of the morning rush-hour I realized that my guitar which had served me so well was no

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

longer lying underneath me and had been removed and stolen without me even noticing.

This was a real setback as I now had no means of earning any money. Taking stock of the situation I decided I would try and borrow a guitar at one of the two Christian Youth Hostel's in Amsterdam. They had been very cooperative when we were visiting Amsterdam a few months earlier. However I was in for a shock as they decline my request to borrow a guitar. They did however give me the opportunity of working in the hostel cleaning the dormitories and toilets. It was quite hard work seven days a week but relative short hours. Only two to three hours a day. The pay was little short of slavery, only paying about nineteen Dutch Guilders a week plus free board and food.

With all the nice things to do in Amsterdam it would take me for ever to to earn enough money to get back to Wales. As it happened I no longer wanted to go back to Wales and was having a great time in Amsterdam, showing tourists around the town, taking a moderate commission on the various herbal items I helped them purchase.

During my period at the Youth Hostel I had made friends with a black South African guy called Martin who was a political activist and asylum seeker in The Netherlands. This due to his opposition to the apartheid regime of the former White Government of South Africa.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

Martin was also a good guitar player and singer. We sang together and played in various Cafes and did some acoustic gigs with performing many close harmony work from Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young. Martin had the high voice which blended nicely with my deeper voice. He was being looked after by Amnesty International, who finally found him a temporary accommodation in Amsterdam Oost (East). At the time I was having problems with the director at The Shelter, The Christian Youth hostel in the Amsterdam Red Light district. Apparently I was not obeying the curfew law which demanded that everybody had to be inside the hostel by 00.00 everynight.

After receiving multiple warnings, one night I was sacked and not allowed back in. Martin offered me temporary accommodation in his one room dwelling on the fourth floor of an apartment building. In fact it wasn't a real accommodation, but more like an atic room for storage and it belonged to the couple who worked for Amnesty International.

It was very small and certainly not too comfortable for two people to live, but despite that it was much better than the privacy of The Youth Hostle's six berth dormatories.

One day I went out to order some food at a snackbar near to Martin's flat. While waiting to place my order I got chatting with a Dutch guy who spoke very good English. In fact he told me that he gave English lessons at a technical school in Amsterdam. His name was Gijsbert

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

or Gilbert as he translated his name into English.

He invited me around to his flat which was just around the corner from where I was living with Martin. Gijs lived on his own in a large three room apartment on the Pretoriaplein, which was rather ironic taking into account I was living with a South African at the time.

Gijs loved to speak English and was also quite lonely. When he heard about the conditions and squaller we were living in he offered me a room at his house for a minimal rent. I had no money but he said that he could help me get a job and that I would pay rent when I could afford it.

First I thought that he must have been gay in order to make me such a generous offer, but as it turned out he was just a lonely guy and saw me as a means to improve his English and have someone to practice his beloved Shakespeare on.

I used to call him 'Gekke Gijsbert' or Crazy Gilbert as he would often go completely off the handle. He was very expressive and moody which meant that he would often dance and sing if he was happy, but that could soon turn into shouting and rage when he became angry.

I guess the significance of our friendship was that Gilbert was the first real Dutch friend I had made and I soon noticed that I began to learn how Dutch society was functioning and how to

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

make contacts. Up until that point I had only really met people like myself who were passing through or had just started to live in Amsterdam themselves. Now I was starting to discover what Holland was really like and how to get on with the Dutch inhabitants.

Gilbert took me to visit his family in Oostzaan which is a very traditional Dutch village just outside Amstedam. There I met his brother Martin who was an amateur boxer at the time and his next door neighbor Henry van der Zee who had once been a famous Dutch boxer.

Henry's son Johan played drums in a local band in Monninckendam, another village nearby. When I told Johan I could play guitar and piano he immediately asked if I would join his band in Monickendam. It seemed very impractical to me, as I had no form of transport and also didn't have an electric guitar at the time. However Johan said that he would pick me up with his car in Amsterdam and that the band could provide me with a bass guitar.

So there I was, playing in my first Dutch band. They were not very good, in fact they sounded pretty garage band-like but that didn't matter. They were nice guys and it was great to get out of Amsterdam once every week. So I had no problem with it. Nico, one of the band members was related via his sister's marriage to Arnold Muhren from the famous Dutch Band The Cats, even that nice connection couldn't help us enhance our musical careers!

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

I hadn't heard of the band The Cats until I found myself in Marken a small fishing village near Volendam. When I went up to the café jukebox to put some music on and I was amazed to see that the whole jukebox was exclusively devoted to the records of The Cats. It was an unbelievable experience for both me and for the local people in the bar. They could not understand how anybody on Earth could not have heard of the The Cats!. Playing in this band made my realize that I had to get my act together and find a job somehow so I could buy a new guitar and get back into music as a means of making a living.

A legal job was not possible as I only had a visitors passport at the time. So I decide to go back to Cardiff for a few weeks. Get a manual job in a factory and earn enough money to go back to Holland with a new guitar. I discussed my plan with Gijs who also thought it was a good idea and promised that if I came back within 3 weeks that he would keep my room on for me.

When I arrived home I found a job within a day at the local bakery. It was hard work including night shifts, but the wages were reasonable and I was earning again. I decided to stay for five weeks instead of three just so that I could save a bit of money to buy me some time in Amsterdam when I got back.. I knew that finding a job would not be so easy. Especially not being able to speak Dutch. In the meantime I acquired a regular British Passport which

would allow me to apply for a work permit in The Netherlands.

When I arrived back in Amsterdam I was in for a shock. Since I had not called Gijs during the five week period, he had assumed that I would not be coming back and had decided to rent my room out,... to a girl this time. Gijs had in fact placed an advertisement in the local newspaper and was busy making appointments with prospective female tenants. He had received many reactions as rooms for rent are very sought after in Amsterdam. Gijs invited me in and we discussed the situation and he said. OK you can have your room back, but I still want to interview all these women who will be coming to view the room this evening.

Gijs told me that he would do the interviewing and that I should not say anything but just sit there and study the movements and habits of these women so we could compare notes afterwards. About seven or eight women showed up at various times that evening and Gijs felt completely in his element, knowing that both they and I had something that he could decide over.

The idea was that Gijs would interview all the women, ask them all sorts of questions and then call them the next day to tell them that the room had been hired, by me of course. After an exhausting evening for Gijs we started to discuss all the candidates. I told Gijs that they didn't seem too interesting as people with the

exception of a young girl called Marion Raven. She looked very naive and was looking for a room as she was working in Amsterdam and living up in the North of Holland. I felt attracted to her although she said very little in English during that first encounter.

Life in Noddy Land

I confessed to Gijs that I was really interested in that girl and wouldn't mind having her in my room. Gijs took my joke seriously and said, 'here is her telephone no. why don't you call her and tell her that she can move in with you'.

I laughed but noticed that he really was serious. If she really wants the room she will have to put up with your snoring he said with a laugh. I was a little worried and uncertain about how to undertake such a pertinent task. I finally picked up the phone to call her. I hadn't made any real preparations for the conversation that would follow, so all of a sudden I had her on the line. She quickly picked up on my accent and said Oh you must be the roommate of Gijs. Can I have the room? I didn't know what to say and stammered Yes, but ,.... She didn't even wait to hear the rest of my sentence and shouted "yes" you have made me so happy. Before I could get out what I wanted to say she said. I'll be around in about an hour or so with my things. She had already hung the phone up leaving me with the telephone still in my hand and speechless, still stumbling to utter the

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

words “but you will have to share the room with me”.

I realized that I had gotten myself into a right mess and that it would not get easier now she had been told that she could move in. I decided that I would break the news to her as soon as she had arrived, however I had not anticipated that she would bring her boyfriend along to help her move her stuff in. Later in the evening she arrived with her belongings together with her friend. They brought all her stuff up into what was my room. She was a little astonished to find my suitcase and some stuff in the room, but carried on to install herself unaware of the actual situation. I was still shell shocked and unable to muster up the level assertiveness necessary to reclaim my room.

All I could do was to turn to mad Gilbert and ask him for advice. He reacted very business like and said. Listen, its your own fault. Either you or she can live here, but not both unless you share the one room.

He said that I could sleep on the couch until the end of the week, and that I had just a few days in order to hit it off with Marian as she was called or I would have to go and find a new place to live.

I put my plan into immediate effect and was making definite progress with Marian. However there were setback's and 'sort of boyfriends' to deal with. It was all very complicated and energy consuming. The five days on the couch

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

turned into five long weeks and then finally we really fell in love with each other and started our relationship together in “our” room at Gijs’ house.

Gijs became a little jealous because all my attention was now focused on Marian and I had very little time to listen to his tirade of Shakespeare monologs and hear him out. In fact not long after he asked us to leave and find somewhere else. Marian was surprisingly enough quite eager to leave as she could not deal with Gijs’ tantrums and self pity.

We hired a number of temporary rooms and small flats before finally becoming broke again and forced to move back in with her mother and brothers and sisters up in Lutjebroek in the North of Holland.

Lutjebroek is The Netherlands equivalent of Timbucktoo. Everybody’s heard of it, but very few people have ever been there or even know where it is located. As it happens it can be found in between the towns of Hoorn and Enkhuizen about an hour by train from Amsterdam.

Lutjebroek with it’s four or five streets was quite a contrast to metropolitanism of Amsterdam. It is a small farming village where people didn’t even lock their front doors and where bicycles can be left unlocked without getting stolen. For me it had a certain “Noddyland” experience, very cute and picturesque. Everything is so nice orderly and

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

open. Nobody would even draw the curtains in the evenings hence you could stare into every house and see what they were doing or eating as you walked along the street.

Marion's parents were divorced and her father was living nearby in Grotebroek the next village. Translated into English the villages translate Lutjebroek – Little Trousers,.. Grotebroek – Big Trousers!.

Her mother lived in the house together with her six children, Ellen, Marion, Margaret, Stef, Jose and Franky.

Ellen was the oldest and the most serious. She was the academic of the family. At the time she was doing her O and A levels, but she would later go on to become a University Professor and lecturer. Marian was more like a butterfly and very unpredictable in both her way of thinking and her state of mind. Margaret was more of a mischievous nature and was a lot of fun but also with her head in the clouds. Stef was a bit more reserved and was more interested in the welfare of his rabbits than in the strange Welshman which had just joined their household. Jose was about 8 or 9 at the time and very shy and giggly, while Franky then six years old was too young to be able to put things into perspective.

For me it was the first real encounter with Dutch family life outside the city life of Amsterdam. What struck me in particular was the local culture prominent in North Holland.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

Basically people are very blunt and to the point up there. They say exactly what they think and are not afraid of confronting other people with their opinions. Even if it means confronting you with their direct criticism. This of course is in deep contrast with the UK culture of being terribly polite until someone is out of the room!

This difference of cultures became a apparent during the Christmas period. Marion's brothers and sisters had explained to me that it was Dutch custom to only exchange gifts on Dec 5th instead of on Christmas day like in the UK and America. This didn't seems such a big deal and having found work at a UK publishing company in Amsterdam I went out and bought the whole family a present with my first hard earned paycheck.

What they had not informed me about was the Dutch tradition to accompany a present with a Rhyme usually accentuating areas of personal irritation about someone's character and life-style. Complete oblivious to Dutch custom I reached for my presents and proceeded to open them until I was frowned on by the whole family. "Wait you must first read the little poem before you open your present" the mother of the house quickly explained.

Unsuspecting, I unfolded the scrap of paper on which the rhyme had been written. I really didn't know what to expect. The rhyme turned out to be an endless rant about what a no-good bastard I was and how I managed not to escape many of the household chores that the

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

rest of the family were expected to complete. It read something like this....

Madrid 5 december,

Dear Chris,

You have travelled a long way
To find our little village here in Lutjebroek
It quite different to Wales and Amsterdam
That is different koek
You always leave your socks lying around on
the floor
That's not how we like it,. hoor!
Now you have moved in with us and are living
here
You can first wash the dishes before you drink
all our beer.

Well I was absolutely flabbergasted and shocked having to read the tyranny of words out loud in front of the whole family. They, on the other hand, seemed completely at ease and satisfied with themselves, offering distinct nods of approval to the author of their slanderous rhyme.

I was shocked to find out what I had expected to be a very friendly family event could be accompanied by such implicating and satanic verses. This was the first of many culture shocks I was to endure during that period in the North of Holland.

The Shades

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

After about a year or more working in Amsterdam and still living in Lutjebroek, I decided to call up my good old friend Steve Philliops to see what he was up to and find out if he fancied coming over to Holland in a sort of plan so we could continue our musical aspirations together in Holland and set up a new band over in Holland.

Similar to when Steve had given up his job to join our band in Sunderland two years earlier, he also didn't need much persuading this time either. In fact when I mentioned that Marion had a fun-loving younger sister, the deal was done and Steve was over within weeks.

For a while Steve came up to Lutjebroek and stayed at Marian's mum's house, and sure enough, within days of his arrival he had hit it off with her younger sister Margreet Raven which made him my brother in law as well as a good friend, at least for as long as it lasted.

Shortly after Steve's arrival Marian and I moved back to the city where we found a nice little room right in the center of Amsterdam. The house was divided up into about 6 rooms with a communal kitchenette, wc and shower. The tenants were practically all foreigners coming from various countries like Italy, USA and the UK which made up the largest contingency. Hence English was the house language and speaking Dutch or Cloggy as it was then called was frowned upon as anti-social behavior even if both the perpetrators were Dutch nationals.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

After Steve's relationship fell through with Margreet he moved down to Volendam where he had been asked to play in a local top 40 cover-band. He had also found work in the nearby town of Edam and hence was rapidly getting himself established in Holland.

Steve's Volendam band was called Hope, but believe me, there was not much hope of them actually getting anywhere apart from playing the bar-dancing cafés up and down the country. The band were probably more cut out for working on building sites than as musicians. It was interesting to observe how their self-confidence and aural behavior would differ depending on their whereabouts. In the trusted surroundings of Volendam they were very loudmouthed in bars and behaved a bit like local rock 'n roll heroes. However anywhere else in Holland they would just sit huddled up in their dressing room and didn't want to venture out as the danger of having to speak the normal Dutch language was a daunting experience for many of them. The further away from Volendam the more reclusive they would become. I can remember Steve inviting me to come along to one of their gigs in Denekamp in the Eastern part of The Netherlands. Before and after the gig and during the intervals Steve and I would be in amongst the people, probably trying to chat-up some girls. The band would not leave the dressing room and did not want any encounter with people from outside Volendam. Needless

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

to say they were not too pleased to have me around either.

I can remember staying at Steve's new loggings in Volendam after a gig and walking to the highway the next morning to hitchhike to work. Normally I would never have to wait longer than about 5 or 10 minutes to get a lift, even in the more rural areas of North Holland. But not this was Volendam and no lifts for strangers there. As a consequence I had to walk the 4 miles before I could get a lift on the main highway into Amsterdam. Out of sheer frustration I had been skipping and dancing along the roadside as I made my way to the highway. One of the people who passed me without offering me a lift was one of Steve's band members who I had travelled with the night before. Apparently he saw me skipping and dancing in the road and reported the sighting back to Steve who probably said why didn't you give him a lift then?.

It was around this time that Steve purchased an AKAI stereo tape recorder which he used to record Sound on Sound. This technique involves recording a track then bouncing it over to the other track while added a new instrument or voice at the same time. This was the poor mans solution for making home recordings and I guess this is when Steve started writing his own material.

After a while Steve and I got together and we started to make plans to get our band back together again. Only this time we planned on

using The Netherlands as our base from which to do foreign tours instead of the UK.

Steve was really pushing to get this idea moving and before long he had found a location where we could all live. It was a farm house in the tiny village of Middelie which was just a few miles away from Volendam. The farm house was no longer used as an animal farm and was undergoing a process of renovation into a large guest-house with plenty of rooms for rent. Because of the deafening noise we were planning on producing with our future band a separate little cottage next to the main farm-house caught our attention. It was just one large room in fact, but it was a little distant from the farm house and provided us with an accommodation that we could also use to practice and record. Besides that, there were other advantages too like less tentant control from our host Mrs Hooiberg which we immediately re-named 'Ma' or Ma Hooiberg bringing back memories of our German 'Ma' in Manchester.

First Steve and I moved in, then we discussed who we could ask like to complete our new band line-up. As that point in time I had been living in Holland for about three years or so and Steve for about one year. We were both going through a transitional phase in which we were very negative about Dutch people in general. They have a strange taste in music, their wonky pronounciation of English, they eat very boring food, are basically hopeless at striking up a groove, and worst of all they can't clap

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

probably. Ie When the Dutch clap along to a song they are only able to clap on the 1st beat and the 3rd beat of the bar instead of the more rhythmic 2nd and 4th beat. Whatever we had many reasons for ridiculing them and were very skeptical about asking a cloggy to join the band.

Partially because of our doubting nature with regard to the prospect of finding good Dutch musicians and also partially due to the fact that we thought we would have more change of success with an all English speaking band, we decided to look for English or Welsh musicians. We had decided that we would go for a drummer and a bass guitarist and that I would just sing and play a bit of organ or whatever.

Ian Moffatt was our ideal candidate for the vacancy of drummer, however we would have to lure him away from his cushy little job at the Welsh Brewers planning dept. Moff also new of a bass guitarist of which I can only recall his last name being Barrett.

After we had been able to persuade them to quit their jobs and come over to Holland they eventually arrived and moved in at the farmhouse. Barrett was a bit of a dark horse and didn't mix in too well with either Steve, Moff or myself, and after two weeks he left. The only reason that I remember him at all is that he brought a vile disease over with him called 'the mumps' and shortly after he had left I developed the first symptoms which entailed

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

a hideous itch all over the body including the body parts which where itching for other things!

After Barret had left and I had recovered from my three week sickness we discussed how to continue without a bass guitarist. It was soon decided that I should temporarily take over the position of bass guitarist and learn to sing and place bass at the same time. Although it sounded like a daunting task at the time, I soon got the hang of it and it didn't present too much of a problem.

Being a three-piece band certainly had its advantages. Firstly we didn't need a lot of deliberation in order to make swift decisions about musical arrangements. Also we only had to split the money three ways which meant one mouth less to feed and more bar consumption tickets for each of us.

We were looking for identity and discussing what kind of repertoire we should go for. Steve was very impressed by the emergence of the Sex Pistols and he launched the idea of becoming a punk rock band. Punk at that time was synonymous with UK bands which made us an immediate commodity in the Dutch youth club circuit. Most of them didn't have enough budget to bring over UK bands, while we were sitting there right on their doorstep. We soon found ourselves playing a combination of new-wave music with Punk rock. Neither of us were real punkers. In fact most of us resented them. However Punk was in and it looked as though

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

it was to there to stay for at least some years to come.

Steve had been doing some songwriting over the past year or so, recording onto his AKIA Tape recorder while living in Volendam. I was very impressed at what he could churn out using the Sound on Sound technique. One of his first songs was entitled “Funk It” which we often reduced to “Fuck It”. We recorded Steve’s Funk It together with my song Wednesday Afternoon and a joint effort entitled The Blues. All three songs were recorded by Arnold Muhren in his professional studio in Volendam. Arnold was the brother-in-law of my friend Nico whom I had played with for about a year in the band in Monnickendam.

Steve and I discussed the idea of a song/writing sharing partnership similar to Jagger/Richards or Lennon/McCartney but most of our songs were actually written separately without any collaboration involved. We later decided to keep it separate except for the songs we had actually written together like Your So Cruel To Me.

Moff was most definitely the Ringo of the band. We tried diligently to discourage him from singing and getting too involved in the creative songwriting activity, but he would not be deterred and as the years went on Moff kept plodding away and finally perfected the art of singing without a microphone.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

This technique is commonly possessed and applied by opera singers and politicians, but practically unheard of in the more contemporary music genres, and most certainly not very practical in the heavily amplified Punk Rock scene. However Moff never had any problem with making himself heard despite not having a mic and having to compete with >100dB of drums, guitar and bass noise.

I have often heard Moff using his singing technique, even in later years at various Jam Sessions in Hoorn. It is amazing how the human voice can be adapted to resonate at similar levels to a fog-horn at sea. Just to give you some idea of the volume. If you want to try it yourself the follow these simple instructions: Open your mouth about to halfway then relax the lower jaw completely, take a deep breath then slowly blow air out from your lungs while letting your complete body resonate, it is a bit like making a sound through blowing air into an empty bottle of beer for example. The fact that both your head and diafram are vibrating to the same source will provide you with additional amplification of your 'sound'.

So hence Moff's wall of sound was born and became quite popular with our local group of friends and followers which were growing quite fast. This group was later to be know as The Shades Society. It was certainly not a regular fan club as we ourselves were the driving force and participated fully in all of its activities. I

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

guess it was more of a club of friends, but revolving around our band activities.

The founding members where Marriet de Haan and Janet van Dort, both from Oosthuizen, a small village nearby. It was to become an important place for us as it hosted the nearest bar and discothek called Ans & Piet where we soon became regular visitors. It could be long before we held our long awaited first gig at Ans & Piet in Oosthuizen. This certainly got us well established within the local community and our young group of followers was rapidly expanding.

As we were now billing ourselves as a UK Punk band, we had to do something with our image and basically we were much too nice and friendly to make any real impression in that Punk scene. Hence we decided that we would become less nice and to be quite abnoxious. We drank and smoked ourselves into oblivion before we went on stage and quite often couldn't even play when our time came. This got the audience nice and angry and so we regularly got into spitting battles with the audience which we inevitably always lost.

I can remember one evening being booed off stage and absolutely covered in spit and thinking to myself. I would rather go and sing about Jesus and eat lots of pasta rather than undergo this kind of vile humiliation. Fortunately Steve and Moff where always there to pick me up after a show and usually our malice didn't stop after our last number on

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

stage, but we would go on to damage and wreck items at the youth clubs we played in.

On one occasion we were busy carting our equipment down a flight of wooden stairs at a youth club in Landsmeer. Steve suggested we let the force of gravity do most of the work and we let the speaker cabinets hurtle down the staircase causing structural damage to the property below. Our antics hadn't gone unnoticed by the caretaker and without us even noticing he had confiscated one of our guitar amplifiers to use as collateral in getting us to somehow pay for the damage.

We loaded up our van and drove back to our base in Middelie. Only when we unloaded the van did we notice the missing amplifier. By then it was 3 o'clock in the morning and hence pointless to return.

The next morning we called up the caretaker to discuss the missing amp. He immediately confessed to taking it and said that we could get it back, but first we would have to settle some damages. We arranged to meet him the next afternoon. We arrived a little early and the bell seemed not to be working due to the damage we had brought on the building. After ten minutes of ringing without answer we tried throwing little stones up at the office upstairs where a light was shining. We did finally attract the attention of the caretaker but only after one of our stones had broken the upper story window.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

We had expected some hard bargaining and were even prepared to use physical force to retrieve our amplifier, however that was not necessary as the the caretaker and the manager who had probably not heard how bad we had played made us a very strange proposition. We would have to play again at the club, but this time without any money and the club would pay for the damage from what they could collect at the door. It sounded like a good deal to us and especially after we had secured an unlimited amount of alcoholic consumptions as part of the deal.

I don't remember much of our punishment gig as we were too pissed to even see properly. In fact that is the only I can remember about the gig., standing on the stage making a lot of noise and seeing a blur next to me which must have been Steve. It was one of our worst ever performances and we must have broken our record for alcoholic consumptions on that day.

In the meantime back at the farm-house we were getting ourselves into all kinds of trouble with the lady of the house. Ma had a daughter who seemed to take an interest in us lads and so the affairs started. First with me, then with Steve and finally with Moff. This cycle was repeated a number of times with various other young ladies from the surrounding area. A girl who was unfortunate enough to have indulged in sex with all three of us was immediately promoted to the rank of three star general within The Shades Society. I wouldn't be appropriate to list them all in this publication,

embarrassement all round! They probably all have grown-up children these days who would certainly have frowned upon their permissive behavior back in those good old days.

The musical aspirations of The Shades also started to take on new dimensions when we started writing more and more of our own material. Later we wrote more traditional types of new wave songs like You're So Cruel, The Blues, I Hear Them Talking and De Bluuz, which was our first and only attempt at writing a song in the Dutch language.

Back at the farm-house Ma was beginning to regret she had ever let the likes of us stay at her house. After finding her daughter regularly in our sleeping quarters her patience finally snapped during a visit from a family from Germany. The visiting relative also had a daughter accompanying her. Ma warned us and me in particular to stay well away from the visitors and we were actually banned from entering the main house during their visit. However temptation got the better of both of us and the young German lady who had been given a similar lecture by her mother. "Don't go near those nasty UK punk boys". On her very first night at the house we met up with her in Ans & Piet's bar and were really knocking the drinks back. On our way home it was obvious that the German lady was not heeding her mother's advice and in fact was actually looking for exactly what she had been forbidden. The only problem was she was a bit shy and didn't want to go into our quarters. .

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

Instead she told me that there was a spare room in the house which she had noticed earlier on and that we could sneak in there.

I certainly didn't require much persuading and so we found the room and made good use of it.

The next thing I can remember it was early morning and suddenly the door flung open and there was Ma' panting with rage because of our disobedience. "I knew it" she snarled and when I laughed it was just too much for her and she demanded that I leave the premises and never come back.

I can remember Steve sticking up for me later and he actually tried to reason with her, but that didn't help matters as she had made up her mind and decided on the spot that Steve could go too. Only Moff was allowed to stay as she regarded him as the lesser evil of our band. I guess this was a defining moment as it split up the band. Moff still living in the farmhouse with Ma while Steve and myself found a new place about 5 kilometers away on the other side of Oosthuizen in a tiny village called Etersheim.

We were very quick to find our new home which was a deserted sheep shack, in fact two deserted sheep shacks. These living conditions would have been considered subnormal even in the poorest of countries in the world.

No water, no electricity no central heating an asbestos roof and concrete on the floor, oh forgot to mention...and only one toilet,.. which

was the field we shared with a herd of sheep.
The field was also their toilet too!

Our new host was a mildly cynicle man called Cor Meerdeboer. Cor was rarely visibly happy although he did seem to take a delight at hearing some of our wild stories and how we had out-stayed our welcome at the Ma Hooyberg residence. Ma had recently entered into the same antique business as Cor was involved in so there was quite a bit of competition among them and mutual animosity was never far away. I often wondered why he had taken us in, I guess it was partly loneliness and partly because he could get some inside information about what the other antique dealers were up to in the direct vicinity.

The Sisters & Etersheim

Steve and I soon found ourselves living in spartanic conditions in the middle of a field in the middle of nowhere. We had taken up residence in one little shed while we soon started fitting the other shed out to function as our band hang-out, practice room and recording studio. During our first week in Etersheim we engaged the Shades Society to help us dig out a deep trench of about 80 meters in which we could bury an outdoor mains cable which would provide both sheds with electricity. The trench was necessary so that the cable could be deep enough to protect it against the winter frost and also from our new neighbours, the ever grazing and shitting flock of sheep.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

This was our first major step back towards normality. Now we had electricity the second step was some kind of heating. We managed to purchase a small portable gas stove which had a bottle of propane gas in it. This didn't make the place warm but did prevent us from dying of frostbite in the winter months. Finally we added a jerry can with a plastic tap to give us a limited but refillable cold water supply.

The owner of the property Cor Meerdeboer was a real humanitarian and allowed us his house for a shower about once a week.

Becoming separated from Moff who was still living in the relative comfort of Ma's farmhouse, we soon found ourselves in a sort of loyalty crisis in our three way relationship with Moff. It seemed like we were drifting apart and the The Shades were now split along the lines of Steve / Chris and Moff. In fact it was much more complicated than that because all kinds of new friendships and alliances were being formed within our new found friends from the Shades Society and the locals of Oosthuizen.

One of the most memorable highlights of The Shades was a Talent Contest we entered in the North Holland village of Spierdijk. We had read in the papers that the record label EMI in close collaboration with a local newspaper De NoordHollands Dagblad, would be organizing a talent competition for which the first prize would be a demo recording at EMI studio's

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

under the supervision or a professional supervision of a well known producer Pim Koopmans. This plus all the additional publicity via the newspaper was very tempting and we decided to go for it.

We had quite a few compositions that we were either trying to record ourselves or planned to record in a professional studio. There were so many entries for the talent competition that the organizers had decided to hold preliminary rounds in order to down-select some bands would go through to the final later that month.

We were so confident that we would get into the final that we had lost all focus of the competition and were busy fooling around as usual. When the results came in from our qualifying round we barely scaped through to the final, qualifying as last and sixth band out of about twelve.

This didn't position us very well for the final which was a few weeks later and we basically had to adjust our expectation accordingly. One of the things that we had overlooked was the fact that the village hosting the event was a little further away from our local domain where we were had more of a fan base. Secondly, the public attending the talent contest comprised of farmers and were not really interested in punk rock or new wave or British music and musicians in general. So this was also a problem how to gain popularity in such a short space of time in that area.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

As it so happened, during the period between the qualifying rounds and the final, I got into trouble with my bank The Rabobank, which was founded by farmers for farmers! They had given me a 1000 guilder loan on which I had defaulted. What had started as a trivial argument had escalated out of control due to the farmer-like bureaucracy of the Rabobank and as a result I vowed never to pay back the loan. A vow that I come to regret and in fact later have to resolve in order to get financing for the purchase of a house.

In the true nature of a aspiring Punk Rocker we had written a song to vent all our disgust about the credit practises of the Rabobank. The song was entitled Rabobank we hate you, Rabobank you stink.

Well when the final came around we had included this number into our repertoire and were amazed at the reaction it got in Spierdijk, where practically everyone had an account at their local Rabobank. It was a great performance which made really got the crowd going and made a big impression on jury and EMI, sponsors of the event.

Despite our success there was still some tough competition and plenty of time to get up to new mischief. Steve had 'found' a nice camera, which later turned out to be the camera owned by one of the newspaper journalists who had taken pictures of our performance just minutes earlier.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

After hearing all the bands entries to the competition, the jury retired for a while to make their decision. When they return they announced The Shades as the victors of the talent competition.

We had to go and receive our prize from the Lord Mayor of that area and Moff wanting to get in on the action had hidden some silly putty in his hand. When the Lord Mayor had given us the prize he shook hands with us all, however Moff had the silly putty in the palm of his hand and pressed it into the palm of the Lord Mayor.

He was very professional about it and certainly did not want to look silly in front of all his subordinate villagers, so he tried to ignore it, and tried desperately to rub it off his hand before having to shake hands again with the other artists. When the silly putty got into contact with his beige tweed suit it immediately acted as a bleach all the color out of his suit.

Hence within minutes the Lord Mayor's suit was covered in patches of a significantly lighter shades of beige. Great stuff adding even more entertainment value to the extactic Spierdijk farmer community.

We were now really confident that EMI would give us a record deal as they had previously done with the Sex Pistols. A week or so after the competition we were visited by Pim Koopmans who was assigned by EMI as our producer. He came up to Etersheim to listen to our music and selected three songs for the recording.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

Around about the same period the relationship between The Sex Pistols and EMI had gone sour and they had written a similar song about EMI as what we had done about Rabobank.

Despite the Sex Pistols break with EMI and EMI's break with punk in general, they did record our three songs in their neat recording studios in Heemstede.

Unfortunately for us EMI didn't give us a record contract nor did they give us the tapes they had recorded. We spent weeks on the telephone with them and with Pim Koopmans but it didn't help and we never got to claim our well earned prize. The tapes had mysteriously 'disappeared' and they would never ever surface again. This was the closest we would ever get to a record contract, and in the meantime the personal relationships within the band were also getting very strained due to the promiscuous nature of our relationships and the girlfriend swapping and stealing that was going on throughout.

Finally Moff announced that he had had enough and quit the band. Despite the breakup of the The Shades, Moff stayed on in Holland and was still our friend and very much part of our social circles that revolved around The Shades Society. We would typically organize short trips to the beach, rowing expeditions, visits to Amsterdam, ect. etc.

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

Soon amongst the Shades Society a new band was emerging with Franciose Kooijmans, Rik de Haan, Almer Vet and guess who,.. Ian Moffatt on drums.

Dicky & The Fruitcakes

Songwriting at Rick & Reina's

Working in America

Four Months in China & Tibet

Dylan Christian James

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

Portugal

**Musician & Songwriter or
Computer Programmer**

Stuttgart and Boeblingen

**Lakeside Stories - Singer
Songwriter Collective**

Sailor's and Musicians

Song Catalogue

All Alone 1997

All alone
Not afraid
Here I stand
For you I wait

And all the time
That it may take
I won't falter
I won't break

Like on the moon
You dance your day
Worlds apart
Far away

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

So would you please
Drop me a line
To let me know
That your doing fine

What's the use of hanging on
Is it right or is it wrong
But just for you
I will reveal
My only motive
That's the way I feel

So don't give up
Keep on loving me
You and I
Eternity

And yes, we will win
We will find a way
To redeem
Our love someday

Just you and I
Sitiing by the fire
All alone
Yes that's home

Building Bridges 1997

Our project was doomed for failure
Before we even tried
We could not reach consensus
On choosing a design
Because our allocated time
Was running out real fast

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

We marched outside to get it done
And give it all our best

But building bridges ain't no easy thing to do
With building bridges we bit off more than we
could chew!

Frits was doing the talking
You could hear him miles away
With arms stretched out and fingers pointing
He tried to save the day
But nobody was listening
We did not hear a word
For we all knew deep down inside
That it would never work

Chorus

Dee was getting so frustrated
We blew away his plan
He wanted to replace the poles with strings
Which might have work out well
But Dee had lost some credit
On the night before
Marching at strictly 60 degrees
Swiftly across the moors.

Chorus

Joost was visibly impatient
He even got involved
Which did not help us in the least
Our problem, still unresolved
I guess we're just another loyal group
Like the one before
Not like those juvenile delinquents

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

God I bet that man is bored

Chorus

The psychology department
Looked on and seemed amused
Jotting down their learned notes
That they would later use
In a personal confrontation
With two of them and you
You don't stand a chance in hell
They've know you through and through

Chorus

Well the moral of this story
Is hidden in the tail
If you want to build a bridge
You just have to prevail
Cause we are International Business People
Not International Business Machines
And there I lay my case to rest
Now all has been said and seen

Building bridges ain't no easy thing to do
With Building bridges we bit off more than we
could chew!
Building bridges ain't no easy thing to do
Especially when that bridge is between me and
you

Cardiff Re-visited 1997

Walking through deserted streets
The rain pouring down
Some soaked faced people looking miserable

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

No smiles to be found
But my spirit is at an all time high
For this ain't no foreign place
This is my homely ground

Back again, back again, back again

There's a church on the corner
The one I used to attend
It's where I learned to sing a song
And throw my voice in tune
And do all those naughty things
That choirboys do
Except sex with the vicar
For he was heterosexual too

Back again, back again, back again

Across the football park that we used to call
"The Rec"
Then through the flower gardens
Into the wildies next
We cross the road to Roath Park Lake
Roses full in bloom
Some broken glazed greenhouses
From stones that we once threw

Cardiff's City Centre is no longer the same
St. Davids cultural temple and a shopping mall
maze
A project developer's paradise
A citizen's hell
But no-one stops things changing
And I guess that's just as well

Back again, back again, back again

Caribbean Greetings 1983

Doomed to be encountered
By an alien force in space
Only then will we realize
That we've left it much too late
People will greet people
Whether they're black or red or white
And we will stand there side by side
United as we fight

But it won't be there tomorrow
And it won't be there next week
It won't be there on Christmas day
It won't have changed a bit

Politicians busy
Trying to make their point of view
While Africans are out there starving
When they're just like me and you

Humming...

Chorus

A special Christmas message
Filled with wishes warm and true
That all the very nicest things
Will find their way to you
Caribbean greetings from a girl so far away
I wish I could be with you there,
And I wish it could be today

But I won't be there tomorrow
And I won't be there next week

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

I won't be there on Christmas Day
I won't be there to sing.

Change Team Blues 1987

As a member of the change team we spend
our working day
Fixing all those APAR's that the SE's throw
your way
It's a pity we can't tell them that we have our
problems too
Like when Big Blue comes to tell you
It's time to try a something new

Chorus

All change, everybody needs a change team
All you have to do, is try something new
Change team, well if you can't try nothing new
Then just stick around and sing along with the
change team blues

Wednesday afternoon meetings that's when
some programmers start to fret
The dilinquency of APAR's means that
deadlines can't be met
Just put the blame on someone else and
you've got yourself one week
To get your shit together before Coen
van.Beeten starts to heat

Chorus

When Mr.Eddy Kroonsberg comes a knockin'
on your door

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

Cause he knows some football referee who
you could be working for
And if you wanna meet him then he'll arrange it
all today
Don't worry about your level boy it's going
down anyway

Chorus

Now even for sub-contractors there is life after
death
Even in the wake of a departmental aftermath
Just cut you hair, put on a tie and paint your
brain blue
And you could be an IBM employee too

Child Suicide 1989

Did you read the evening papers
They called it a child suicide
She filled herself up full of pills
And didn't take the time to say goodbye

A girl with a future
Branded "a beauty queen"
She signed a million dollar makeup contract
At the age of barely sixteen

Too many people breaking
Too many hearts
Why should it hurt so deeply
When lovers part

Born without a father
But lived a quite normal life

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

Then one day she met her daddy
For the very first time
A few weeks later
It ended with a lovers row
Why she had to take her own life
Nobody will ever find out now

Too many people breaking
Too many hearts
Why must it hurt so deeply,
When lovers part

***Communist Orphans* 1990**

How long does it take
Before you look in the lake
And you see you going nowhere now
It's never too late to correct a mistake
And use it to help somehow
But it takes a positive mind to correct itself
And put the past far behind

But who cares, who cares
About the millions of communist orphans out
there
Who shares, who shares
We only see the pictures of Tianaman Square
So who cares, about the reds

A labourer's dream
Came onto the scene
It took us all by suprise

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

Nobody knew just how big it grew
Until half the world was sucked up inside
Now there's no room for fun
In that second to none
Political party in rule, so who cares..

Well they pulled down the wall
And said goodbye to it all
Yet there is always someone left behind
They are sitting at home
Their reputation has gone
Leaving memories of a wasted life
Now there sons and their daughters
Have big chips on their shoulders
'Cause their parents where on the wrong side

Dylan Christian James 1987

When you open up your eyes
You look around and you wonder
Isn't life a big surprise
In fact they say
'That it's a wonder'
So welcome to the world
Dylan Christian James
Your mother's labour pain are over now
So don't cry baby

What a lot of faces, what a lot a lights
All over you they seem to hover
Is it day or is it night
What's all the fuss, why all the bother
So welcome to the world
Dylan Christian James
Your mothers labour pains are over now

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

So don't cry baby

Your a little late but that's OK
The party's begun but it's not over
For the rest of my life I want to share with you
Let's just make sure that it's a good one
So welcome to the world
Dylan Christian James
Your mothers labour pain are over now
So don't cry baby

Gameboy 1995

When I look around me
What do I see
Little children focused
On some stupid L.C.D.
So life is just a game
Life is just a game..boy

Load up your lasor gun
And let them monsters have it
You can kill a million
Without causing havoc
Well life is just a game
Life is just a game..boy

Why do you look so pale
Why don't you eat your dinner
Instead you start another game up
And you know its gonna be a winner

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

But life is just a game
Life is just a game boy

I know you think it's cruel
That you have been deprived
The toy that's in your dreams
The one your dad won't buy
Now dry your eyes and listen very carefully
Have you ever heard about the game
They call reality

You can get it, if you want it
Who am I to say no son
And keep you from it
Cause life is just a game
Life is just a game...boy

Help 1989

Sitting here in my room
Thinking about writing songs
Recalling good times that have past
Old time memories
Have become my destiny
Are they to recover
Where can they be found

Chorus

I want your help
I need your help
I want your help
I need your help

Give my something
Like your loving

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

I'm not happy as I am
Only you, can pick me up
Fill me with your tender touch
Don't want to keep this frown
I just want to smile again

Chorus

I guess I'm not beaten yet
Though I have reasons to regret
The way that I mistreated you
Oh how it hurts my pride
To know that I have lied
My fate is well deserved
And it hurts me more each day

I want your help

If Not For You 1996

You caused me so much pain
But I love you
You made my tears fall like rain
Every night
Could I be wrong
To let you slip away
Could I be wrong
Or am I right again

I'm missing you so bad
Missing you already
This hurt is deeper
Than any pain
My heart is weak
My mind is not much stronger
And I can't take

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

This pain no longer

It could be a sign
That I am changing
It could be a sign
That I am growing old
It could be a sign
That love is waning
Or it could be a sign
That I am just going mad

Please believe me when I say
I'm truly sorry
Words just can not explain
How I feel
If we both know
That there is no solution
Then we must fight, Fight to break away

In My Car 1989

In my car when there's no-one beside me
In my car and I'm out on the highway
Well I'm doing 95 and my wife is miles behind
When I'm in my car
In my car I get so excited
In my car I just get can't hide it
When I'm holding that wheel
It gives me that feel
I'm in my car

Now down in the subway where the heat is on
They'll pick you out if your not strong
They'll mug you.. and beat you up
Rob you of your very last buck

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

But in my car nobody defies me
In my car, it must be my style of driving
That makes old people run
Yeah, that's my kind of fun when I'm in my car

And when my car needs a little bit of service
I don't take her to the garage
Cause I don't want some greasy mechanic
Looking un-der her bon-net! neah
I'll fix her, You'd better believe it
I'll role up my sleeves and slide underneath
her
She'll recover completely and she'll be purring
to me sweatly again
In my car I meet a lot of women
In my car things really start a-swingin'
I just pull up at the corner
Blow my horn and start to holler ...
Get in the car, get in the car, get in that god
dammed car, m...f....car

Jamie's Birthday 1996

We spent our '96 summer vacation
About a day's sail away from Hoorn
Across what they used to call the Zuider Zee
Until they built a road from shore to shore
They built a road from shore to shore

It's my sons favourite camping / harbour
Where boats and tents converge
When the weather is nice it's all so pretty
And when it rains it's not much worse
When it rains it's not much worse

There are all walks of people

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

We always meet someone new
This year it was the Fennel family
And their ship called Kuanyin
Their ship called Kuanyin

Come next year we'll set our sails
And point the bows to north
We'll be back to have some fun
Yes we'll be back for more
Back for more

They bought the ship in the Caribbean
Then sailed it all the way back home
I bet those cockroaches got real sea-sick
Or are they glad they came alone
Are they glad they came alone

Dylan, Jamie and Frieda
They played, they sailed and they swam
While their fathers talked about the deep blue
sea
And their plans to sail the world
Their plans to sail the world

The subject was navigation
The beers flowed to our heads
It got so late Dylan fell asleep
He had to sleep in Jamie's bed
He had to sleep in Jamie's bed

Come next year we'll set our sails
And point our bows to north
We'll be back to have some fun
Yes we'll be back for more
We'll be back for more

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

Well it's our last night at The Kuilaart
And it's Jamie's birthday too
So a very good reason to have a drink
And sing a song or two
I'll sing this tune for you.

Jig 1998

You've been so nice
You've been so good
You hung around
You understood
You gave me something
That I call support
So stay here while I thank you all

I needed someone to sing along
So I called up 'tricia
She said "your on"
Just come on over and bring your gitaar
We'll show 'em how to sing ooh aah

Ooh Ooh Aah
Ooh Ooh Aah
gitaar
Ooh Ooh Aah
Ooh Ooh Aah
I'll help you one day girl
Just like you helped me

You've been a lovely audience
I'd love to take you home with us
But you wouldn't come
And I didn't really mean that anyway
I'd rather stay here and play the night away

Lullaby 2000

Hasn't time flown
The evening has past
But not all alone
I wished it would last
Welcome aboard
A ship blown off course
There's no sight of land
In a sea full of sand

What is your secret
How much do you know
Of what I was thinking
But trying not to show
Taken by surprise
Surrender I
For you I sing
This sweet lullaby

Now you're gone
And we're so far apart
Memories
Are all that's left in my heart
And each and every stranger
Is whispering your name
And so many people
Are wearing your face

Bear with me now
I'm almost through
How can I find out
What's inside of you
Here in my heart
That's where you'll stay

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

Tomorrow I'll dream
Of yesterday

Mystical Myrthe 1999

Mystical Myrthe sleep don't you cry
Drink up your bottle then we'll say good night
Here's mummy and daddy and pussy cat too
Sleep little Myrthe
There's dreaming to do

Mystical Myrthe don't be affraid
We won't desert you, we won't betray
Cause all of our loving is coming your way
So mystical Myrthe
There's no time to waste

When night's are long and your nappy is full
We'll be right by your side
When friends come around drinking and
singing
And we having a real good time

Mystical Myrthe our beautiful child
Give us a hic-cup and then a big smile
Soon you will grow up and have your own
friends
'till then dear Myrthe just sleep and pretend

Nervous Breakdown 1990

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

I wake up in the morning, have a bite to eat
Comb my hair and brush off my teeth
Put on a shirt and knott up a tie
I'm looking pretty neat but I don't know why I
do it

It's because my will is too weak
That I don't start to holler not even a squeak
Just give me a little time and I'll convince
myself
That it's not worth the effort cause we're all
going to hell

I'm having a nervous breakdown
A very nervous breakdown
I'm having a nervey breakdown
I'm having a nervous breakdown now!

Lying in my bed
I can't get to sleep until all my tears are shed
While the presure builds on me
To sign my own declaration of insanity

"What I'm saying here right now is
I think I'm gonna have another nervous
breakdown
It won't be long and they'll be giving me
A whole load of sedatives and all for free"
signed

Chorus

You just can't get things right
When you work all day and you drink all night
And your body's feeling low
Your mind is dizzy and your blood won't flow

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

Both feet are off the ground
While you burry your head and think outloud
"What's wrong with me,
Oh please someone help me it's help I need

One Population 1990

Say hey you government officials
And all you people of the world
I've got something I want to say to thee
And I don't want to be misunderstood
I'm not going to be telling you
How to live your lives
But I just want to draw your attention
To a problem for all mankind

Why can't we feed our people
While there's food enough for all
And use some of that technology
For something else than war
But no-one is in a hurry
To change it all today
We're too busy making money
There must be a better way

Well if we have one population
Why don't we have one civilization
And if we had one congregation
We would see the same revalation
So if we have the same flesh and blood
Then there's a firm foundation
To rid this world
Of war and starvation, war and starvation

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

Now I'm not saying I know better
But I surely know no worse
If only we could find a way
To brake this fatal curse
They started the United Nations
To solve the problems of the World
Yet 50 years later
Hungry cries can still be heard

Just look all around you
There's poverty everywhere
Governments protecting governments
For their people they have no care
And people will fight people
And culture will fight culture
And if we can't find an answer
Then the whole world will suffer

Chorus

One Hundred Oange Balloons 2001

One hundred orange balloons
Released into the sky
A hundred unknown destinations
To which they will surely fly

Driven by the Southerly wind
They slowly drift apart
High above the fields and wavey sea
They carry their message card

Like a hundred lonely hearts
Floating through the sky

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

Looking down on humanity
Where ever it may lie

I pass one on a sailing yacht
On my way to Hoorn
Bobbing up and down on the gentle waves
It makes its way along

I try to retrieve it from the water
But that was not to be
Some will travel far away
While others stay near to me

One hundred orange balloons
Over the sky they flew
One hundred orange balloons
All reminding me of you

Though for another time 1992

There is a place somewhere that I want to see
And I want to see it with you
Not right now, not even next year
For we both have many things to attend to

There are dark streets to wander
And there's people to meet
There will be breakups and indifference
While the world is at your feet

Yes there is money to squander
And there is music to make
While being spotted through a telescope
Having sex, with yourself, in a boat, on the lake

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter

Oh the sirenes are howling
The police had arrived
They're looking for a maniac
And your the only one they can find!
So you row your boat ashore
To give yourself in
Just remember that embarrassment
Is not equal to sin!

Well when we're old and gray
And have mellowed our ways
I hope we'll find some time to spend as two
But until that day, just this I will say:
Enjoy your life, but let life,.. enjoy you

Confession of a Singer / Songwriter