

The New Roxette

www.theNewRoxette.com

Chats to:



Frank Allen

The Searchers

Please introduce yourself, and maybe for some of our younger audience especially, please can you tell us a brief history about The Searchers?

I am Frank Allen, bass player and front man with The Searchers and a very long standing member, having celebrated on August 3rd 49 years as one of the group. For the benefit of younger readers The Searchers came to national and international prominence in 1963 when the Beatles change the whole outlook on popular beat music across the globe at a time when in particular America was a closed shop to artistes from the U.K. The first record, *Sweets For My Sweet*, was released in June that year and started a run of fourteen chart hits which included *Sugar & Spice*, *When You Walk In The Room*, *Needles & Pins*, *Love Potion Number Nine*, *Someday We're Gonna Love Again*, *Goodbye My Love*, *Don't Throw Your Love Away*, *He's Got No Love*, *Take Me For What I'm Worth*, *Take It Or Leave It*, *Bumble Bee* and *Have You Ever Loved Somebody* as well as a succession of albums and extended play discs that charted.

Like the Beatles and many of the new bands at the time it was formed in Liverpool and I broke that chain when I replaced the original bass player, Tony Jackson in 1964.

My first disc with The Searchers was *When You Walk In The Room*, our most covered hit ever, and I was to play on 9 of the chart singles.

Originally the group was called 'Johnny Sandon & The Searchers'. Sandon left to join another Liverpool outfit in 1962 and the remaining four members, John McNally, Chris Curtis, Mike Pender and Tony Jackson turned professional to accept the chance of an engagement at Hamburg's famous Star Club, which is where I made friends with them. At the time I was with 'Cliff Bennett & The Rebel Rousers'. John McNally and I still remain from that early line-up and we have run the band together and have fought hard to maintain the tradition and reputation after others departed.

When the hits stopped at the end of '66 we made the successful transition into the cabaret world learning the craft of entertaining an adult listening audience rather than the screaming hoards of teenagers that had previously packed the concerts. This was to stand us in good stead for the eventual touring schedule of all evening solo concerts that now form the major part of our work. Our reputation in this form of presentation is second to none among the comparative groups of our era.

You seem to be one of the hardest working bands around at the moment, having recently been on tour across Australia, New Zealand this year already, as well as across the UK. Do you still enjoy the touring and where are the bands favourite places (countries) and/or venues you've visited? Is there a particular place you love returning to and why?

We take on somewhere between 150 and 200 shows a year and that's the way we like it. I wouldn't like to play favourites with countries. They are all so different to each other and every place has its own special appeal. Oddly enough the tours I have found most memorable have been the ones for the British forces in far flung, and sometimes dangerous, areas as Bosnia and Belfast as well as The Falklands, The Ascension Islands, Belize and even including a trip down the Mediterranean on the aircraft carrier HMS Illustrious playing two concerts while on board.

There are not too many countries we haven't performed in although we've not travelled to South America, Japan and South Africa. Maybe that is still to come.

How do you and the band feel about being invited to perform and headline at HOTC this summer?

We are always excited about new places that open up to us and we will be all for making it a roaring success so that we can make a return visit at some point. I believe the HOTC always tries to book an act that has local connections and in this case it is our new-ish drummer of a bit over three years standing so far Scott Ottaway who is in fact a resident of Aylesbury. So we can at least count on his family for support.

If the weather holds I think it's going to be a brilliant event. And if the weather doesn't hold it will still be a brilliant event!

Is there anything EXCITING/SECRET/INTERESTING you would like to tell or share with our readers about the band?

Nothing radical I'm afraid. We were never The Who or The Stones. We never threw a TV set out of a hotel window. In fact moderation is the only thing we did to excess. We did play some incredible concerts though. Four days at the enormous Araneta

Colosseum in Manila in 1966. The Royal Variety Show in 1981, where we were presented to the Queen. Two days in June 1989 at Wembley Stadium as guests of Cliff Richard who was celebrating his 30th anniversary in show business. There are so many important memories. We were and still are very lucky people.

The Searchers are part of the 'Sixties Gold Tour' later this year. Please can you tell us about that?

It is one of those package tours that have become such a major part of the nostalgia circuit these days. This is a particularly impressive line-up with The Searchers, Gerry & The Pacemakers, The Fortunes, P J Proby, Brian Poole and Chip Hawkes. Just think of the choice of massive hit records we all have to pick from. It will cover pretty much the whole of the U.K from the end of September until the beginning of December and is not to be missed.

Do remember we are not going to be around forever so it's important to catch the real people before you are just left with tributes to keep the flag flying.

By the way, you can find the whole date list on our website:

www.the-searchers.co.uk and apart from that date sheet it is a full and fascinating site which we seriously participate in and update regularly.

Having been successful for so long, you must have a lot of great stories, from people you've met/performed with, to any embarrassing live moments etc? Is there anything you can tell us?

I can only repeat the earlier answer, consistent quality shows and good behaviour (in the main) was our policy. For an amusing anecdote I can mention the club secretary who rang John McNally wanting to book us for his very small club. He was given the price which it seems was way out of his league. He then said *"I don't need four of you, how much for three?"*

What would you say has been your biggest highlight/s by being in the Searchers?

Again I have pointed out some of the biggest shows. I could add my first trip to New York with the group in September 1964. We played six shows a day for seven days at the Fox Theatre in Brooklyn, a huge place, and the bill was The Searchers, Marvin Gaye, The Supremes, Martha & The Vandellas, Smokey & The Miracles, Little Anthony, The Ronnettes, The Shangrilas, The Temptations, The Contours, The Dovells, The Newbeats and Jay & The Americans. Try beating that..!

What else are you looking forward to this year?

More successful concerts, more good times on the road and a continuing healthy life to enable us to carry on. Next year is virtually planned already with February and the first part of March in Australia, lots of U.K solo shows plus summer dates in The Philippines and New Zealand. I think that's about enough to be getting on with.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

I think that's about it. I just want people who haven't seen us before to get to a show. I think you'll have the best time of your lives and we'll get to know your faces as you come back again and again. Get onto the website, find out all about us, check out the dates and once you've seen our concert email our web mistress Wendy Burton and let her know how you enjoyed it.

Thank you ever so much for your time! Great chatting to you!

We look forward to seeing you all at Hobble on the Cobbles in a few weeks time.

HOBBLE ON THE COBBLES, AYLESBURY MARKET SQUARE

SUNDAY 25 AUGUST 2013

For all the latest News & Information do check out their website at:

www.the-searchers.co.uk

