



SONGS OF PROTEST AND ANTI-PROTEST OTHER MUSIC OF THE VIETNAM WAR

SHINDIG!



How five US ex-GIs in Germany anticipated punk and krautrock

"It was tough playing that kind of music when the people didn't like it"

the monks

CLIVE'S ORIGINAL BAND • BRIGITTE FONTAINE
LYN DOBSON • SÉRGIO MENDES & BRASIL '66 • THE HEARD
TERRY REID • TCHOTCHKE • CURTIS HARDING

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SHINDIG!

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"Soft Machine was a complete revelation. There was nothing in their repertoire that was in 4/4 or even 3/4"





Turn This World Around

Like many on the path to enlightenment in the late '60s **LYN DOBSON** began his musical path as a jazz player (primarily on alto saxophone). As the decade progressed, he worked with Manfred Mann, Georgie Fame and The Small Faces before moving into progressive music with The Keef Hartley Band and Soft Machine, playing on legendary sessions for Nick Drake, Mick Softley and John & Beverley Martyn. At the age of 86 he's still recording, with three new albums released this year alone.

JON 'MOJO' MILLS discusses appearing on *Top Of The Pops*, almost jamming with Roland Kirk, taking LSD with The Small Faces, The Third Ear Band, music therapy and living through The Aquarian Age

Lyn and his son
photographed for
1974 solo album *Jam*
Sandwich



With Manfred Mann in 1966.
L-R: Henry Lowther, Jack Bruce, Manfred Mann, Paul Jones, Tom McGuinness, Lyn, Mike Hugg (seated); formative influence Larry Adler; mid-60s outings with Group Sounds Four & Five and Manfred Mann

Shindig! Why the flute? Compulsory school music lessons or an interest on your part?

Lyn Dobson: The first instrument I learned was the chromatic harmonica when I was 10. I was a big fan of Larry Adler. I even got the 78rpm shellac recording of his *Romance For Harmonica*, written by Ralph Vaughan Williams. It was my older brother who persuaded me to change to the saxophone, so I did what he said and got to like the saxophone, and then the flute comes later.

SI: You were a teen in the '50s. Did you gravitate towards jazz or rock 'n' roll or were you pretty open-minded about music?

LD: I did go to rock 'n' roll, because that's what you did. I had a saxophone and I wanted a job, so was doing Little Richard and Fats Domino-type stuff in that era. All you needed to play was the route – "Da da da" – on every tune. And you could get away with it. I've always liked rock, but I did gradually gravitate towards jazz because it's an improvised music

SI: Can you tell us about how you got into the biz and some of your formative professional engagements?

LD: I was born in Bedford, which is where I played these formative rock 'n' roll gigs with various bands. I was playing one or two gigs a week, so wasn't earning much. I was always determined. I went to a public school on a scholarship. Boy, that was my worst nightmare of all time. Public schools were hell when you're a working-class guy. I remember telling the headmaster that that was what I was gonna do: play the

saxophone.

SI: Group Sounds Four & Five featured you, Henry Lowther, Jack Bruce and a very young Jon Hiseman. The unearthed recordings are so good. Did you sense great things from your collaborators?

LD: By that time, I was living in London and married with a kid after a shotgun wedding. That band was a very formative

thing. I think we were voted into *Downbeat* by Charles Fox, who was a very reputable jazz critic at the time. We mostly played at The Regency Club in Stoke Newington. Jack Bruce came later. We had many other bass players, but it was mainly me and Henry Lowther. And then Jon Hiseman.

I suppose when you're young, you take it for granted. I knew that it was a good group though. We could just about afford to go to Ronnie Scott's to hear what the legends were doing. We were a new wave of jazz musicians. We were doing very original stuff. Jack wrote a few originals. Henry too. Many wonderful people passed through the ranks. Ron Rubin was one of the best players. And Ron Matthews and Dave Holland, who was a schoolboy then. As was Jon Hiseman when he played in that group.

SI: Once you'd become adept at flute, saxophone and more, you found yourself increasingly in demand, working with Manfred Mann, probably the closest you got to pop. You cropped up on all manner of recordings. What are your personal favourites?

LD: I was actually a part of that group for a couple of years, with Henry Lowther.

I was playing with my older brother over Burton's in London, one of the dance gigs, and Manfred Mann and Mike Hugg came in and played with us. He denied that later. We only did it for the money. It was a gig that brought in an income. Not a lot, I can assure you, but certainly enough to live on.

With Manfred Mann we didn't do that many records. I think we did one instrumental album, an EP and a single or two. We did a lot of gigs though. A lot. With 'Pretty Flamingo' we spent eight consecutive weeks at #1, so we were on *Top Of The Pops* eight weeks running. I was a pop star, temporarily.

SI: As part of Georgie Fame's band for his first CBS album *The Two Faces Of Fame*, you played with the likes of Tony Coe and Terry Oxley. What was the young Georgie like as bandleader?

LD: He was very good bandleader. I liked him. He was a good employer. He was up against Rick Gunnell, an East End hood, who was his manager most of the time we were together. Gunnell was trying to make him a solo artist and wasn't interested in his band at all. Whereas Georgie was a very accomplished musician, and he wanted a solid band. However many people he had playing w he always made sure you got a good solo. Georgie was very caring as a bandleader. It was a huge change from Manfred Mann though. With them, when we ate, we did the Egon Ronay restaurants in places like Bath. Then we got to Georgie Fame, and it was curry sauce and chips. Not that I'm knocking it, he was a very nice man. He carried a few difficult musicians with difficult problems themselves, but looked after them very well.

SI: There's a concert of you playing with The Georgie Fame Quartet in Switzerland in





Lyn performs with The Georgie Fame Quartet, Lucerne Jazz Festival, Switzerland, December 1967; Fame's solo CBS debut; Lyn joins The Small Faces on tour, November '68; Keef Hartley and The People Band albums

"My girlfriend and I ended up dropping acid with Steve Marriott, Ronnie Lane and their girlfriends. That was the greatest spiritual experience I'd ever had and I will remember it till I die"

1967. When he wanted to be, Georgie could be a serious jazzier. How did it feel to play with Hiseman again?

LD: That year we toured with that quartet, also featuring John Hiseman and Rick Brown, who used to be with Screaming Lord Sutch. We toured Czechoslovakia and Poland, because Georgie had won the European Award for the best jazz singer. He was a very sophisticated musician. He played pop, but he also was a great jazzier. Truly.

When we did that tour, we were on the same bill as Roland Kirk. He was way above any of us really. But he was second on the bill because of Georgie Fame then having pop interest. One of the reasons why Roland Kirk died young was that after every gig – and remember, he was totally blind – he would go to a jazz club after hours and jam. He'd probably do that *all* night. *Every* night. When I went on a couple of those, John Hiseman was playing alongside him, really well. I wasn't, as I wasn't up to the mark. Hiseman was. Even then.

SI: You performed live with The Small Faces during their final days together in 1968. What was that like?

LD: I was really close friends with Ronnie Lane and Steve Marriott. They were interested in my sitar playing, especially Steve. He had a whole collection of Indian records and was very open-minded. My girlfriend and I ended up dropping acid

with Steve, Ronnie and their girlfriends at a superb location in a house up the Thames, near Henley, that originally belonged to the writer Jerome K. Jerome. It was a wonderful experience. They were so enlightened. That was the greatest spiritual experience I'd ever had and I will remember it till I die.

At that time in 1968, I wasn't that much into pop music, but The Small Faces had a completely original slant on it, and they were very sensitive people. They were younger than me, but they were knowledgeable. They were a few lifetimes ahead.

SI: How did you become part of The Keef Hartley Band? After having played on pop records how did you feel about that very 1969 amalgamation of blues-rock and the emerging jazz-rock?

LD: Again, The Keef Hartley Band was mainly through Henry Lowther, because Henry played with them too, and I was quite close to him at that time. I did do one tour of Germany with Keef by myself without a big brass section. He was a great guy. And we had a great band. Keef was an underestimated player. I do remember in Germany at that time we would arrive at gigs and there would

be a haze of marijuana smoke. Huge spliffs would be handed onto the stage by the hippy audience. And the acid was great.

SI: What was it like satisfying Charlie Watts' needs for something that "sounded different" by playing in The People Band?

LD: Mel Davis and Terry Day, the drummer, were the originators of what you call "free music", long before it even arose in the States. There was this early movement of free music, and that was The People Band. For gigs anybody could come. You could have a hundred people there. It was amazing. It was an exhilarating and interesting experience. Although I loved free music I always used to gravitate towards sanity, I suppose. We'd start with however many people playing, totally avoiding anything harmonic or rhythmic, and we would just plough on with this wall of white sound, and then eventually we would all come into the same key. That was a wonderful resolution. I thought Mel Davis was brilliant.

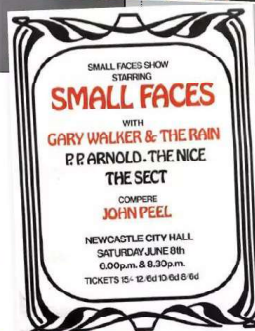
SI: Had you been a fan of Soft Machine before appearing on 3?

LD: To be honest, I'd hardly even heard of them. I think I was invited to join because they wanted a frontline, and they got Nick Evans, Elton Dean and me. I was recommended by one of their roadies or something like that. But anyway, I joined, and it was a complete revelation. They were a brilliant band to play with. I couldn't play any of the originals written by Mike Ratledge and Hugh Hopper at first. They were so complex rhythmically, but I worked at it for a couple of weeks and got the hang

of them. Robert Wyatt was like a rock drummer in a way, but he could play those 7/8, 17/8 pieces easily. There was nothing in their repertoire that was in 4/4 or even 3/4. But once you got the hang of it, they were brilliant songs.

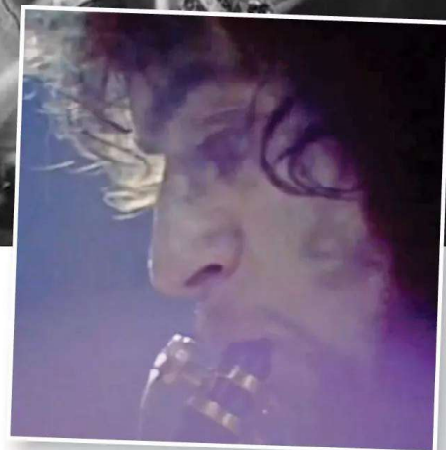
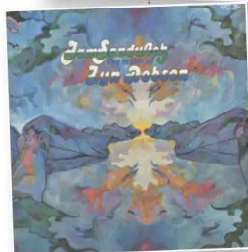
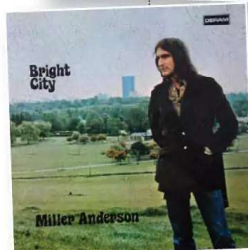
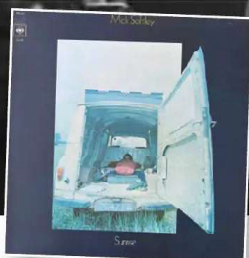
SI: You played on albums by several lesser-known singer-songwriters in the '70s like Brian Short, Mick Greenwood and Mick Softley. What can you remember?

LD: Not a lot. I can remember a bit about Softley, because we spent a whole week recording. I met Richard Branson at the same time because we recorded at The Manor in Oxfordshire. We had a fantastic





Lyn, Elton Dean and Hugh Hopper: the Soft Machine's frontline in 1970; Lyn appears on albums by Mick Softley, Miller Anderson, Nick Drake and his solo debut



rhythm section, which were mostly Pentangle people. I played really well on that too. Everything from this and John & Beverly Martyn and Nick Drake was down to Tony Cox. He was the producer, and he got me all kinds of recordings. He didn't mess around or interfere in any way. He just put people together.

SI: You appeared on the 1971 *Daylight* album, on which you make some great contributions, not least on album opener 'Lady Of St Claire'. What, if anything, do you remember from the album sessions? What was it like to be doing regular sessions at this time, contributing quite creatively to pieces of music you had never heard before (or since)?

LD: In general, the saxophone is a very, very jazzy instrument whereas the flute is an international one. I've always been into world music. You see a flute in every country in the world. That's one of the reasons I think it's so popular. It's endeared by so many different cultures – they

have their different versions.

In the ancient times you'd take a bit of bamboo and stick a hole in it, and you've got a flute.

Again... the *Daylight* album came through Tony Cox. He was a very empathetic person, so whatever he suggested to me, I knew was going to be interesting.

SI: You played on Miller Anderson's *Bright City*. Any memories of those sessions?

LD: He was lovely. I really admired him. He was the guy I toured with in Keef Hartley's band. I met him through Keef and he was a bloody brilliant singer. I was honoured to record with him.

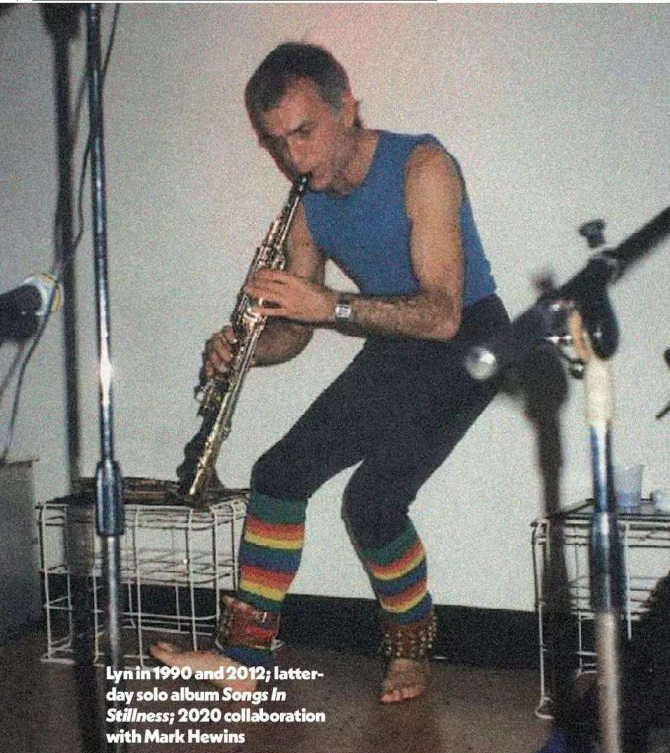
I do remember from my own, egoistic point of view, that a reviewer wrote something about the "exquisite embellishments". He described my playing, which I thought was wonderful. That's the nicest compliment, because I didn't do that much. But I liked what I did. And they did too.

SI: Obligatory Nick Drake question: did you meet him and what are your memories of the *Bryter Layter* sessions?

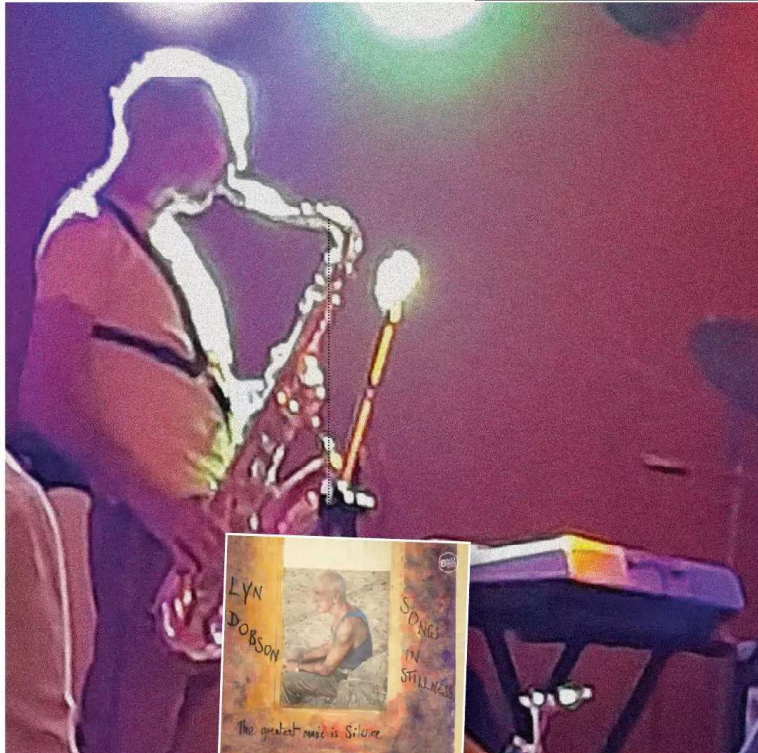
LD: I did meet him, but only pretty briefly, because he was a very reclusive person. He seemed humble and polite. I think the arranger Robert Kirby was good in some places, but some things that I was arranged to do I would've much preferred to just play myself. Ray Warleigh featured as well, who was also a flute and alto sax player. He played superbly. Like him, the good bits I did on there, I made up myself. I'm just being picky really though as I do love Nick Drake's songs. They're timeless. And, like Soft Machine, I don't think England was ready for Nick Drake during the time he existed.

SI: If pushed, who would you say is the most inspiring artist you've worked with, and why?

LD: The one that's totally relevant was when I played with a group before Group Sounds Five, consisting of me and Henry and Harry Miller, and this drummer, Donald Brown, who used to play with Chet Baker. Donald Brown was about 20 years older than all of us. But he was a really brilliant drummer. He gave me the best lesson I ever had. When we



Lyn in 1990 and 2012; latter-day solo album *Songs In Stillness*; 2020 collaboration with Mark Hewins



“Soft Machine was a complete revelation. I couldn’t play any of the originals written by Mike Ratledge and Hugh Hopper at first. There was nothing in their repertoire that was in 4/4 or even 3/4”

were playing a gig I was going on for a long time, too long, and he’s just playing away without stopping and he shouted, “Shut up, man. Shut up. You ain’t saying nothing!”

SI: Your 1974 debut album *Jam Sandwich* is great, and totally mad. It sits on the fringes of what Pete Brown and numerous others were doing, breaking down rock, jazz and folk.

LD: I think there was an atmosphere of openness, which came to an end with Margaret Thatcher. Before that we were enlightened. We were on the way to the new Aquarian Age, which was still on path. My album came from that.

SI: In the ’80s you became involved in music therapy for disabled people, hosting “Sound & Colour” therapy workshops. Has music therapy changed the way you look at what you do?

LD: Well, it’s always been my direction. I gave up my career when I was 31 in 1971 after I finished with Soft Machine. I had to abandon it because I was a single parent of a severely autistic son. When my son was born, nobody knew anything about autism. In fact, he was taken into The Whittington Hospital for six weeks for observation. At the end of that time, they said there was nothing wrong with him. I read this book by Lorna Wing, and when she described the symptoms of severely autistic people it was so obvious that’s what he was. I’ve worked with a lot of autistic people across the whole spectrum. My son was severe. He didn’t speak for his whole life. He sang, he did a lot of things, but he wasn’t motivated to actually speak

language. Living with him and working with people like him was why I made an album in Crete, *Songs In Stillness*, 10 or so years ago. My favourite music is silence. My son and I would go for long, long walks, never speaking a word. But we didn’t need to. A lot of people would benefit from that too. He passed away a couple of years ago at the age of 49. But he was really quite something.

I’m still working on the “Sound & Colour” workshops. I did a bit in Wales for various homes for disabled people of various kinds. Also in Crete, where I lived for a long time. They appreciate it. There’s a whole series of books called *The Law Of One* surrounding this. I want to get a constructive pyramid that these patients can sit in and then project colour on the outside. I work with the colours of the chakras, which are a very powerful thing and hardly explored by anybody really. There’s a load of stuff that can be done with that.

SI: How did you end up playing with The Third Ear Band in the mid-90s?

LD: I knew all of them in the early ’70s – Mel Davis extremely well. Glen Sweeney, who was the leader, and I used to drop acid in Trent Park in the late ’60s when Mel was studying to be a teacher. If you go deep into the woods where you can just about see the house, it feels like you’re in the 17th century, as the main house dates from then. There was never anyone there, so it was magical.

The Third Ear Band went through various line-ups, and I’m very happy with the recordings I did with them. *Behind The Pyramids* I’m really pleased with. I like free

music if you like to look at it like that. But I also like conventional music as well. Glen would just lay down this very simple rhythm, which you could do anything with.

SI: Since then you’ve continued to sporadically record on the fringes of what may be referred to as “The Canterbury Scene” with Mark Hewins, not to mention your own releases. What keeps you at it?

LD: I recorded three albums in Norway with a brilliant sound engineer and guitarist called Benjamin Meling. His father was a famous painter. He passed away a couple of years ago, but I met them in Spain. We went to Norway and recorded there and did some recordings of flute in the open air playing to the birds. There are three albums. One is rock, featuring songs I’ve written, *Turn This World Around*. One is *Standards*, which I do completely a *capella* in most cases, singing with no accompaniment. And then the last one is a meditation album that’s got a lot of sitar on it, *Meditation Music*.

I’ve known Mark Hewins for years on and off. We just made contact in the last two or three years, and I went to stay with him. He’s got a place in southern Spain and a place in Margate, which make it an ideal situation for recording. I’ve known him for years, but I didn’t actually do much playing with him until relatively recently. He played with Lou Reed at some point in his career. He’s a brilliant musician; a master of minimalism. The recordings we recently made are on his Bandcamp page.

Right now, I’m thinking of getting a group together to promote these albums. [\[9\]](#)

Contributors: Michael Bjorn, Jon ‘Mojo’ Mills, Andy Morten, Huw Thomas

For more information head to lyndobson.bandcamp.com