



GERRY & THE PACEMAKERS

The Gerry & The Pacemakers/Del Shannon tour with Cilla Black took place in October and early November 1963. It also featured the Bachelors, Duffy Power and Jet Harris & Tony Meehan. Sadly, Jet failed to appear on the opening night and never appeared on the tour, leaving Tony Meehan to rehearse again, with guitarist Joe Moretti playing the detuned Jet Harris parts. Tony and his revised line-up rejoined the tour on a later date in Dublin.

Due to Gerry being Gerry, and him having his three Pacemakers on hand, plus road manager Les Hurst and backline roadie George Hollingsworth, plus the fact that they all came from Liverpool, my life was never to be the same again. In all truth, I have never laughed so much on any tour as I did on the three tours I did with Gerry and his mob of undesirable Scousers.

Something different occurred every day. We soon found out that my tour bus driver, Johnny Sparks, was selling items to fans at the stage door. For two bob (10p) you could purchase an apple core or a cigarette end out of an ashtray all of which, according to Mr Sparks, were supposed to have been a Gerry Marsden cast-off.

When the show played the ABC cinema in Dublin, Tony Meehan returned to the tour. My heart went out to him when, after the first show that night, Tony went into his dressing room and pushed the metal bar to open the window, and his hand slipped and smashed through the glass. Tony suffered an awful cut which immediately required a visit to a hospital and stitches. As far as I can recall, he bravely returned to do the second show with his hand heavily bandaged. What I do vividly remember is that, after each show, his hand had to be re-bandaged and at times re-stitched due to the bleeding.

Back at the hotel, I put in my wake-up call for 8.00 a.m. plus

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a full English breakfast, so as to be fed, bathed and dressed ready for the coach departing for Belfast at 10.00 a.m. the next morning. I received no wake-up call (cancelled on my behalf by some undisclosed person – I still believe it was a Pacemaker or one of their assistants), which resulted in me waking late, then throwing various items of clothing into a suitcase, grabbing a taxi and chasing the bloody bus around Dublin.

Our next show was in Belfast, after which we were due to fly to Birmingham the following day to play the Hippodrome. However, a problem arose on checking-in as it became obvious that the stand-up string bass used by John Stokes of the Bachelors wouldn't fit into the hold of our BEA Viscount aircraft. On noticing a BEA Vanguard loading, I asked where it was going and was advised Bristol. I asked if John's bass would fit onto that aircraft as it had a much larger hold. The bass was duly sent to Bristol, where I had it collected and forwarded on to John at the theatre.

My next tour with Gerry was in November 1964. The show starred Gerry, Gene Pitney, Marianne Faithfull and the Kinks. The last night of the tour was at the Futurist Theatre in Scarborough. Various members of the show had asked if (as was generally permitted on last nights) they could play the odd joke or two, to which I agreed providing they didn't go too far. There's nothing worse than in-jokes being played onstage and the audience not having any inkling as to what the hell is going on.

The Kinks opened the show with three numbers, and as soon as they finished their first number onto the stage pranced Gerry and his road manager Les Hurst. Gerry was wearing shorts and a dressing gown with a towel over his head and immediately went into a shadow-boxing routine. At the end of the number Les placed a stool and a bucket on the stage and while Gerry sat on the stool totally ignoring the Kinks, Les wafted him with the towel. As the third number started, Gerry was off shadow-boxing again.

Compère Bryan Burdon had an unmerciful time. He was using the centre riser – a microphone which came up from the stage floor and was operated from the wings. When he went on, the mike was eight feet high, but it slowly descended until Bryan was on his knees to announce the next act.

Gene Pitney closed his act with his big belter, 'I'm Gonna Be Strong', which takes a lot of breath control. Just as Gene took a breath for the last few notes, Gerry and Les dashed onstage, lifted

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him up and carried him off into the wings, but Gene was brilliant: he simply carried on singing and ended the number outside his dressing room door.

As you will read later, the lovely Marianne Faithfull did not miss out on the last-night attentions of Gerry and Les either.

When a tour plays the Futurist Theatre in Scarborough, where the stage door is at the front of house next to the same entrance and exit the audience use, it is common practice after the show to get artistes out via an alternative exit. In Gerry's case, Les Hurst rightly decided to get Gerry and the guys out through the back of the theatre. The idea as advised by Les was, the limousine would be parked at the end of a narrow back lane. Gerry, Les, Fred Marsden, Les Chadwick and Les Maguire would nip out of a back door into a small back yard at the end of which was a five-foot wall. They would all climb over the wall and drop down into the lane. On landing, they would nip twenty yards along the lane and jump into their waiting limousine. Easy. Unfortunately, Scarborough is an extremely hilly town and the back lane into which they would each drop was on a very steep hill. Les Hurst told the guys that speed was of the essence, hence they all spread themselves out along the wall. Gerry went over and dropped four feet down into the back lane, but when Les Chadwick, the last to go went over further along the wall the drop he encountered was around eight feet due to the aggressive slope of the hill. All you could hear was a loud 'Aaaaaaargh!' as he crashed to the ground.

A week or so after the tour, I received a note from the Post Office advising me that a large parcel was awaiting collection at the main sorting office near Hornsey railway station. When I went to collect the parcel, it turned out to be a massive package and there was a considerable amount owing on collection. I had no idea what it contained and demanded to see what was in it prior to parting with so much cash.

The package turned out to be a complete technical plan of the *Queen Mary* showing all the rivet holes and piping that went into the construction of the great liner. Not only that, the plan was mounted on oilskin canvas. I declined to accept delivery. Following previous tours with Master Marsden, I was also the lucky recipient of various useful items which also arrived in the post: a trial period with a hearing aid, a boxed set of spanners, confirmation of a holiday week in Bermuda (invoice to follow), a series of driving

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lessons, a manual on how to construct your own canoe and, of course, a full set of saucepans and a one month trial with *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (delivery of which to be arranged). It was obvious young Marsden and his cohorts had been in 'Let's order a few items for Mal' mode!

Touring with Gerry, Fred Marsden, Les Maguire, Les Chadwick, Les Hurst and George Hollingsworth was always a pleasure. We had a lot of laughs and a lot of fun, but at showtime everyone adopted a very professional attitude and I never had one moment of upset with the six lunatics!