

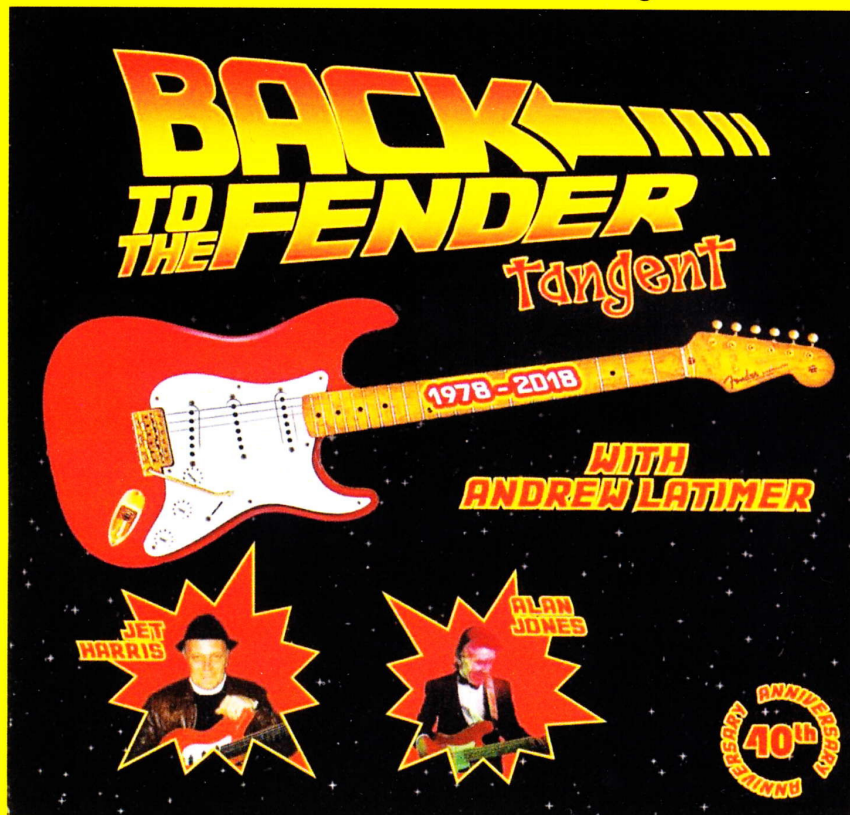
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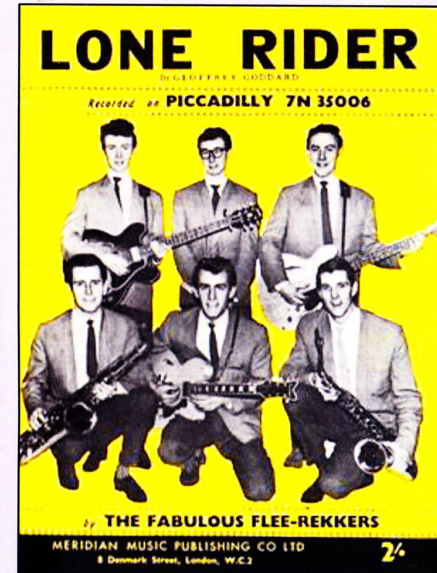
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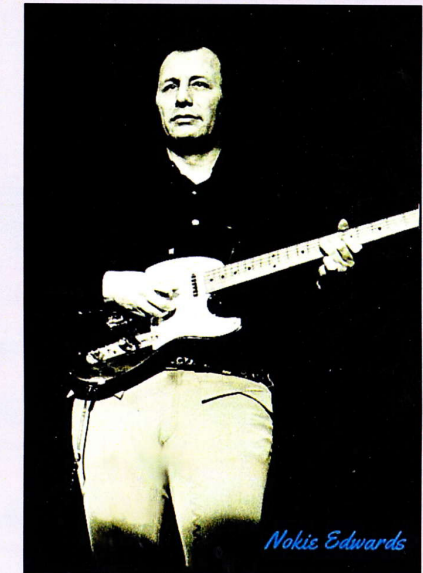
## 108

SUMMER 2018

## INSTRUMENTAL REVIEW



### THE FABULOUS FLEE-REKKERS



*Nokie Edwards*

**farewell Nokie**

**Derek Skinner**

**Farago "Judy" István**

*and the best in  
rock instrumental  
reviews*

# THE FLEE-REKKERS

Introduction by Dave Burke

I may be entirely wrong, but I do seem to recall that there was a brief fashion for green jeans sometime around 1960. Fads like Robin Hood hats, Italian blazers, Prince of Wales check trousers and those long-haired green jumpers that looked as though they needed to be combed rather than washed came and went with remarkable speed back when the whole of life was in front of us instead of in the rear view mirror. So *Green Jeans* was a timely choice of title by Joe Meek for The Flee-Rekkers' revival of *Greensleeves* – in fact it was quite inspired as it was both topical and a nice twist on the tune's traditional title. It also helped that it was a bloody great record!

Trying to find the members of the band in 2018 is fraught with many problems, not least of which is the sad fact that most of them are highly likely to have already departed this world. In fact I have known of Peter Fleerackers' whereabouts for decades but he declined my request for an interview saying that he was "too old". When I thought that I would have one last try I discovered his obituary online, sadly he passed away on December 21st 2016.

I next began looking for bass player Doug Henning as I knew that he had continued to work in music after the demise of The Flees. He had for years been the music director for The Three Degrees and had also been a regular member of the studio band on BBC Radio's Huddlines, a comedy show featuring Roy Hudd. I finally tracked him down to a band called Trio Fantasia that he had been playing with only a couple of years ago. My hopes were high, only to be dashed when I learned that Doug had retired and moved to Spain and, more



finally, had suffered a fatal heart attack in 2016. I think we can see a pattern developing here, so I thought my best hope would be to find someone younger, which led me to Derek Skinner. Derek has very kindly told me all he can recall about his time in the band – and much more too – as you will see in a future article.



Flees' bassist Doug Henning

However, Derek joined in late 1960 so we are still without direct testimony from one of the original members who was present prior to that date. Sadly I fear that that is now not likely to change.

So the Flee-Rekkers story that follows is the most complete to date and we are grateful to David Peters for his splendid effort in putting it together for us. Because of the fresh input from Derek Skinner I have been obliged to tweak a few of the details where the generally "known facts" have proved to be inaccurate, and I hope that David will forgive me for this.

# THE STORY OF THE FLEE-REKKERS

by David Peters

The Flee-Rekkers, initially known on record as The Fabulous Flee-Rackers, were a British instrumental rock and roll band fronted by tenor saxophonist Peter Fleerackers whose distinctive surname came from his Dutch father. Their origins date back to 1957 in South Ealing, West London where guitarist Dave "Tex" Cameron had a skiffle group. Wanting to move into rock 'n' roll with electric guitars, Tex recruited Doug Henning on bass guitar, Ronnie Marion on rhythm guitar and Phil Curtis on drums. Along with vocalist Jimmy Barron they were initially known as The Ramblers and then The Statesiders, but they really wanted to play instrumentals similar to The Champs, Duane Eddy and Johnny & The Hurricanes, so they contacted sax players Peter Fleerackers and his friend Elmy Durrant who were playing in a dance band. Explaining what they were after, both were invited to join the group and they adopted Peter's surname as it was sure to attract interest.

Playing the London ballroom circuit brought them to the attention of Bob Alexander who discovered them at Putney Ballroom (London's "Hive of Jive") in late 1959 and, after a lot of persuasion, he became their manager and they signed to the Harry Dawson Agency. By this time the line-up had changed with Phil Curtis having been called up for National Service and replaced by Micky Waller (later Derek Skinner) on drums and then Alan Monger taking over from Ronnie Marion on rhythm guitar. Monger also occasionally played baritone sax to further fill out the sound. This was the line-up that turned professional, making their first demo recordings at Star Sound in Rodmarton Street, London W1.

Basing the sessions on their stage act meant that vocalist Jimmy Barron was featured on just one track, *Summertime* performed in the style of Gene Vincent.

The instrumentals recorded included Duane Eddy's *Some Kinda Earthquake*, Johnny & The Hurricanes' *Buckeye* and The Champs' *El Rancho Rock*. These can be found on the group's CD *Green Jeans – The Anthology* released by Castle Music in 2006. Also included are their demo versions of traditional tunes which they titled *Brer Robert* and *Shiftless Sam*, both of which they later revisited for Pye Records. Two numbers were recorded without the sax players, a version of the Arthur Lyman hit *Taboo* and lead guitarist Dave Cameron's own ballad *Sunday Date*. Also on this CD is the group's previously unreleased '60s recording of the Boots Brown hit *Cerveza*.



A successful audition for independent producer Joe Meek led to him recording the group's debut release in a hired studio. *Green Jeans*, a rocked-up version of the traditional *Greensleeves*, was coupled with *You Are My Sunshine* on Joe's own Triumph label in March 1960 as RGM

1008 where they were billed as "The Fabulous Flee-Rackers".

That month they embarked on an eight day tour with Lance Fortune, Wee Willie Harris, The

Five Dallas Boys, Edna Savage and Al Saxon appearing at Bradford, Pontefract, Scunthorpe, Newark, Harrogate, Burnley, Dewsbury and Worksop. April saw them back on the road on a 26 night tour for promoter Arthur Howes with The Everly Brothers, The Crickets, The Five Dallas Boys, Cherry Wainer & Don Storer, Lance Fortune, Danny



Hunter and The Freddy Lloyd Five with Tony Marsh as compere.

Triumph had a promotional show on Radio Luxembourg called *It's A Triumph* which included the group's recording of the *It's A Triumph* jingle and used The Flee-Rakkers' *Green Jeans* as its theme tune.

The record reached #23 on Record Retailer's Top 50 where it stayed for a healthy 13 weeks from the middle of May, although it does carry the familiar tale of demand outstripping Meek's capacity to supply copies due to problems at the pressing plant.

Triumph was formed in February 1960, Joe Meek quit in July and the label collapsed in November after just ten months in business. Meanwhile Joe had taken *Green Jeans* to the Top Rank label who relaunched it in August on JAR 431 as by "Fabulous Flea Rakkers".

Scheduled for JAR 432 was another Joe Meek production *Hot Chick-A-Roo* b/w *Don't Pick On Me* (as by "Ricky Wayne And The Flee-Rakkers") which had previously been released in April as *Chicka'roo* on Triumph RGM 1009 by "Ricky Wayne With the Fabulous Flee-Rakkers", but EMI took over Top Rank that same August and JAR 432 never reached the shops.

Born Learie Carasco in St Lucia, Ricky Wayne was a singer from the London pub circuit who went on to become a prominent bodybuilder in the USA. He became a noted political writer and broadcaster on his return to St. Lucia where he also served as a senator. In 2007 Wayne was honoured with an OBE for his contribution to journalism in St. Lucia.

## The Flee-Rekkers

### Programme.

1. The Frantic  
FREDDY LLOYD FIVE
2. Your Compere  
TONY MARSH
3. H.M.V.'s New Rock Personality  
DANNY HUNTER supported by  
The Fabulous FLEE-RAKKERS
4. Pye's New Disc Star  
LANCE (w/m) FORTUNE
5. TONY MARSH introduces
6. The Fabulous  
FIVE DALLAS BOYS
- Interval
7. Triumph Records All-Star Rock Group  
The Fabulous FLEE-RAKKERS with JIMMY BARRON
8. Organ Star from "Oh Boy" & "Boy Meets Girl"  
CHERRY WAINER with DON STORER
9. TONY MARSH
10. America's most consistent Stars of the Hit Parade  
**THE EVERLY BROTHERS**  
*God save the Queen*



In May 1960 the group appeared at the Savoy in Portsmouth and on the 7th they made their TV debut on ABC's Wham! to promote *Green Jeans*. Also on the show were compere Keith Fordyce, regulars The Vernon Girls, Billy Fury, Jess Conrad, Joe

Brown, Dickie Pride, Little Tony, Gill Gordon, The Fat Noise and Danny Rivers. They were back at the Savoy in Portsmouth in September (billed as "Britain's Number 1 Jive Group") and they had their second single released on Pye 7N 15288: *Sunday Date* c/w *Shiftless Sam*.

*Shiftless Sam* was a reworking of the old sea shanty *Drunken Sailor* ("What shall we do with the drunken sailor...") and Dave Cameron's *Sunday Date* had been used in the cinema short *London Nights* in which the group had a bit part. The film gained its certification in November while *Sunday Date* registered in the NME charts at #28 for one week on the 15th of October.

Some of the group also played on the single *Early In The Morning / Cool Water* (Pye 7N 15292) credited to Chick (accompanied by) Ted Cameron & The D.J.'s. Those appearing were not Ted but Dave "Tex" Cameron and the Flee's saxes.

## The Flee-Rekkers

In November they toured with Jess Conrad, Ricky Valance, Garry Mills, Terry Dene and Ted Heath and on December 4th they could be found at the Theatre Royal Lowestoft where they appeared with Garry Mills, The Hunters, Danny Rivers, Ricky Wayne and Davy Jones.

January 1961 saw their next release out of Joe Meek's studio in Holloway Road: *Blue Tango / Bitter Rice* on Pye 7N 15326. *Blue Tango* was a Leroy Anderson composition from 1951, played by the composer it had reached #1 in 1952 and Alma Cogan released a vocal version in 1952. *Bitter Rice*, a jazzy type recording, was written by singer Danny Dawson.

This month The Flee-Rekkers were again at The Savoy in Portsmouth where they starred in the Friday "Teenage Beat Night" and on the 21st they made their debut on the BBC Light Programme's radio show Saturday Club. They also signed a 12 month contract with Mecca Ballrooms (reportedly for £10,000) to be featured as guest group on their ballroom circuit throughout the UK. Mecca's London venues included The Lyceum, Hammersmith Palais and the Tottenham Royal.

They hit the road again on Don Arden's 1961 All Stars tour beginning on February 12th in East Ham and finishing on March 6th in West Bromwich. Appearing with them (but not at every venue) were Gene Vincent, Terry Dene, Johnny Kidd & The Pirates, Johnny Duncan & The Blue Grass Boys, Michael Cox, Screaming Lord Sutch, Chris Wayne & The Echoes, Jess Conrad, Mark Wynter, The Four Jays and Mike & Bernie Winters as comperes. As well as having their own spot on this tour The Flee-Rekkers backed Screaming Lord Sutch.

In May came their first and only EP, *The Fabulous*

Flee-Rekkers. Released on Pye it featured four new recordings: *Isle Of Capri*, *Brer Robert*, *Hangover* and *P.F.B.* Peter had raided the oldies catalogue for *Isle Of Capri* which featured the saxes over a frantic beat and was joined by three traditional tunes on which Peter was able to claim the writer's credit. *Brer Robert* followed The Piltdown Men type of sound while *P.F.B.* was the oldie *Phil The Fluter's Ball* and *Hangover* was a sax-led take off of *Early One Morning*.

One of the best recordings by the group was released in June

on Pye's new label Piccadilly. A dark, atmospheric performance of Geoff Goddard's classic song *Lone Rider* featured on its A-side, John Leyton's vocal version was to follow later. With Dave Cameron's moody guitar taking the lead and saxes breaking in between, it was reminiscent of Duane Eddy and an example of Joe Meek's production at its best. *Miller Like Wow* on the flip found Peter Fleeckers digging into the old folksong book again with his adaptation of *The Miller Of Dee*.

For the Summer Season the group was in Blackpool appearing with The Karl Denver Trio, Marty Wilde, Eden Kane, Julie Grant and Daryl Quist. In December they were out on another tour featuring Jess Conrad, Vince Eager, Nelson Keene, Johnny Gentle, Michael Cox and The

Semitones. On January 27th 1962 they could be found at the Aylesbury Town Hall, March 24th at The 400 Ballroom in Torquay and April saw them on another package tour, this time with Gary US Bonds, Gene McDaniels, Johnny Burnette, The Four Kestrels, Rolly Daniels, The Condors, Danny Rivers and Mark Wynter. This "Rock 'n' Twist U.S.A." tour lasted from April 21st to May 13th and took in 23 dates in its 23 days touring the UK from Glasgow to Plymouth.

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LICESTER, De Montfort's Hall	Tue., Apr. 24th	6.20 & 8.40
DONCASTER, Gaumont	Wed., Apr. 25th	6.15 & 8.30
WORCESTER, Gaumont	Thurs., Apr. 26th	6.15 & 8.30
BIRMINGHAM, Colston Hall	Fri., Apr. 27th	6.30 & 8.45
Bournemouth, Winter Gardens	Sat., Apr. 28th	6.00 & 8.30
RUGBY, Granada	Sun., Apr. 29th	5.30 & 8.00
Cardiff, Granada	Mon., Apr. 30th	7.00 & 9.10
Aylesbury, Granada	Tue., May 1st	7.00 & 9.10
KINGSTON, Granada	Wed., May 2nd	7.00 & 9.10
Harlow, Granada	Thurs., May 3rd	6.45 & 9.00
GRANTHAM, Granada	Fri., May 4th	6.25 & 8.30
MANFIELD, Granada	Sat., May 5th	6.00 & 8.15
TOOTING, Granada	Sun., May 6th	6.00 & 8.30
PLYMOUTH, A.B.C.	Mon., May 7th	6.15 & 8.30
MAIDSTONE, Granada	Tue., May 8th	6.20 & 8.30
BEDFORD, Granada	Wed., May 9th	7.00 & 9.10
NETTING, Granada	Thurs., May 10th	7.00 & 9.10
WIDELWICH, Granada	Fri., May 11th	6.00 & 8.30
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