



GERONIMO

*red man loved the country
loved the forest and he loved the plain
running deer and raining water
buffaloes on the open range
and then the white man came
white man come with sweet talking lies
white man lives – red man dies
white man come make red man sad
white man's firewater so very bad
hey there Geronimo where are you?
I got the measles – the chicken pox and the flu
guns are exploding I don't know what to do
hey Geronimo*

I guess it was the TV interview that did it for me. The touring had been hectic and sometimes hair-raising, but mostly a laugh. However, by the end of two weeks we'd all had enough of the cramped van, erratic meals, primitive accommodation and frequently hair-raising gigs. Cracks, if not chasms, were opening up in the band's short-term relationships and we all just wanted out. Maybe, if there was a pile of cash in the offing, we'd re-group back in Blighty but, for now at least, no one would've shed a tear if Geronimo bit the dust forever. The only good thing about the daft costumes and grease paint was that we could've been anyone up on stage and so felt a kind of liberation. Also, replacements wouldn't ever be a problem - maybe that'd even been the idea.

But television was different, even in those black and white days; it was close up, much closer, more intimate and in-your-face. And, what was worse, it was my face - my imperfect, blemished face to be splashed across the screen. The face I wasn't bothered anyone seeing on a normal, everyday, basis - though somewhat alarmed having blown up for millions to gape and point fingers at behind my back. I didn't think I was especially vain or self-conscious and, having learnt to take stares or comments from strangers (mainly kids) in my stride, was almost proud to be different - unique even, in a small way. It was only the pigment of a tiny part of me that was different, there was nothing inherently wrong with the skin, and had it not been on my face wouldn't have attracted any attention. Also, from my point of view, I sometimes felt it gave me something of an insight into what it must be like for those with racial or other differences such as culture, class or creed. For me, not part of a larger group with which to identify and be part of and in a world obsessed with first impressions, I often felt discriminated against. As a singer one must inevitably confront the public at some point and nerves are an occupational hazard, so having a birthmark was an additional and maybe insurmountable hurdle.

After we'd done our Wild West number, the TV people were keen to have a few words with me - the lead singer and songwriter of The Buckskins, Europe's next pop sensation, so they'd been told. Even though I knew it would be a relatively quick and superficial bit of banter, I became more and more apprehensive.

- Would the makeup hide my mark?
- If not, would the interviewer ignore it or make it an issue?
- So far no one had said a thing - were they being polite or just too embarrassed to mention it?

- But what might happen on camera if, for example, the make-up got smudged or melted under the spotlights?
- There was also the matter of honesty. If I presented myself as if the thing didn't exist in front of millions of people, how could I backtrack later?
- Okay, maybe not millions - but what about the future?

It's strange, I've often found, how some seemingly intractable problems are solved at the last minute, but only after you've banged your head against a brick wall first. I was sitting in a café the night before our TV debut thrashing out my problem with Nicky, the only member of our mob I felt close enough to share secrets with, when in walked a willowy teenage girl in tight jeans, sloppy purple sweater and big shades. After buying a coffee she came and sat at a nearby table, then took out a paperback and began reading. Though she was turned away from us, obscuring her face, it seemed to me she kept giggling to herself, so I tried to look over her shoulder and discover what was so amusing. I managed to catch John Lennon's ⁽¹⁾ name so asked her to fill us in. It was a book of short stories and drawings, recently published and, from what I could see, mostly daft stuff akin to Edward Lear. I asked the girl - Sylvie was her name - for a quick peek and showed Nicky one piece called, 'Good Dog Nigel'.

*Arf, Arf, he goes, a merry sight
Our little hairy friend
Arf, Arf, upon the lamp post bright
Arfing round the bend.
Nice dog! Goo boy,
Waggie tail and beg,
Clever Nigel, jump for joy
Because we are putting you to sleep at three of the clock, Nigel.*

There was more than a touch of Stanley Unwin ⁽²⁾ about Lennon's wordplay which I was surprised a foreigner would get, but she seemed to have no problem, her English being very nearly better than mine. Neither was she fazed to hear we were soon to be 'famous' pop stars but did laugh when we described our get-up. She was very sympathetic to hear of my concerns about the broadcast, though I didn't tell her the real reasons, and she admitted she'd rather die than appear on TV herself. I ladled on the flattery, saying something daft like the cameras would love her whatever she did - costume or not, preferably not. Though I hadn't been trying to pick her up (oh no), it soon became obvious something was going on and before long Nicky took the hint and left us to it. The evening sped by and all too soon I was accompanying her to the door of a lofty gothic building she said she was sharing with some other students. Though Sylvie hushed me as we tip-toed upstairs to her tiny garret, and kept insisting on whispers, that didn't stop us continuing to enjoy each other's company throughout the night.

By morning I was not only in love but ready to break all ties and commitments to prove it. Maybe I was just using her as an excuse but, so what? I still felt somewhat railroaded into this escapade and had little loyalty either towards the band or, in particular, our wayward Svengali himself. As per usual, he had led me off track with hip-talking promises followed by lonely comedowns - but never an apology or word of regret. Sylvie's unexpected arrival into my life, on the other hand, was like divine intervention, even though there wasn't anything very spiritual about our relationship - but it was kind of unworldly. However, unlike Arthur, she made no demands on me, except that I keep her company

throughout the night - holding each other tight, laughing a lot and just feeling good to be young and alive.

Not long before dawn, and hardly having slept, I hurried over to Veronika's for my gear, managing not to wake a snoring soul as I crept around the comatose bundles on the floor. Finding my way back to Sylvie's place through the chilly unfamiliar streets, continually clutching her big latch key to confirm I wasn't dreaming, I half expected the place to have vanished or be shut tight like Ali Baba's cave in my absence. Once returned, we cuddled up together again and indeed seldom moved from her room for the next two weeks. When eventually I was discovered by her all-female house mates, they mostly came to accept me with shy giggles and grins, especially when I made myself useful fixing a faulty hair dryer and doing other odd jobs. In fact, like a stray cat, I became something of a pet around the house - especially as a man's presence was strictly forbidden in this haven of feminine 'innocence' and the thrill of secrecy became addictive. Madame Roux, the housekeeper-cum-guardian, never found me but her fearsome reputation - emanating from her basement lair and seeming to lurk around every corner - only heightened the thrill of our dangerous liaison.

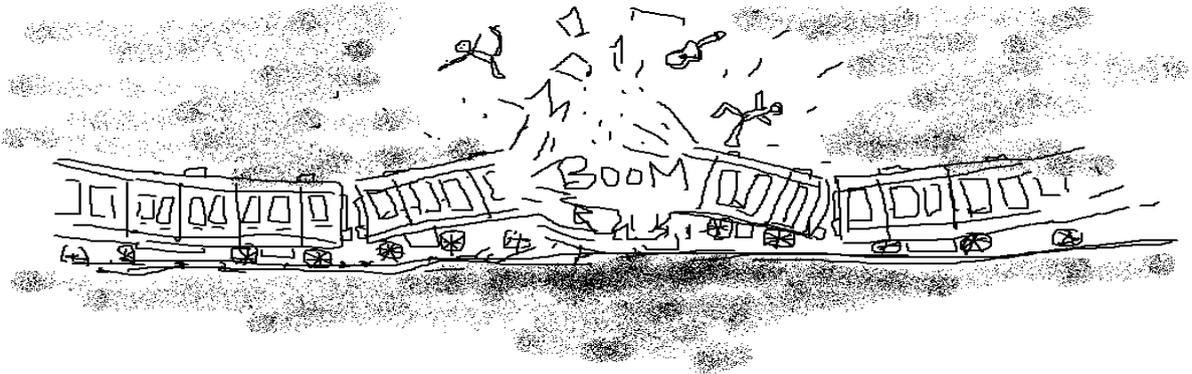
Ensnared in this new world, I convinced myself the TV appearance didn't matter - the costume disguise meant anyone else could take my place and mime to our recording. In fact, as I discovered from Nicky a couple of months later, this is exactly what happened and, strangely enough, no one seemed that bothered. Even Arthur, apparently, just shrugged his shoulders and was even seen to smile to himself on hearing the news of my escape. Nicky also informed me they'd all been bunged a couple of hundred after it was over, so nobody had any regrets. His parents even lightened up on his return, maybe realising at last that trying to tie him down to a conventional life was more trouble than it was worth. He soon began re-growing his hair and beard, then got a job working at a little indie record shop, meeting up with Potto and Wilky most weekends and, in time, notched up some modest success as the Thames Valley's answer to The Grateful Dead - but there lies another improbable story.

Unfortunately, my affair with Sylvie came to an abrupt end all too soon when her parents, not so forgiving as Nicky's, caught up with our dalliance (squealed on, no doubt, by a jealous house mate) and dragged kicking and screaming back home. I never saw her again, nor were any of my missives replied to and the phone slammed down whenever I rang. Arthur, I wasn't surprised to hear, also had his pride and joy snatched back. The Snotmobile was repossessed by heavies soon after landing on English soil - the Green Doors had some very loyal fans back in Molesey it seemed.

As for me, boringly familiar to tell, I slunk back to the family home and got a factory job to pay off my debts and court fine. Ironically, it was a television manufacturer (a British company - those were the days) and my task was to check the contrast and brightness controls, etc, tweaking the connections of defective units with a soldering iron. My punishment for avoiding an appearance on TV was to spend months staring at a test card, and not even a colour one - poetic justice, or am I being paranoid? The police eventually caught the hotel kleptomaniac and I heard no more of the case.

It wasn't the end of my musical ambitions however, far from it, but from then on I was determined to do it my way. The birthmark had made me chicken out of my first big break - though had I been using this as an excuse? It hadn't ever prevented me from socialising and developing relationships or getting jobs, so what was I really afraid of? However, though it might have put me off TV appearances at present, it didn't stop me playing live - in fact, as a song-writer, the experience might even have given me something extra to sing about. I don't mean I would ever refer to the birthmark directly - I never even confided with close friends or family, so why should I want to tell the world? But maybe there were insights acquired from what I'd been through which could be translated

creatively? Many successful people had overcome much worse afflictions, even gained strength and inspiration from them, so why not me? At the time I really didn't know how, or even if, that might happen - nor if I cared. And so, broke and busted as I was, home was as good a place as any to lick my wounds and recoup losses - it was the cheapest option anyway.



‘So, you were about to tell me something?’ I asked Arthur pointedly. I held a couple of 45s up suspiciously. What was it that felt wrong about them?

‘Here. Give me one,’ he said at last. Removing the sleeve, he placed the vinyl on his lap, took out a coin and used it to scrape at the surface. Quite easily, with only a few short strokes, the dull black coating flaked off to reveal a golden hue.

‘Eh? What’s this?’ I exclaimed.

‘What’s it look like?’

‘Well, it’s certainly not plastic - it’s too heavy.’

Susan came over and took the gold disc from him, examining it closely. ‘You crafty old sod,’ she said. ‘I take it back. Maybe you do have some of your grand-daddy’s scheming ways.’

‘Always did,’ he grinned. ‘Just kept my cards close. Speaking of which, if you haven’t guessed already, it’s how I came about all these in the first place.’

‘You mean there’re others?’ I grabbed some more records and weighed them up in my hands. Not all were heavier, but maybe a dozen in that one box were. I ran out to the hall and ripped open another crate. This time I found more records and at least twenty were ‘specials’. Roughly the same number was found in all boxes. Well over a hundred discs, maybe even two hundred, were solid gold.

What was that about cards? I suddenly thought. ‘You said you’d won the van in a poker game —was that all? You never told us.’

‘You never asked.’

‘Well I’m asking now.’

‘Oh, about twenty grand. Not from those rockabilly losers of course - they were skint - I just had their wheels and gear. Though it’s what gave me the idea for the Antwerp gig. Good one eh?’

‘So what about the money to pay for the gold? Who were the mugs you skinned that off?’

‘You wouldn’t believe it if I told you. And I’m not telling you. Anyway, man. It doesn’t matter now does it?’

Despite further questions the only thing he would let on was how Della de Brix, although an annoyingly pushy brat, was actually something of a whizz kid at cards but couldn’t get a seat at the poker table due to the age limit. She’d persuaded Arthur to stand in for her and bingo, a lucrative little hustle was executed - though poor Della was left standing like a prune when our man absconded with the takings.

‘But why do this with it?’ asked Susan, peering at a gold disc in genuine amazement. ‘I mean, you could have bought property. Even shoved it in a bank. Invested it?’

Arthur nearly collapsed. ‘You straights!’ he laughed. ‘Let those crooks in on my haul? In any case, this was a jive - about as pure stoned as you could get. Profitable and...’ he winked, ‘...no one ever needs to find out.’

‘Really?’ I asked. ‘Is this gold clean?’

‘Gold is gold,’ said Arthur, slightly miffed. ‘And never goes out of style - unlike music. What’s important - it’s my pension. I had it sitting there in Auntie Kate’s all these years, just gathering dust - and value of course.’

‘So why didn’t you take it before?’ I asked.

‘Never needed to. I always had some income one way or another - till my luck ran out. Then when I went back to the States I came into a whole new pile - thanks to Susan.’

‘Pity I didn’t stay,’ she said. ‘I might’ve stopped you wasting it all - or at least, had a good time helping you blow it.’

‘It wasn’t quite like that,’ said Arthur, almost seriously. ‘Maybe I’ll tell you one day. Let’s just say, I wasn’t the only financial investor to lose out in recent years.’

‘I still don’t see why you had to come all the way down here with your hoard,’ said Susan, shaking her head. ‘Why Swanage? Why now? And why me?’

‘Because - silly woman - I want you to have it. I don’t have long - what good is all this to me any more? Cash it in - take it. All I ask for is a room, preferably with a view. Always liked the seaside - ships passing in the night, gulls shitting by day - never a dull moment you know. Just don’t dump me in some crummy old folk’s home. That really would freak me out - and do me in.’

Over the following 24 hours, having cleaned up the discs and made a few discrete enquiries, we discovered there was at least half a million pounds worth of gold. Arthur never divulged exactly where it had originated but, from hints he dropped, I presumed the most likely source was South America - illegally imported antique jewellery and other trinkets - melted down and recast in Holland. The discs were easy to bring back into the UK and stash away undetected for years without arousing any suspicions.

Though he also never admitted it, I concluded the whole Geronimo debacle was a cover, which is why he wasn’t bothered when I did a runner. In fact, he was probably pleased because it meant no one was likely to ask for copies of the records. Had we been a hit - what would he have done then? No, he was gambling on the assumption we’d bomb. He couldn’t have used an established act because they’d never have put up with the cheapo conditions and, secondly, they’d have run more risk of being successful. It was a kind of ‘Springtime for Hitler’⁽³⁾ scenario, with our record being the sure-fire flop.

‘So what did you really think of my song?’ I asked.

‘Do you really want to know?’ he said.

‘Maybe not - but I’m curious.’

‘Well, what did you think of it?’

‘Me?’

‘I don’t mean what we did to it,’ said Arthur. ‘That was a joke - a good joke, but still a joke. Could even have been a hit, believe it or not - with the right promotion. Never overestimate public taste. No, what did you think it was really about?’

I was flummoxed, then took out the lyric sheet from the box file and read - a long time since I’d done so. How old was I when I wrote this rubbish? Eighteen? Nineteen? Too idealistic and green to know better, obviously, but maybe young enough to express honest feelings, even if not great literature. I’d no real recollection, but the words brought me further back, to when I was a child. Me and the gang escaping to the woods whenever we could; climbing trees, playing hiding games, building camps, racing on bikes; pretending to be

stuntmen, astronauts, gangsters, sportsmen, or film characters like Flash Gordon, Superman, The Lone Ranger and yes, Tonto, his faithful red sidekick. It was always the Indians I wanted to be - the only ones who seemed true to themselves and really free. The ones who could live off the land, survive by native lore and their wits alone - and Geronimo was the greatest of them all. He'd defended his people so fearlessly despite overwhelming odds - ethnic cleansing on a grand scale - and evaded capture against the might of the American army and duplicitous politicians for years. In the end he wasn't so much captured as accepted an honourable surrender when to continue running would have been suicide, not just for him but his family and loyal followers.

*hey there Geronimo where are you?
I'm so stoned on white man's brew
guns are exploding I don't know what to do
hey there Geronimo* ⁽⁴⁾

Recently, on a trip to see my aged mother living on the South coast, she told me that as a child I'd been 'very naughty'. I asked her how, and she replied, 'Well dear, you never did what you were told - only what you wanted.' It was said with a wry smile but I know that, as a single mum, it must have been difficult enough trying to manage a young tribe of little Indians without me, the eldest and supposedly most responsible, trying my level best to be Geronimo.

The song was really about all that, I guessed, but maybe also the red skin on my face. It wasn't till I got to be a teenager that I ever thought much about it - if at all. Then I ran around getting drunk or stoned on music or anything else that might help me relive a lost past. Either that or create a glorious future without modern constraints, living by 'native' or 'beat' laws out on the Western plain. Many people do the same thing when they're young, and maybe for similar reasons. I'm lucky, I suppose, that my way wasn't fatal, as it had been for Sammy and others I'd known. I'm also fortunate to have hundreds of songs, like snapshots taken on the run, which capture thoughts and feelings from those days and shed some light upon a faraway time when almost anything was possible. The vast majority of them will never be heard in public - thank heavens - but I can still read the lyrics, play them back even (many are on cassette) and wonder what went wrong. Or maybe it didn't?

'I see what you mean,' I said to Arthur.

'Thing is...'

'Yes?'

'Thing is Alwyn, man. That ain't it.'

'What?'

'Where'd you go from here? Back home - to fart around playing kid's songs for peanuts?'

'I told you before...'

'Okay - sorry. I'm sure they're lovely. But you've also got loads more Geronimos haven't you?'

'I hope not.'

'You know what I mean - new ideas. New tunes maybe.'

'I suppose so, but...'

There was an awkward silence then Arthur said, 'Ever heard of a singer-songwriter called Sam Baker?' ⁽⁵⁾ (No relation by the way.)

'Nope.'

‘Kind of Alt-Country, new style Americana, but really unclassifiable. Comes from Austin, Texas - made a name there and now starting to get known all over. He’s even toured the UK recently. I caught him in Boston a couple of months back.’

‘And?’

‘In the late Eighties he was travelling around South America - riding a train to Machu Picchu in Peru. The carriage was bombed by Maoist revolutionaries - the Shining Path, I believe - and Sam was badly injured. Other people nearby were killed, blown to pieces, but he survived - just. It took many operations to save him, though his left hand was permanently twisted into a stump. He suffered for years with brain damage, hearing loss and other serious problems. He still has tinnitus in his ears, like a permanent echo of the explosion ringing round his head. But despite all this, he wanted to re-learn to play guitar - left handed - even though he could barely hold a pick or get his broken fingers onto the strings.’

‘So?’

‘He doesn’t write songs about what happened to him, not directly, but it obviously had a big influence on his outlook. Made him what he is. Gave him a perspective. No one cares if he’s not a great guitarist - they’re two a penny - but he’s got a unique voice.’

‘What about his songs,’ I asked, wanting to laugh. ‘Are they any good?’

‘Stories,’ said Arthur. ‘Song-tales you might say. Very simple. Quiet like - often with a bitter twist.’

‘He’s a lot to be bitter about, I suppose.’

‘Yeah, but he’s not. Just honest. Even weirdly hopeful.’

‘I’ll watch out for him - but what’s it got to do with me?’

‘For fuck’s sake - stop feeling sorry for yourself. That man didn’t let the bastards win. So what’s your problem - a little skin blemish? Hah!’

‘Yeah, well.’

The next day I drove the empty van back to Teddington and helped Jim load his pile of recycled artworks aboard. ‘Another generation,’ I thought. ‘How long will it be before they’re wondering what the hell all this shit is really about?’

Following a quick lunch we headed home to Newcastle and, after offloading at the Gateshead gallery, drove home and sank into my old familiar armchair with a sigh.

‘Good trip?’ asked the wife.

‘Not bad,’ I said. ‘Phantom road works on the A1, as per usual.’ Then, opening a newspaper and putting my feet up, I sat back in anticipation of a good old slump in front of the box. After a few moments, unable to get comfortable, I suddenly remembered the buckskin memento stuffed inside my jacket. Pulling it out, along with the gleaming gold disc it concealed, I said, ‘By the way - got a frame you can stick this in

FOOTNOTES - Chapter 17

(1) ‘In His Own Write’ by John Lennon - published by Macmillan & Scribner, 1964, is a collection of stories and illustrations penned in the author’s inimitable style first published by Jonathan Cape on 23rd March 1964. It was a huge success, the first edition sold out completely on the first day of publication – it was also, somehow, translated into French. The book comprised 15 short stories, 8 poems, 3 play scenes, 5 other items and 26 drawings. Paul McCartney provided the introduction. There were numerous re-issues, often paired up with Lennon’s next offering – ‘A Spaniard in the Works’ – and presented as one volume. The Lennon Library – www.ntlworld.com

(2) Stanley Unwin (1911 – 2002), sometimes billed as Professor Stanley Unwin, was a British comedian and comic writer, and inventor of his own language, ‘Unwinese’, referred to in the film *Carry On Regardless* as ‘gobbledegook’. Unwinese was a mangled form of English in which many of the words were corrupted in playful and humorous ways, as in the description of Elvis Presley and his contemporaries as being ‘wasp-waist and swivel-hippy’. Unwin claimed his gift came from his mother, who once told him that on the way home she had ‘faloloped over and grazed her kneelabbers’. Unwinese, also known as ‘Basic Engly Twentyfido’ – probably a reference to Charles Kay Ogden’s 1930 work, ‘Basic English’, which strips the language down to 850 words. Apart from his mother, Unwin also cited James Joyce’s inventive use of language as an influence - there might too be elements of Lewis Carroll’s 1871 poem ‘Jabberwocky’. Stanley Unwin’s career began in wireless and radio communications and then with the BBC as an engineer. He got his first radio broadcast by accident whilst testing equipment with F.R. Buckley when they ad-libbed a spoof documentary about an imaginary sport called ‘Fashe’. Buckley then encouraged Unwin to join in and introduced him as ‘Codlington Corthusite’. The recording was played back to two BBC producers who added some sound effects. The programme was aired on Pat Dixon’s ‘Mirror of the Month’ programme and after getting a good response led to another sketch in which Stanley was interviewed as a man from Atlantis. More broadcasts followed, with Ted Ray, June Whitfield, Kenneth Connor and others. He later appeared in numerous films, TV and advertising, etc. In 1968 he recorded the narration for ‘Happines Stan’ on *The Small Faces LP*, Ogdens’ *Nut Gone Flake*.

Stanley Unwin (1984) *Deep joy: master of the sproken (sic) word*. Whitby, Yorkshire, England: Caedmon of Whitby. ISBN 0-905355-30-X

(3) ‘Springtime For Hitler’ is a fictional play in Mel Brooks’ 1968 black comedy film ‘The Producers’. It is a musical about Adolf Hitler, written by supposed Nazi, Franz Liebkind. The play is chosen by the producer Max Bialystock and his accountant Leo Bloom in their fraudulent attempt to raise substantial funding by selling interests in a play, then causing it to fail, and keeping all the remaining money to themselves. To ensure the play is a total failure, Max selects an incredibly tasteless script (which he describes as ‘practically a love letter to Hitler’), hires the worst director he can find (Roger De Bris, a stereotypical homosexual and transvestite caricature) and casts an out-of-control hippie named Lorenzo St Du Bois, also known by his initials ‘L.S.D.’, in the role of Hitler (after he had wandered into the wrong theatre by mistake during the casting call).

New York: *The Movie Lover’s Guide: The Ultimate Insider Tour of Movie New York* – Richard Alleman – Broadway (February 1, 2005) ISN 0-7679-1634-4

Also, *The Entertainment Weekly Guide To The Greatest Movies Ever Made 1* – New York: Warner Books. 1996 p. 42.

(4) Geronimo (June 16, 1829 – February 17, 1909), often spelled Goyathlay or Goyahkla in English, was a prominent Native American leader and medicine man of the Chiricahua Apache who fought against Mexico and the United States and their expansion into Apache tribal lands for several decades during the Apache Wars. Geronimo’s parents raised him according to Apache traditions; after the death of his father his mother took him to live with the Chihenne. He married a woman from the Nedni-Chiricahua band of Apache when he was seventeen; they had three children. In 1858 a company of Mexican soldiers attacked Geronimo’s camp while the men were away and among those killed were his wife, children and mother. His chief, Mangas Coloradas, sent him to Cochise’s band for help in revenge against the Mexicans. It was the Mexicans who named him Geronimo, stemming from a battle in which, ignoring a hail of bullets, he repeatedly attacked Mexican soldiers with a

knife, causing them to utter appeals to Saint Jerome (“Jeronimo!”). Geronimo never called himself a chief but was a military leader. As a Chiricahua Apache, this meant he was one of many people with special spiritual insights and abilities known to Apache people as ‘Power’. Among these were the ability to walk without leaving tracks, the abilities now known as telekinesis and telepathy, and the ability to survive gunshot wounds. Geronimo was wounded several times by both bullets and buckshot but survived. Apache men chose to follow him of their own free will, and offered first-hand eye-witness testimony of his many ‘powers’.

Geronimo married several times during his life, fathering a number of children. Some of these wives were captured or were lost in his travels; others came and went for various reasons. At the end of his military career, he led a small band of 36 men, women and children. They evaded thousands of Mexican and American troops for over a year, making him the most famous Native American of all time and earning him the title of the ‘worst Indian who ever lived’ among white settlers. His band was one of the last major forces of independent Native American warriors who refused to acknowledge the United States occupation of the American West.

Numerous stories abound as to who actually captured Geronimo, or to whom he surrendered, although most contemporary records, and Geronimo’s own later statements, give most of the credit for negotiating the surrender to Lieutenant Charles B. Gatewood. The debate still remains whether Geronimo surrendered unconditionally. Geronimo pleaded in his memoirs that his people had been misled. In his old age, Geronimo became a celebrity. He appeared at fairs, including the 1904 World’s Fair in St Louis where he reportedly rode a Ferris wheel and sold souvenirs and photographs of himself. However, he was not allowed to return to the land of his birth. In 1905, Geronimo agreed to tell his story to S.M. Barrett, Superintendent of Education in Lawton, Oklahoma. Barrett had to obtain permission from President Roosevelt to publish the book. Geronimo came to each interview knowing exactly what he wanted to say. He refused to answer questions or alter his narrative.

In February, 1909, Geronimo was thrown from his horse while riding home and had to lie in the cold all night before a friend found him extremely ill. He died of pneumonia on February 17, 1909 as a prisoner of the United States at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. On his deathbed he confessed to his nephew that he regretted his decision to surrender. He was buried at Fort Sill in the Apache Indian Prisoner of War Cemetery. ‘Geronimo’ – National Geographic Magazine 182, October 1992.

Geronimo: a Biography – Alexander B. Adams, 1990, Da Capo Press.

(5) Sam Baker, in 1986 at the age of 32, was travelling in Peru when, as he says, “I got in the middle of someone else’s war.” A terrorist bomb (the Sendero Luminosa or ‘Shining Path’ Maoist group) blew up the train he and some friends were riding on. Several passengers died including a German boy and his parents who were sitting next to Baker. Though he nearly bled to death, Sam survived but suffered a constellation of injuries and after effects – shrapnel in his leg, renal failure, brain damage, even gangrene. “Right now, the loudest thing I hear is the ringing in my head,” he says of the Tinnitus, which will never go away. The other obvious reminder of the blast is his left hand, the fingers of which are permanently crunched and twisted. Fortunately he has enough dexterity to grip a pick – after re-learning to play guitar left-handed. The brain damage he initially suffered affected mainly the part of the brain where words are stored - which is ironic, since it’s the stories and images he paints with words that brought him acclaim – first with his 2004 debut, ‘Mercy’, and now with its 2007 follow up, ‘Pretty World’. ‘For somebody who’s gone through the pain and trauma he’s gone through, Sam Baker has an amazingly positive outlook on life, as though everything’s a gift at this point. “Everything is a gift at this point,” he declares. “But, see, it’s a gift for you at this point. It’s not just me; it’s everybody in this restaurant. I went through the anger and

the bitterness – deeply. But that energy didn't get me anywhere. It's toxic. And ultimately, I did come to a point where these days are beautiful. Because they're so short and quick to pass. And that's all we've got – no matter what we hold in our hands, drive around in, put in the bank, or shower ourselves with.”

Dan Forte – Wood And Steel Magazine, 2007. Published by Taylor Guitars.