THE SONS OF THE PILTDOWN MEN

Bruce Baxter tells the tale to Dave Burke

With three Top 20 hits in the UK it is fair to say that The Piltdown Men were a far bigger deal over here than they ever were in America where a solitary #75 placing was their only chart entry. Ed Cobb and Lincoln Mayorga were an enterprising team who clearly took full advantage of any opportunity that presented itself, so when Mayorga arrived in the UK in 1962 and began to work with a top class British band it was not too long before the cogs in his brain started to whir. Once aware of the UK popularity of The Piltdown Men he must have soon begun wondering if there was a way of

getting a little extra mileage from their novel prehistoric concept. What if this British band he was working alongside were prepared to become The Sons Of The Piltdown Men? Doubtless a stone-age lightbulb suddenly lit up over his head!

The British band in question were The Terry Young Five who, in the autumn of 1962, were travelling the country as a part of a package tour which included The Everly Brothers, Frank Ifield, The Vernons Girls and Ketty Lester. The Cobb-Mayorga team were managing Lester and

Lincoln Mayorga was not only her musical director but also the man responsible for the exquisite piano work on her enormous Love Letters hit. He had travelled over from the States with her and was working with The Terry Young Five who, as was the custom in those days, were providing the back-up for all of the singers including Lester. After discussions between Mayorga, Terry Young, and the band's manager Peter Walsh, it was agreed that The Terry Young Five would add a second sax player and become The Sons Of The Piltdown Men. And so began a small but fascinating chapter in the history of British instrumentals. But let's go back to the beginning for the full story.

Bruce Baxter began his life-long interest in music as a three year old when he started piano lessons and, although he did not take up the instrument seriously, this did give him the advantage of being able to read music at a comparatively young age. In 1957 rock'n'roll came along and 16 year old Bruce decided he wanted to play sax just like Rudy Pompilli in The Comets. A second-hand Buescher tenor sax was duly procured and after he had practised for a quarter of an hour he discovered that he needed to sit down to get his breath back. He concluded that this must be because he had begun smoking at 13. A change of tack was called for and he re-focused, traded in his sax, bought a Hofner Senator guitar, hurriedly screwed on a pick-up and resolved to play just like Franny Beecher, Scotty Moore and Duane Eddy.

Bruce soon discovered a fellow pupil at Rutlish Grammar School, in South London's Merton where he was living, who was just as crazy about music as himself. His name was John Rostill, Birmingham-born youngster who had moved down to nearby Mitcham. Together they began to practise several times a week in a spare room at Bruce's house and also in John's living room. In 1959, with the bold confidence of youth, Bruce answered an advert in Melody Maker for "Rocking Musicians". The ad had been placed by an ambitious young

singer by the name of Terry Loony, soon to be understandably re-christened as Terry Young. Bruce and John auditioned for the job with John now playing bass. They were successful and joined Terry and his brother, known as Barry Daniel, who was the drummer with the band. Terry Young was from Finsbury Park in North London and was an enterprising sort of guy with a lot of confidence who was quick to make business contacts. Because of this the band were able to skip the usual first step of playing in pubs and instead went straight on to become a semi-pro band playing dancehalls in and around London.

Bruce's day job at this time was as a bank clerk in the City of London. Having noticed that his close friend John Rostill was somewhat ahead of him in terms of ability and technique, Bruce decided to practise virtually day and night, perhaps rather riskily taking little blue pills to enable him to stay awake all night. His



determination paid off though, and once Bruce had realised that he could make a living playing music he gleefully handed in his notice at the bank. The next step was to move into a flat with his mate John so that they could concentrate entirely on their music. Terry Young suggested that they should get a bedsit in the block of flats where his girlfriend lived in St John's Wood in North-West London. This is a rather upmarket area, although Bruce assures me that the accommodation was in fact very tawdry and another struggling artist in the same block was singer Jimmy Justice.

They both did various odd jobs around London to make ends meet, but none of them would last long as they invariably had to take time off to play gigs and would get fired as a result. Finally in May 1961, after auditioning for the job at The Roebuck in London's Tottenham Court Road, they landed a summer season at Butlin's Holiday Camp at Clacton-On-Sea in Essex.

This was through the auspices of Peter Walsh who had previously run the Starlight Ballroom in Slough and who, after a spell at the George Ganjou Agency, had formed his own Starlight Artistes and also became the manager and agent for the band.

Peter Walsh was well connected and swiftly secured them an audition with Pye Records producer Tony Hatch. He liked Terry and also declared that he was impressed with the quality of the backing group, adding that he was more accustomed to hearing good singers performing with inferior musicians. However, there was no opportunity for the band to perform on the topside of Terry Young's debut 45 released in 1961 as it was a version of Maverick, the theme to the Warner Brothers TV show, which required a full orchestral arrangement. Bruce did manage to play on the flipside though, another westernthemed number titled Partners. Bruce added "That was my first experience of working with "proper" session musicians." This and Terry's second 45 were both recorded at Olympic Studios with the highly respected Keith Grant engineering and Tony Hatch producing. The topside of the second 45 was also written by Tony Hatch and called Someone New backed with Now, Forever And A Day. The band got to play on both sides of this single but sadly neither of the 45s made the charts. Bruce also told me that the singles were in fact recorded in reverse order, and so it seems likely that the release of Someone New was deliberately delayed and Maverick rushed forward because of the huge popularity of the TV series.

Shortly after the recordings were made they added a tenor sax player named John Lord and a pianist called Lindsay Heard, also adjusting the band's name to The Terry Young Five. As the

band were now looking to advance and move upwards they also invested in new equipment. Bruce treated himself to a new Gibson with amplifier built-in spring reverb to replace his Vox AC30, also outing his Fender Musicmaster in favour of a Guild X500. John upgraded from a Hopf Bass to a Fender Jazz bass and, in place of his Vox AC30, bought an 18"

and, in place of his Vox AC30, bought an 18" Wharfedale speaker which he often likened to a bus wheel! He also built his own speaker cabinet and then added a Leak amplifier which sat cosily on top. Given John's ultimate musical destination it is ironic that they did not want to sound too much like The Shadows, as did most other bands of the day, and for that reason Bruce never did own a

Next the band secured another regular gig at Butlin's, this time in conjunction with cigarette manufacturers Nelson who produced Senior Service. Back then it was perfectly okay for cigarette brands to advertise their poisonous wares, and so the band promoted them with a regular touring gig at Butlin's. This involved them performing Monday to Friday every week and rotating between holiday camps in Skegness, Clacton, Margate, Bournemouth and Minehead. As if that wasn't enough they would also do ballroom dates at places like Morecambe or Cleethorpes on Saturday and then a concert on Sunday in Blackpool or some other similar seaside resort. Around this time there was also a personnel change with pianist Lindsay Heard returning to his native South Africa and being replaced by a recent graduate from The Royal Academy of Music named Barry Booth.



Binson echo unit.

In October 1962 the band got a spot on The Everly Brothers tour, although as it transpired it ended up as the Phil Everly tour as Don never made it due to ill-health, or of course it could have been during one of the brothers' frequent non-talking periods. The band backed up Ketty Lester for her segment on the tour, although Lincoln Mayorga played piano with them during her spot. This was when Mayorga dreamt up the

novel idea of transforming the Terry Young Five into The Sons Of The Piltdown Men.

Terry Young and Peter Walsh could see the commercial possibilities that this offered and Bruce also found himself "quite taken with the idea," adding that "a Lincoln was friendly. laidback kind of guy as well superb pianist." as a Accordingly Mayorga asked his US office to mail him the demo of an unissued title that he had previously recorded with his Hollywood session guys so that The Terry Young Five could learn the arrangement. It was also decided that a second sax player would be needed to play baritone in order to

reproduce the Piltdown Men's hits, so Kevin Drake was poached from Zoot Money's Big Roll Band, the band becoming The Terry Young Six until their new moniker was formally adopted.

Once the demo of *Be A Party* arrived, Mayorga put the band through their paces learning and rehearsing the number in various theatres during set-up time on the 1962 tour. Whether there was actually a demo for *Mad Goose* or not is

uncertain as, if one existed, why then was it not included on Ace's Piltdown Men CD \boldsymbol{A} where BeParty the title (under Gargantua #2) is to be found? Blue Tail Fly is of course a very familiar melody, and it possible is that Mayorga simply cooked up a quick arrangement of the tune with the title of *Mad Goose* for the other side of the 45. In any event Bruce remembers that the sessions for the single were held at Star Studios in Central London's Rodmarton Street, and also that three tympani were hired in especially for the recording. The resulting 45 was issued on Pye International in June 1963. Releasing it on Pye's International label was something of a brainwave because it

gave the impression that, yes, this was an American recording and it genuinely had something to do with the "real" Piltdown Men. Of course at the time no-one knew that The Piltdown Men were basically a fictitious band anyway.

Before the single released in 1963 The Terry Young Six did several tours appearing with Jet Harris & Tony Meehan, Paul & Paula and their one-time neighbour Jimmy Justice in April, and also Chris Montez, Tommy Roe, The Viscounts and the of first their many appearances with The Beatles during that same month. In May they appeared with The Beatles again as well as Roy

Orbison, Gerry & The Pacemakers and Louise Cordet. Still in May they appeared alongside The Four Seasons, Del Shannon, The Brook Brothers and Freddie & The Dreamers. By July the band had become The Sons Of The Piltdown Men to coincide with the release of the 45, and under that name they appeared with Gerry & The Pacemakers, Billy J Kramer & The Dakotas and Tommy Quickly, and then on another bill

with The Beatles and Gerry, and then onto August with The Beatles and Gerry & The Pacemakers as well as The Fourmost. Still in August they appeared with The Beatles again, also with Chas McDevitt & Shirley Douglas, then with John Leyton and Tommy Ouickly. Moving onto





The Terry Young Six *I-r:* Bruce Baxter, Barry Daniel, John Rostill, Barry Booth, Kevin Drake, Terry Young

September there were more dates with The Beatles and Chas McDevitt & Shirley Douglas, and then next it was Roy Orbison, The Searchers, Brian Poole & The Tremeloes and

Freddie & The Dreamers.

Interestingly, Bruce told me that he made the stage announcements in his usual English accent, there was no attempt by the band to mislead people into thinking that they were American. Their all-instrumental set normally included Mad Goose and Be A Party of course, as well as Piltdown Rides Again, McDonald's and Brontosaurus Cave Stomp, plus Green Onions and Watermelon Man too the band's act normally going down very well with the audience.

Life on the road went well for the band for a while but problems did begin to creep in. As professional musicians playing at concert venues they were members of the musician's union and so were entitled to expect a degree of parity in terms of remuneration. However, the rest of the band discovered that their newly appointed and highly-qualified pianist Barry Booth was earning more than them. Terry

Young, who was by now more involved in management with Starlight Artistes and less interested in singing, assured the band that this had been a necessary step and would pay off for them in the long run. They reluctantly accepted this, but in subsequent conversations with Barry it was learned that Terry Young had negotiated Barry's wage down by claiming that the rest of the band were earning more than they actually were. Terry Young had obviously picked up managerial skills pretty quickly, but the result of all this financial unhappiness was increasingly demoralised band. However, one very positive aspect to Barry's recruitment was that, because of his formal musical education, he

soon became something of a mentor to Bruce. Suddenly Bruce became more aware of musical theory and elements of composition and arrangement, and the realization that he was

> developing into a proper musician gradually began to dawn.

> Further problems for the band arrived during a party in a Bournemouth hotel for Billy J Kramer's 21st birthday party. Barry Booth and John Lennon got involved heated in a discussion about the merits and demerits of certain musical genres and artists. They had both had too much to drink and said some daft things, although no fight actually broke out. Paul McCartney managed to smooth things over diplomatically, but when the next Beatles tour came The Sons Of The up Piltdown Men found themselves replaced Peter Jay & The Jaywalkers.

> That may have been entirely co-incidental, and in any case once Brian Epstein had signed Sounds Incorporated to his NEMS organisation Peter Jay & The Jaywalkers soon found themselves likewise cut adrift to make way for Sounds Inc.

The rot really set in though after John Rostill and Kevin Drake, who had grown to be very close, failed to turn up for a gig one night without any warning at all. Rostill had grown deeply disillusioned with the music business and was also subject to bouts of depression. Naturally the rest of the band were miffed at such unprofessional behaviour by the pair and had to manage that night the best they could with one sax player and Barry Booth playing the bass notes on his organ. Drake had returned home to Bournemouth with Rostill in tow and between them they set up The Interns, although by the end of 1963 Rostill had been recruited into The Shadows.





To make matters worse for The Sons Of The Piltdown Men their remaining sax player, John Lord, became ill and was forced to leave the band. They still had contractual commitments to honour and so got in various musicians including tenor player Dave Woods and a mate of Barry Booth who happened to be renowned bassist Danny Thompson, later a member of Pentangle. By 1964 Starlight Artistes had lost interest in the band as by then they were also looking after the highly successful Brian Poole & The Tremeloes as well as new chart entrants Marmalade. Faced with declining bookings and the high cost of keeping a large band on the road, the inevitable result was their dissolution.

A couple of weeks later Bruce Baxter answered the phone and it was Starlight Artistes on the other end of the line. Would he like to work with The Spotnicks? Evidently they were coming over for a UK tour but lead guitarist Bo Winberg was unwell so would Bruce like to stand-in for him? "Being without gainful employment" Bruce chuckled, accepted." On the first day of their rehearsals Bruce told them that the only problem he could see was Orange Special. Blossom They replied that this would be okay as they never played it live because the number had been recorded at half speed and it was more or less unplayable at the tempo of record. Bruce was

astonished because it was the number that they were best known for in the UK and the fans would be very disappointed if they did not perform it. He worked on the number for a couple of weeks and discovered that if he transposed the key from F to D it just about became playable. Orange Blossom Special was duly inserted into The Spotnicks' set and off they went across the UK on tour with Bobby Rydell and Helen Shapiro.

At the end of the tour Bruce was persuaded to fly back to Stockholm with the rest of the band. There he met Roland Ferneborg who was The Spotnicks' manager as well as the owner of Swe-

Disc Records, their record company. He also met the now recovered Bo Winberg. Initially Bo was a little stand-offish until Bruce made it clear that he did not seek to compete with him and was there only to do a professional job of work. As luck would have it The Spotnicks' rhythm guitarist Bob Lander happened to receive his military call-up papers at this point, so as a result Bruce was drafted back into the band for a six week tour of France. They all thoroughly enjoyed the tour and in fact Bruce and Bo got on so well that Bruce was invited back to Stockholm to contribute to the band's new LP. The Spotnicks In Stockholm. The album was recorded in Stockholm's Europa Studios and

Bruce even collaborated with Bo on composing a couple of the tracks, although he opted for a buyout instead of a writer's royalty.

While Bruce was with The Spotnicks their drummer was British stickman Derek Johansson, Skinner, Ove having left the group just beforehand. So, for a short while The Spotnicks were in fact half-English and half-Swedish. Bruce remembers Amapola, playing Hava Nagila and Perdido as well as Orange Blossom Special of course, and also appearing on a children's TV show where they had to run around a lot although, as Bruce did not learn to speak Swedish until slightly later, he did not really understand what was going on. One nightmare

though was wearing the space suits. Bruce confirmed "It was hell! The Perspex window misted up in seconds so we played the first number completely blind. After that we immediately discarded the helmets, but even then the suits were very hot and uncomfortable. After the show it was a race to the showers!"

Bruce recalls a gig at a dancehall called Nalen in Stockholm because it was where Bob Lander announced that he was leaving to go into the army and the English guitarist who was going to replace him would play lead on their next number using the radio guitar. Bruce recalled "I was at the back of the hall and someone gave me



Bo's transmitter-equipped Stratocaster and, as I was a fair way back from the stage, they got me to stand on a table so that I could be seen. I immediately realised that because of the distance there was a time delay so I had to concentrate like mad to keep in time – in effect I was playing ahead of the beat. If that wasn't bad enough I then became aware of a presence at my side. It was a bouncer who had not heard the announcement and had decided that I was just a

drunken reveller cavorting about on the table. All of the road crew were at the other end of the hall near the stage and this bouncer tugging at my leg trying to remove me from my precarious perch. Eventually some members of the audience were able to persuade him that it was all part of the show and he let me finish the number - but it was touch and go there for a while! Normally when I was on stage I used Bo's

spare Stratocaster and plugged into The Spotnicks' sound system, although bassist Bjorn Thelin had his own separate bass system."

After his time with The Spotnicks Bruce was approached by Roland Ferneborg to play on an album he was recording at Europa Studios for another of his artists, Swedish rock singer Little Gerhard. He sang in both Swedish and English and Bruce ended up playing with his backing

group as well as producing a couple of tracks for him which sold fairly well in Sweden. The backing group were actually very good musicians and included brothers Rune and Yngve Furen who are close friends of Bruce to this day. Two of the vocal tracks they recorded – Come A Little Closer and Sticks And Stones – were issued on Swe-Disc in 1964 under the name of Little Gerhard & The Soul Reps.

The disc sold quite well in Sweden, leading to a second 45 on Swe-Disc. This time it was two instrumental tracks so the disc was credited to just The Soul Reps: Leif Alverstam (bass), Leif Koronen (drums), Yngve Furen (organ) and Bruce on guitar of course. One of the titles was Shamus O'Toole which owed its origins to an old Irish folk song which Bruce, Barry Booth and Danny Thompson had worked on together back during the tail-end of The Sons Of The Piltdown Men. The other tune they initially referred to as The Bass Song, later re-titled Walk On Man. This was heavily influenced by Green Onions and featured pronounced bass, organ and some stinging guitar from Bruce that Steve Cropper would have been proud of. This latter 45 was

picked up by Limelight, a subsidiary of Mercury Reco rds, and issued in the States during 1964 with Walk On Man being re-titled as Soul Food.

The four Swe-Disc tracks were issued in France as an EP by Polydor Records. The high quality of Shamus O'Toole was not lost on The Spotnicks and they recorded their own version of the tune which appeared on a six-track eponymously titled EP on Swe-Disc in 1964, as

a UK single on Oriole that same year, and also on their 1965 LP The Spotnicks In Berlin.

In Sweden Bruce had become a sought-after session player and got a fair amount of studio work in Stockholm. During this time he also met Daniel Bell, a Scottish guy who was the assistant musical director of Stockholm's Royal Dramatic Theatre, and he studied composition and orchestration with him. In order to broaden his

musical knowledge still further he joined the band of renowned Swedish jazz clarinettist Putte Wickman, writing charts for his band in the style of Woody Herman, Quincy Jones, etc.

In 1966 a bereavement brought Bruce back to the UK and he discovered that the music scene had changed enormously in his absence. He joined a soul band affiliated to the well-known Tiles Club in London's trendy Oxford

Street. At the same time he was also seeking an outlet for the skills he had acquired in Stockholm. He gradually built up a reputation as a musician with a background in rock who could handle an orchestra and so began to get arranging work. Allan Crawford, one of the





unsung heroes behind the launch of Radio Caroline and who had recently joined Pickwick International, approached Bruce about arranging for a regular series of LPs covering current chart hits. The LPs were to be titled Top Of The Pops as the BBC had not been smart enough to copyright the name of their premium TV pop programme. To do this Crawford needed an arranger who could handle anything thrown at him and Bruce fitted the bill admirably and, as this meant a dependable income stream for the foreseeable future, he accepted immediately.

The hits picked for each Top Of The Pops album were selected by Pickwick each week after consulting the charts in Music Week, and if there were any problems Crawford simply scrubbed the track off the list. The first LP was issued in 1968 and about a year later Crawford left to explore the sunnier climes of Australia. Sales were good and Pickwick asked Bruce if he could cope with producing the albums as well as arranging them. Knowing of Pickwick's frustration that some big hits were being left off the albums, he not only accepted the producer's job but also negotiated a big increase in budget so that in future they could include any hit that the executives wanted. He moved from a four track studio to an eight track and, whereas three or four singers had previously been used for all twelve tracks on the LP, he began to use many more singers who were able to imitate specific artists. The costs may have risen substantially but fortunately so did sales and each LP was selling in excess of 250,000. In fact in 1971 four of the LPs actually charted and one even made the top spot! Bruce not only produced the Top Of The Pops albums for ten years but also put out a series of popular budget music albums on Pickwick by The Bruce Baxter Orchestra, including his double album of instrumentals titled 50 Smash Hit Guitar Extravaganza.

In the eighties he formed a close working relationship with top producer Gus Dudgeon which led to him providing arrangements for Lindisfarne, Chris Rea, Elkie Brooks, John Miles, Judith Durham and Gilbert O'Sullivan. In conjunction with Dudgeon he also composed and produced the main theme for the Moscow Olympics, which might have made them wealthy men if only the Russians had not invaded Afghanistan leading to an American-led boycott. The work he did for Dudgeon brought him to the attention of other producers and he worked on projects for Bucks Fizz, The Swingle Singers and The Barron Knights as well as arranging and conducting music for the TV series Doctor Snuggles and Cool It featuring comedian Phil Cool.

These days Bruce is semi-retired, although he does do the odd arranging job that turns up as well as composing library music to "keep him sane and in beer money" as he puts it. Reminiscing about his early days with John Rostill he remarked: "John and I really used to laugh a lot. We were pretty silly when we were young, but we were also deadly serious about the music we played. He did get depressed when things were not going as well as we had hoped they would, and I feel there was an element of impatience which led to his departure from The Sons Of The Piltdown Men. I remember one occasion at a party we had when we lived in the flat upstairs to Terry Young's girlfriend, I was put to bed completely pie-eyed. Unfortunately I was smoking a cigarette at the time and I was woken up a little later by John pouring a kettle of water over me to put out the fire. He probably saved my life."

BRUCE BAXTER ~ SELECTED EARLY DISCOGRAPHY

TERE	RY YOUNG			
1961	Maverick (v) / Partners (v)		UK	Pye 7N 15321
1961	Someone New (v) / Now, Forever And A Day (v)	(UK	Pye 7N 15353
THE	SONS OF THE PILTDOWN MEN			
1963	Mad Goose / Be A Party		UK	Pye International 7N 25206
LITT	LE GERHARD & THE SOUL REPS			
1964	Come A Little Closer (v) / Sticks And Stones (v)		Sweden	Swe-Disc SWES 1033
THE	SOUL REPS			
1964	Shamus O'Toole / Walk On Man		Sweden	Swe-Disc SWES 1034
1964	Shamus O'Toole / Soul Food [Walk On Man retitled		USA	Limelight Y3026
1964	SOUL FOOD	E.P.	France	Polydor 21 970
	Soul Food / Sticks And Stones (v) // Shamus O'Toole / Come A Little Closer (v)			

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