



## **BONNIE AND CLYDE**

*Bonnie and Clyde - Bonnie and Clyde  
keep on running but there's no place to hide this side of heaven  
it was always a desperate affair - going nowhere  
they didn't care if they died - Bonnie and Clyde  
the sheriff's posse laid an ambush down a little country lane  
gave no warning to surrender  
making sure they'd never walk again  
till they were slain - blood fell like rain  
over and over and over and over again  
Bonnie and Clyde*

Jim/Jane/Daisy was first to crack - halfway through a mainly-froth motorway services cappuccino, brushing off remnants of a sticky mainly-sugar Danish pastry, he said, 'Being an avant-garde artist isn't all shagging Tracy Emin or pickling sheep you know - though I have shagged a few sheep when well pickled,' he joked. 'Trouble is, if you're not one of Saatchi's darlings you've really gotta graft to get noticed.'

'My heart bleeds,' I said.

'Look mate,' he'd begun lightly, any hint of Friday night's pantomime dame gone, but started to get defensive. 'I can damned well draw you know; paint, sculpt, whatever. But no one wants that shit anymore - only my granny. So what am I supposed to do? Go into teaching?'

I could see his point. 'But Jane? What's her excuse?'

'Jane's got balls - that's what. She helps me get things done. Puts me out there, shouting my mouth off - which is what you have to do.'

'And the cheapo van thing?'

'I got a grant for my show - mainly due to its green cred - but that's all gone. My girlfriend's sodded off with a bleeding Stuckist of all childish things, and I'm dossing in my mate's studio - a shed at the end of his garden. I'm hanging on by my fingernails here. Satisfied?' He got up and stomped off towards the gents.

'Wow man!' said Arthur. 'I thought I was good at upsetting people.'

'Come on - he asked for that. What am I - a bloody student counsellor? I'm doing him a favour here - the least he can do is be straight with me.'

'I suppose. Young people are so touchy these days. Must be all this reality TV - turns 'em into emotional tarts.'

'Now that really is taking the piss,' I laughed. 'But while we're in confessional mode - and leaving aside that party trick with the Sage choir - what have you really been up to lately? The wads of money? The limo and chauffeur? The fancy hotel? The fact you're here at all - not tucked up snugly in a pauper's grave - and now heading for Swanage of all prehistoric places? Come on Arthur - fill me in.'

I didn't honestly expect much sense out of him; answers maybe, but not honest ones and hardly sensible. But what he did, as usual, was surprise me - which was maybe the main reason I'd tolerated so much crap from him over the years, since I'm easily bored and he's always good entertainment value. 'All that stuff in the truck,' he said. 'May look like junk - but it means something to me.'

'And maybe the cops?' I asked.

Arthur looked slowly about and then said, confidingly, 'Sure. There's valuable evidence there. But not just of interest to them. Anyway, like me, it needs a home. It's been

cluttering up Auntie Kate's for years and now I either dump it, the remnants of my life or...'

He winked at me, pulled out a small jewellery box and opened the lid.

I examined the antique ring displayed inside and, though no jewellery expert, could see it wasn't only stunning but probably worth a bob or two. 'Or what?'

'Propose, of course.'

'To Susan? That's crazy!' I said.

'Maybe, but it's now or never. A final resting place for all my rubbish - I mean memories - and to win back the only chick I ever really loved of course.' It sounded just impossible enough to make sense, given Arthur's haphazard life. But love?

'And you think this little sparkler - and all your money - is going to sway her?'

'There is no money. No car. No chauffeur. No hotel. Nothing - just me,' he said, pulling out a roll of notes and releasing the elastic band to reveal a stack of blank sheets - with just one genuine fifty wrapping them. 'I had it all once,' he said. 'My old man left me a packet but, guess what? This ring, a family heirloom, is all that's left.'

'Come on.'

'It's true.'

'But why the busker's lament? The subterfuge? The sodding games?' I said.

'Okay, I'll come clean - it was a set up. Lester is Kate's lodger, a hire car driver; he owed some rent and helped me out as a favour to her. I just didn't think you'd cooperate without some incentive. I always knew you had a good heart,' he smiled. 'But might need some persuading.'

I shook my head in disbelief. 'Hell, man - what do you take me for?'

'Yeah, well. It was just a little insurance.'

'And is that it? I asked. 'Or are there any more hidden gems you're keeping schtum about?'

'There's more,' he said. 'Important stuff - about you too. But later, eh?'

'Me? How's that?' I was really confused. Arthur had been significant in my life, I accepted that, but like a weird recurring dream or annoying ailment that flares up occasionally and then disappears just as mysteriously. Perhaps that's being a little disingenuous; he'd been a great inspiration at times and maybe lifted me out of the mire once or twice - but he'd also dumped me in it too. I recalled my brief film career.



When Phil suggested we rent a house, along with offering me an interesting well-paid job, I was naturally pleased - though also a little suspicious. Phil was a decent guy, but had his own motives, as we all do. The job, operating sound equipment at APF studios <sup>(1)</sup>, was similar to the one he had himself and, when a vacancy arose, wanted someone he knew and could trust alongside. Also, he couldn't afford to rent a decent place on his own. The reason I knew all this was because, as a sideline, he organised a folk club in Windsor I'd been to a few times - another thing he was hoping I might lend him a hand with I guessed. So, although I was mighty grateful to Phil, it was clear I was also doing him a favour.

Slough may not be known for its blockbuster movie making, but the production company headed by Gerry Anderson located on an anonymous industrial estate was ground

breaking in many ways. Although its founder really wanted to produce feature films, that opportunity either never came or was a flop when it did, but what actually emerged as really successful was 'supermarionation' - a technical innovation which enabled puppets to speak, or give that impression. When I worked there the main production was 'Thunderbirds', but several other excellent series were commissioned before and after then - mostly futuristic SF which, though frequently parodied later, were clever and technically advanced for their time.

My job at APF was twofold; to operate the pre-recorded sound track as action progressed, together with the lip-sync controls for each puppet and, secondly, follow the script as a continuity assistant and be a general helpmate to the director. The sound machine was, in effect, an enormous reel-to-reel tape recorder, linked electronically to solenoids in the puppet's heads making their mouths move up and down. The main problem was that the solenoids (electromagnets) frequently failed to differentiate or register the taped words and one had to override the machine manually - something we rehearsed and noted down beforehand to avoid holding up filming. As with the job at Kenton and Wood, I felt most at home with the guys in the art department though here, where they made some amazing models - often blowing them up as well as other dramatic special effects - seemed almost like magicians. There was always great pressure to keep production on schedule, as filming either human actors or puppets is an expensive and exacting process, which generated much camaraderie as well as occasionally frayed tempers.

At the same time as this Phil found us a large comfortable cottage by the Thames near Maidenhead, shared with another guy named Roger, a cab driver whose sister Rachel I'd recently started dating. Rachel, just sweet little sixteen, was extremely good looking (but not so little) and a regular at the folk club, which was where we'd met up. It was there - and maybe this is what gave me the edge with her - I first began playing regularly in public, though at first I was petrified and practically needed pushing on stage (I would hide in the loo as my spot approached).

It wasn't just performing itself that scared me but trying out new material, even though many song writing folkies were rising to fame from the streets then, doing your own thing almost implied a kind of arrogance. What was wrong with other people's songs? Why neglect hundreds of years of tradition and history wrapped up in the old tunes? On top of that audiences, inevitably not familiar with your stuff, could be hard work. Unless you could grab people with a catchy chorus, funny line or, preferably both, anything at all complex was likely to be lost. Instrumental virtuosity, sometimes just blinding the buggers with fiddly-diddly science, could nevertheless make up for many faults; poor songs, weak voice or stage presence, etc, but my fancy guitar skills were limited.

Though I'd managed to develop a repertoire of a dozen or so passable numbers I still lacked any confidence in them. They were mostly angst filled, confessional rambles, though saved (I like to think) by some underlying humour - but would the punters get it? Phil, bless him, one of life's unerring optimists, gave me great encouragement enabling my fragile musical ego to develop. The support of Rachel and her appreciative school mates didn't do my self esteem any harm either. Also, in those days, if the worst came to the worst, I could always hide behind rampant swaths of hair, a defiant gypsy scowl and some carefree expletives. Each generation thinks they invented public outrage.

Everything seemed hunky-dory for a few months, almost too good to be true in fact. Then Arthur turned up. He'd come, he said, on account of the big film company bash due that weekend at a swanky riverside hotel. Not that he'd been invited, but who'd notice another guest amongst the hundreds celebrating in and around the big marquee? The first thing that went wrong and, in retrospect, I should've heeded the omens - was when a crowd of us all piled into Phil's immaculate new Mini late Friday night on a pub crawl. Maybe I'm just looking for a scapegoat, but I'm sure it was Arthur who insisted we could get seven big hairy

boozers in, no bother. Whatever - trundling down a bumpy hill in the arse end of nowhere, the car suddenly slumped with a crash onto the deck and, as we all yelled in surprise, a wheel trundling past, overtaking down the country lane. As the cold night air started sobering us up while we hunted in the dark for the spare tyre and some tools to fix it, the joke soon began to wear thin. In those days before cell phones, being miles from civilisation meant just that, and either we got the problem sorted or abandon ship.

The following day, having had to leave the car for a tow truck whilst we walked for hours to find transport home, Arthur kept nagging me to let him see the studios. I passed his request onto Phil who, understandably, was still pissed off about the previous night's escapade but, mug that he was, pulled a few strings and we went over to Slough in Roger's cab. It didn't seem unusual that Arthur was wearing his greatcoat despite being summertime because it was like a second skin and seldom came off. But this was a particularly warm day and should've rung bells - that it didn't, even when we came back out into sweltering sunshine, I kicked myself about for weeks after.

Later, at the big event, I discovered to my horror what he'd been up to. With all assembled in the grand marquee, Gerry Anderson got up on stage where a band had been churning out bubbly pop covers all evening. The boss, a tall commanding figure in smart blue blazer, announced that APF was, from now on, to be called 'Century 21 Productions'. This change, he said, would herald an expansion of business into even more innovative and enterprising areas including a big budget Thunderbirds feature film. Following a few more upbeat comments, he wished us all well and to have a great time because we'd thoroughly earned it. Everyone cheered and, to a standing ovation, he sat down beside his wife Sylvia. A moment later the band came back with a rousing version of 'Hard Day's Night'<sup>(2)</sup>, the Beatle's classic which was currently riding high.

*it's been a hard day's night and I been working like a dog  
it's been a hard day's night I should be sleeping like a log  
but when I get home to you I'll find the things that you do  
will make me feel alright*

During the second chorus Arthur, who'd been lurking behind the canvas, leapt on stage grasping a three foot high Lady Penelope in one hand and Scott Tracy in the other and, roughly keeping time with the beat, waggled the two puppets in a slow jig-a-jig. We might have got away with it had he left things at that, but the mime got increasingly erotic as the movements quickened into an athletic striptease. It should be noted, for those unacquainted with Thunderbirds, that Lady Penelope was not only modelled on a glamorous version of Gerry Anderson's then wife Sylvia, but was also voiced by her. To say the couple were apoplectic, having at first pretended amusement, would not be overstating it. Mind you, it wasn't the marionette sex scene itself that was the main cause for complaint, rather that the precious (and very expensive) figures had been stolen and then, to cap it all, been made to dance so badly. Arthur may have been a great musician but he was a crap mover.

There was no point in even getting up for work on Monday. Phil, having been around longer and less culpable than me, managed to survive but I knew my future in the film industry had been cruelly cut short way before its prime. Though I ranted at Arthur and he went off suitably chastened, nothing was going to cheer me up for some time, even though I accepted my old friend's excuse for most of his outlandish antics - booze. The trouble was, he had planned the stunt when stone sober and, though he thought at the time it was just a harmless way to amuse the troops, should've factored in the consequences of his irresponsibility. But that, I knew, was a contradiction in terms. Arthur couldn't help being irresponsible - it was just how he was.

But he did try and make good. Realising my unemployed state was mostly his fault he returned a few days later with a plan. 'How about,' he suggested brightly, 'we set up our own business?'

'Doing what?' I said dismissively. 'Making disaster movies?'

'No man – look.' I followed him outside to where a sleek yellow sports car stood in the drive and watched in amazement as he lifted the boot. Crammed inside were a load of muddy builder's tools - shovels, forks, rakes and saws, etc. On the passenger seat, incongruously, there was even a muddy wheel barrow crammed in.

'What the hell's going on?' I said. 'You want us to make a DIY programme?'

'Maybe later. No, it's a business venture, man. You know - garden maintenance and all that. Can't fail, prosperous area like this. You said you'd done it once - well, you can be CEO and I'll be... what? Just EO?'

Though I was still mad with the fool, I didn't know whether to get madder or collapse with laughter. Then I stopped and started worrying. 'Where'd you get all this stuff? The car in particular?'

'Does it matter?' he asked.

'And why an MG convertible? For running a gardening business for Christ's sake?'

'Well, I knew Phil's Mini was still laid up - this can be a little run-around to tide him over. You know - kill two birds and all that.'

My worst suspicions were confirmed when it turned out Arthur had not only nicked the tools off a building site but also the car from a nearby street. Things couldn't have been much worse; but why, oh why, I implored, had he lifted about the most conspicuous vehicle possible? What's more, not only had he no license or insurance, I doubted if he'd ever had a driving lesson. Nor, I thought, had he done a single day's manual labour in his life and wouldn't know one end of a rake from the other - not the wooden kind anyway.

After I'd given him a bollocking and stomped back to the house he called out, 'But we're in the papers now!'

'You what?'

'I got us an ad - offering our services. There's a whole list; grass cutting, weeding, planting, tree felling. All that shit. Gave this address and phone number - everything.'

Horrified, I froze for a moment then bundled him back into the car, threw out the barrow and other gear, and jumped in beside him. 'Git!' I yelled. 'Anywhere!'

Though his driving was erratic it was probably better than mine as, at the time, I'd never been behind the wheel of more than a bumper car. At first I just wanted us away from there, maybe to a station so we could easily get back home again. But he was adamant he wanted, at the very least, to get a decent day trip in return for all his troubles. No amount of argument would dissuade him so I just gave up and sat back until the gas ran out. We ended in Cardiff where, having no money, Arthur hot-wired another vehicle and headed home. After a while I noticed a police car following behind but, as they made no attempt to overtake, assumed it was just coincidence. Then, about five miles out of town, we hit a road block and were soon surrounded by half the South Wales constabulary, hauled out like bank robbers, hand-cuffed and bundled into separate paddy wagons. Maybe they'd mistaken us for the real deal or it was quiet day but they could hardly have been more heavy handed.

Following the longest night of my life, in a dank cell decorated with defiantly obscene graffiti and some disgusting stains, we were taken to court the next morning and both fined £20 for taking and driving away - TDA or joyriding - even though I'd done neither and was only attempting to stop Arthur, my presence in a vehicle known to be stolen was enough. But the most humiliating aspect of this sorry saga was the following Saturday when Phil came in with the local newspaper. At the top of an inside page was the heading, STEVENS AND GRIMSBY GUILTY - and on the facing page, STEVENS AND GRIMSBY GARDEN

SERVICES. All the facts were laid out in lengthy small-town detail, alongside a thankfully unrecognisable photo, but for some reason I didn't find it as funny as all our mates did.

It wasn't just the court fine which lay heavy on my heart. Rachel soon found a wealthier and more handsome (though marginally less musical) figure of a man to keep her warm at night. Even the house took on a cold empty feeling despite the heat wave as funds diminished. Late one evening, the others having disappeared to the local for more laughs at my expense no doubt, I sat on the little single bed and caressed the other woman in my life - the wooden one with a gaping hole where her heart should be. I wailed out my troubles and, as usual, she echoed every note - though wisely steered me clear of any tricky jazz chords which would only have upset me even more. About midnight the traitorous villain stumbled in begging forgiveness on his knees. Actually, that last bit's not true, but it should have been. He just stumbled in and I kicked him straight back out - then I heard him throw up and collapse moaning. Twenty minutes later, black coffee in hand, he returned diffidently.

I stopped playing as soon as he entered - nothing personal, I just never can rehearse with spectators - but he sat there expectantly. 'What do you want?' I asked coldly.

'Just came to see how you were,' he smiled.

'Great,' I lied. 'Soon, if that's okay with you - I'm crashing out. Tomorrow I'll be going down the library - researching ways to kill myself - as cheaply as possible.'

'Hah! Well you haven't lost your sense of humour then?'

'Not yet - that's tomorrow.'

'Ah-ha!' he said, leafing through my notebook, 'I've seen this before. How's it go?'

'Come on Arthur, not now.'

Despite my pleading he kept on requesting I play him this one song. There were others I wouldn't have minded doing; self-pitying, melancholic tunes more suitable to my mood and time of day. But he went on. The trouble was, I explained, you couldn't really do this one quietly or by half measures. For some unexplained reason 'Geronimo', a cry of ancestral yearning, racial injustice, primitive frustration and much more (as I saw it), roused deep emotions in me every time I sang the song despite my lack of native blood. You couldn't just do it in a detached way, and now was not the time to rouse those feelings. However, to shut him up I did eventually sing a muted version - just one verse and chorus - hoping he'd bugger off.

Arthur went wild. 'Hey man! Gotta get you into a studio to record this,' he cried. 'It's great. Needs the treatment - wall of sound kind-a-thing. But I know some cats with all the gear - so that's no problem.'

'No, no, no,' I said. 'It should be just voice and guitar. Dead raw. Like the Buffy Sainte-Marie song about the buffalo.'<sup>(3)</sup>

'You're wrong man. I know what I'm talking about - if you want it to be a hit anyway. You know: "I'll give it foive".'<sup>(4)</sup>

I laughed for the first time in several days at his Brummy Juke Box Jury panellist's impression. 'Get out! Go on - or I'll give you more than five!'

I was no folk puritan and wouldn't have been one of those luddites who booed Dylan when he let rip at the Newport Festival in 1965 with 'Maggie's Farm', but I did believe that some songs were best served up cold and unvarnished. It was probably the main thing that attracted me to the acoustic/roots scene - its simple honesty. As with stand-up comedy, it was all down to the performer and their material, and no amount of gimmicky backup could improve or disguise that. If a song was any good it should have legs to run on its own and need nothing but a basic accompaniment - sometimes none. It was almost a religious thing - like, 'have faith in song' rather than, 'have faith in God'.

For some unknown reason my mind went back to those nuts on Brighton beach - the preachers. Maybe I'd missed something. Wasn't that their message? Something Jesus said which could also have been the beatnik creed, about birds and flowers not making plans or worrying over tomorrow? But they got looked after anyway? <sup>(5)</sup> I didn't believe in God, but surely this credo could apply to anyone - even folk singers. Hadn't Woody Guthrie sung, 'Gotta walk that lonesome valley, walk it by yourself'? <sup>(6)</sup> He certainly took to the road with nothing, just an old guitar and a little faith. Why not me? Maybe that's what was wrong before - I'd been playing it too safe - not really having faith in the road. Not trusting my muse?

*you gotta walk that lonesome valley  
you gotta walk it by yourself  
nobody here can walk it for you  
you gotta walk it by yourself*

What's more, I suddenly brightened; maybe Arthur had done me a favour after all? Getting the boot from an exciting, promising and well paid job might not, after all, be the disaster I'd imagined. As with leaving home, maybe it was the shove I needed to stop me getting complacent or too comfortable - to make me stand on my own feet and follow my singer-songwriting heroes

### **FOOTNOTES - Chapter 13**

(1) APF, or AP Films, later named Century 21 Productions, was a British independent film company of the late 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s. The company became world-famous for action-adventure puppet shows, most notably 'Thunderbirds'. Established in 1957 by editor-director Gerry Anderson and cinematographer Arthur Provis following the demise of the company they worked for, Polytechnic Films, the new company was named after them, Anderson Provis Films. Others from Polytechnic included producer Reg Hill, cinematographer John Read, and secretary Sylvia Thamm (who later became Anderson's wife). The company was created with the intention of becoming a conventional film production house. When other work did not materialise they were approached by Associated-Rediffusion to produce a children's puppet series, 'The Adventures of Twizzle'. Despite some initial reluctance the new company embarked on this project and followed up with 'Torchy The Battery Boy' and 'Four Feather Falls'. APF always embraced new technology and it was when they adopted 'supermarionation', a technique enabling puppet's mouths to synchronise movement with a recorded sound track, they had their greatest successes with action-adventure series such as 'Supercar' (1960-61), 'Fireball XL5' (1962), 'Stingray' (1964), 'Thunderbirds' (1965-66). Following the first television screening of Thunderbirds in 1965 AP Films was renamed Century 21 Productions and went on to produce further puppet shows and feature films.

Ref: Gerry Anderson: The Authorised Biography, by Simon Archer and Stan Nicholls.

(2) 'Hard Day's Night' was written by John Lennon on the back of an old greeting card in direct response to the need for a title track for the Beatles' first film. Ringo had inspired the title after one particularly busy day; not realising the sun had gone down, he claimed it had been a 'a hard day's night'. The malapropism became the name of the film, then called Beatlemania!, although whether the idea to use the phrase came from the group, the movie's

director, Dick Lester, or the film's producer, Walter Shenson, is a matter of debate.  
<http://oldies.about.com>

The film, written by Alun Owen, was made in the style of a mock documentary and described a couple of days in the lives of the group. It was successful both financially and critically; rated by Time magazine as one of the all-time great 100 films. British critic Leslie Halliwell described it as a 'comic fantasia with music, an enormous commercial success with the director trying every cinematic gag in the book' and awarded it a full four stars. The film is credited with having influenced 1960s spy films, The Monkees' television show and pop videos.

(3) 'Now That The Buffalos Gone' by Buffy Sainte Marie – released on the 1964 album 'It's My Way'. The song, as I read it, is a cry for justice, not only from governments but also others who stole land from the indigenous population. As Buffy says recently on her website, 'This song was on my first album and I'd have thought it would be obsolete by now. But governments are still breaking promises and stealing indigenous lands, and I still believe that informed people can help make things better.' The final verse sums it up:

*oh it's all in the past you can say  
but it's still going on here today  
the government now want the Iroquois land  
that of the Senaca and the Cheyenne  
it's here and it's now you can help us dear man  
now that the buffalo's gone.*

(4) 'Hosted by David Jacobs, Juke Box Jury was a panel show with a difference - the guests would listen to a new record and decide if it was likely to be a hit or miss. It had actually begun in 1959, but only gained popularity as the 1960s progressed, given a desirable early Saturday evening slot by the BBC. The panel was usually made up of celebrities, many of whom had little to do with pop music, but it did spawn the catchphrase "I'll give it foive" from one Birmingham guest. Having a record on the show, even if it was voted a miss, was a huge boost to sales, and both the Beatles and the Rolling Stones appeared to give their opinions on new singles. It lasted until 1967, by which time the format seemed stale and tired. There were two attempts to revive it, but neither caught the public's interest.  
[www.ministryofrock.co.uk/TVRockInSixties](http://www.ministryofrock.co.uk/TVRockInSixties)

(5) 'Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not so much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For all these things do the gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.'  
Matthew 6, verses 25-33 (King James Bible)

(6) Lonesome Valley is Woody Guthrie's version of a traditional gospel song, of which the first known recording is by David Miller, 1927. Many hillbilly and country artists have sung it over the years including; the Monroe Brothers, the Carter Family, the Carolina Ramblers Stringband, the Dixie Reelers and even Elvis Presley (1956) during the Sun Session in Memphis, Tennessee.