

**DRIVING GUITARS:  
THE MUSIC OF THE VENTURES  
IN THE SIXTIES**

**Malcolm Campbell  
Dave Burke**



**With contributions by  
Dave Peckett, Alan Taylor & Gerry Woodage**

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## PREFACE

The Ventures are not only the longest surviving and biggest selling instrumental group in the world, but also the most prolific, attracting a staggering 563 entries for the years 1960–1969 which form the subject of this book. In *Driving Guitars* MC provides a potted history and commentary for every one of those titles on the basis of a rigorously structured and comprehensively indexed discography. If you have ever wondered about the origins of a particular song, or been curious and confused about the recordings that the band made exclusively for the Japanese market, this book will illuminate the darkness by furnishing a wealth of facts, lively opinions and discographical illustrations.

To complement the individual entries and album overviews there are sections by DB revealing exclusive session details — the most comprehensive account ever published — as well as background information on many of the producers, arrangers and musicians involved in those recordings. Also discussed are many of the unissued tracks remaining in the vaults, including alternative versions, unknown Ventures originals and plenty of intriguing trivia.

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I would like to thank Dorothy and Richard for their support and practical assistance, and also Allan Lynn and Darren Turner at Azure Prinitng. Tony Hoffman has helped me in various ways, as has Ian Finlay with his enviable knowledge of the group's history. I am grateful too to Alan Taylor for his encouragement, his eagle-eyed proof-reading and his shrewd observations on the text. Thanks are also due to two distinguished pillars of The Ventures community: Dave Peckett made a number of illuminating comments, while Gerry Woodage not only offered constructive criticism and replied promptly to a wide range of queries, but in addition generously put his photographic archive and other aids at my disposal. Co-author Dave Burke, whose voluminous writings on various aspects of the group and on instrumental music generally were never far from my desk, combed successive drafts and suggested numerous improvements.

MC

To my co-author Malcolm Campbell for his generosity, patience and meticulous attention to detail. To Alan Taylor for his spelling skills and for paying far more attention to English grammar lessons at school than I ever did. To my wife, Vivien, for her kindness in allowing me to indulge my passion for music and writing while forgiving my consequential neglect of decorating duties. To Joanne, Simon and Frankie Tassie for their encouragement and for making my life brighter in every way. To all the loyal Ventures fans all over the world who have bought the *In The Vaults* CDs and made the project into a successful ongoing series. To Don, Bob, Nokie, Mel, Howie and Gerry for helping to make the sixties the most exciting musical decade of all. Thanks a million.

DB



# INTRODUCTION

## CLASSIFICATION/ NOTATION

The 563 main entries provide coverage of Ventures recordings for the years 1960 through to 1969, thus: 1960 (15 tracks), 1961 (56), 1962 (59), 1963 (60), 1964 (37), 1965 (72), 1966 (87), 1967 (66), 1968 (63), 1969 (48). The titles, each provided with notation to facilitate speedy cross-reference, are sourced from the following:

(i) Primary **ALBUM RELEASES**, both *studio* (chiefly American in the first instance), even if they had already, or would in due course, appear as single-sides around the period in question, and *live* (Japanese), which taken together far outnumber other types and provide the most convenient and economical classificatory starting-point. These are itemised by year and plain number, except for live tracks, which are suffixed for ready reference with the identifier L. In a special category is the US release *The Ventures On Stage*, which contains a simulated live performance. The tracks from this set bear the identifier 'L'.

(ii) **FURTHER TRACKS** All *non-album* tracks, all but a couple of these released as singles, suffixed with the identifier S (the residual two are from Japanese EPs from 1965/1966, appropriately flagged).

(iii) **POST-60s RELEASES** i.e. tracks recorded in the course of the 60s but only released through legitimate channels after that decade, suffixed with identifier U (= unissued).

Some representative examples are now given of the notation adopted from the year 1965, which has 64 entries in all, the first 56 album tracks, the remainder non-album followed by post-60s releases:

[65/12] SHA LA LA is a track closing a studio album. The next entry, [65/13L] Medley, is the opener of the next album, but that is a live set, hence the suffix L. Moving further into the year, entry [65/60S] CANDY APPLE RACER in the Further Tracks section is a single release, hence the S suffix. The next entry, [65/61U] HARLEM NOCTURNE, comes in the Post-60s Releases section as a track which remained unissued until 1996, hence the U suffix.

## ALTERNATIVE VERSIONS

In the present state of knowledge it is not possible to document alternative versions among the various 60s releases in anything like the depth of detail attained for The Shadows. It can be stated with absolute certainty that there are many more out there than have been detected to date: look for example at the comment on [64/31] WALK, DON'T RUN '64, where a number of variants are mentioned which have passed practically unnoticed in Ventures literature. To arrive at a definitive listing, it would be necessary to trawl systematically through the multitude of vinyl and digital releases from the group's first releases onwards — in other words, access to a truly comprehensive record library would be an essential prerequisite. Close study of Shadows material from the 60s shows that deviations from the norm can turn up in the most unlikely of places. Given the global diffusion of Ventures recordings there must be a strong presumption that things would not be any different with them.

In the present book the variants so far unearthed are included on a strictly selective basis, confined to those cases where in my judgement divergences from the norm are significant enough to be regarded as providing a quite different listening experience. Hence minor mixing and mastering/ remastering anomalies are excluded. This stricture applies most especially to a number of mono implementations, of singles in particular, where there are often minor tonal differences (commonly a chunkier, thicker overall sound) but where classification as 'alternative versions' would be misplaced (though there is the odd exception, see for example entry [64/37S] RAP CITY).

### ILLCIT/ UNOFFICIAL MATERIAL

As with so many artistes from the 60s and beyond, 'bootleg' and 'unofficial' releases exist offering tracks outwith those issued by record companies. Some items occupy a special category, as they were made available by the group to Gerry Woodage for inclusion on cassette tapes issued to Ventures Resurgence Fan Club members in the 90s. However, interesting as much of the material is, none of it is within the grasp of the public at large, hence it is strictly excluded from this survey.

### CD SOURCES

(i) The **See for Miles** series of two albums per single CD was masterminded by Gerry Woodage (in association with Colin Miles): he sought out original master tapes and paid close attention to cover and other artwork, while providing informative liner notes himself on a number of albums. These discs form the basis of the majority of the assessments offered in this book. Though now discontinued (the company is no longer trading), they have established themselves as a must-have for any respectable Ventures collection in the now universally accepted digital format, and in any case are obtainable on eBay and through other channels without too much difficulty. Reproduction rarely falls below average and is usually better than average (superior overall to the similar 'double' issues from **One Way Records**, though criticism of these has sometimes been unduly harsh, and they have tempting bonus tracks on offer; certainly not up to the standard of certain of the latest Japanese remasters from **Toshiba-EMI**, but these are expensive, prohibitively so for many if not most). There are few really objectionable flaws to distract the listener, which brings us by way of contrast to the succession of individual albums (with ample extras tacked on) from **Magic Records** France.

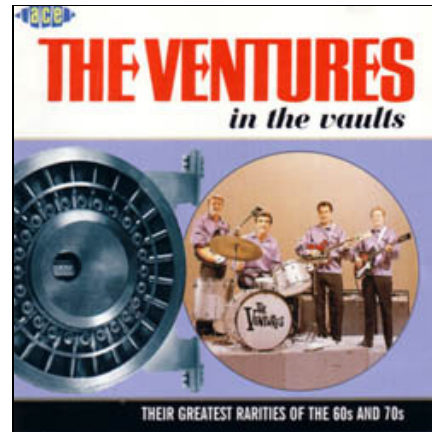
Very often sound quality is impressive, with a firm, pronounced bass and vivid, tactile treble: the masters have been treated across the board, it would appear, with BBE sound enhancement technology or something very like it, which can impart a distinct sparkle to high frequencies and afford increased 'presence' as well as boosting/ tightening up bass (Magic's much-vaunted upsampling to 24-bit processing in itself would not, or should not, brighten the sound). If you like your Ventures spruced-up then these attractively packaged digipaks are for you, but the picture is not entirely rosy.

Of the seventeen albums so far issued no fewer than seven have their stereo channels reversed, a deplorable aberration also in evidence on certain of Magic's Shadows releases: the culprits are *The Colorful Ventures*, *Twist With The Ventures/ Twist Party Vol.2*, *Surfing, Walk, Don't Run Vol.2*, *The Ventures À Go-Go* and *Flights Of Fantasy*. Reverse stereo switching, always a rarity on domestic amplifiers, is practically unheard of now, particularly with the current fad for minimalist design, and while nearly everybody these days has a computer, purchasers should not have to

resort to remedial software to doctor a product that should never have been marketed like this in the first place. A further issue, *The Fabulous Ventures*, is in mono, which is nothing short of ludicrous in this day and age. This could conceivably have arisen from a (vain) attempt at cloaking the sorry shambles perpetrated at source on the stereo mix of [64/13] *NEEDLES AND PINS*, but it is much more probably just an oversight and wholly indefensible.

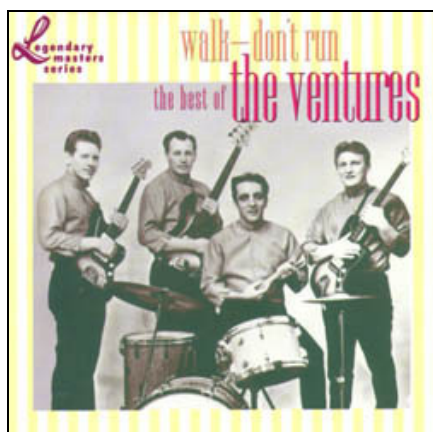
(ii) Albums not taken in by See for Miles are: *The Christmas Album*, first released on American CD in 1990 then in 1992; *All About The Ventures*, conveniently to hand on the 1995 EMI CD *Live In Japan '65*; and *In Tokyo '68*, the least accessible (as well as one of the very poorest as it happens) of all 60s albums, found on the Japanese CD set *The Ventures Live Box* from 1992.

(iii) The majority of the non-album tracks/ 60s-unissued tracks can be found on an invaluable series of Ace CDs compiled and annotated by Dave Burke and Alan Taylor: *In The Vaults/ In The Vaults Volume 2/ In The Vaults Volume 3 / In The Vaults Volume 4*.



(iv) A handful of residual tracks are scattered over various CDs, specified in the relevant entries.

(v) Among the welter of compilations, two stand out for the quality of the programme/ reproduction and the informativeness of the liner notes, both of them from EMI USA: *Walk, Don't Run: The Best Of The Ventures*, in the 'Legendary Masters' series, and *TeleVentures*.

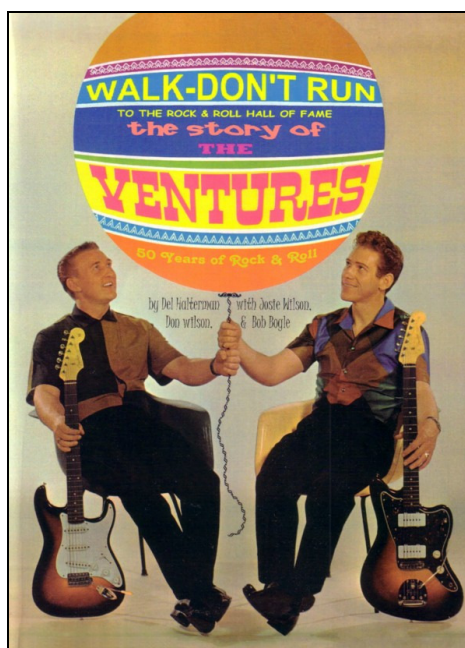
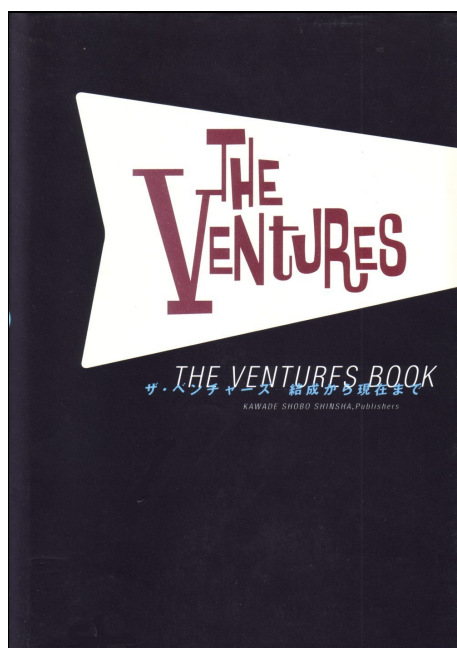


(vi) For still selective but wider-ranging listening, perhaps the best way to sample the group's 60s output is to try one or other of the various EP compilations. There are three fine collections on See for Miles, the third focusing on Japanese compositions (for these alone the Dutch Disky label provides an excellent assortment on their *Pops In Japan*). The EP box from Magic Records France, in mono throughout, is beautifully presented with discs in nine separate card sleeves reproducing original cover artwork (three are pictured below). A more ambitious assemblage is the handsome Japanese box set serving up no fewer than 103 tracks (some are bonus tracks) spread over four discs, with a booklet containing splendid illustrations of front cover artwork.

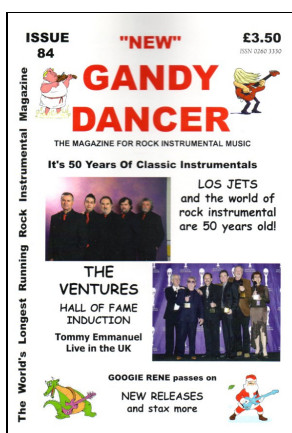
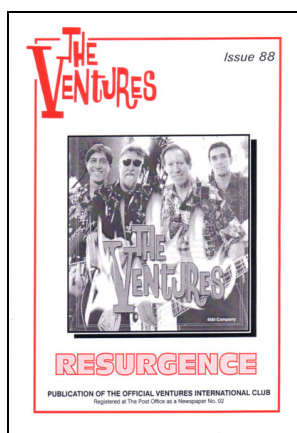




## BOOKS/ SPECIALIST MAGAZINES



The first substantial publication on the music of The Ventures came in the mid-90s. Lavishly illustrated and rich in discographical detail, it was a work bearing an English title but written in Japanese: *The Ventures Book: From The Beginning To The Present*. March 2008 saw the appearance of Del Halterman's detailed and informative study of The Ventures' long and eventful career: *Walk-Don't Run To The Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame: The Story Of The Ventures*, which touches upon a number of 60s recordings.



Extensive coverage of the group is provided by three magazines, all of them UK-produced, one representing a dedicated fan club and the others edited by enthusiasts who recognise the pivotal role played by these stellar and inventive performers in RI.

Gerry Woodage produced the first issue of *The Ventures Resurgence: Publication Of The Official Ventures International Club* in 1984, and it is still going strong in the new millennium. This is the place to go for up to the minute news of the group's

music and activities. A close eye is kept on the all important Japanese scene and also on the steady stream of Ventures CDs hitting the marketplace. There is advance notice of new albums, and merchandise is imported to order.

*New Gandy Dancer*, founded in 1979, can claim the distinction of being the world's longest running instrumental magazine. Its editor, Dave Peckett, a noted Ventures aficionado, has ensured that the group has received ample and varied coverage over the years. Issue 22 (1986) took the form of a 'Special Collector's Limited Edition of The Ventures' and it still makes for a fascinating read in 2008.

Finally here, Alan Taylor and Dave Burke, editors of a younger instrumental magazine, *Pipeline*, are both Ventures devotees. The edition of *Pipeline* pictured below contains a lengthy feature by Malcolm Campbell on The Ventures and The Shadows, in the form of a comparative track-by-track analysis covering the period 1960–2006. *Pipeline* has its own rich website:

<http://www.pipeline.co.uk/>

### ONLINE RESOURCES

The internet has not exactly neglected The Ventures, though it is disconcerting that many of the links lurking there have vanished into the ether. The quality of what there is is very uneven. By far the most comprehensive and informative are the lavishly-stocked 'Sandcastle' pages put together by Arnold E. van Beverhoudt, Jr. at

[http://www.sandcastle.com/ventures/f\\_ventures.html/](http://www.sandcastle.com/ventures/f_ventures.html/)

The group's official website is to be found at

<http://www.theventures.com/>

The Underground Fire 2 site has a stock of postings sent in to a discussion forum by its members, but anyone new to it has a lot of catching-up to do with over 20,000 entries (unclassified) at the time of writing:

<http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/undergroundfire2/>

### A VISUAL RECORD: 'BELOVED INVADERS'

Though strictly distinct from the 60s audio output forming the subject of the present book, 'Beloved Invaders' nonetheless is too important to pass unnoticed, offering as it does a unique insight into the group's immense appeal in Japan and providing precious footage of a select few of their outstanding stage performances. Starting life as a documentary (filmed in 1965 and appearing in 1966), it was released by Toshiba-EMI on video and laserdisc in 1991, and on DVD in 2004.

In brief (for the closer details consult Gerry Woodage in *Ventures Resurgence* 78 [2004] 2), the music is absolutely top-drawer, delivered with extreme precision but displaying a dynamism and tightness way beyond the capabilities of any comparable RI group of the period (any period?) known to me. There is a downside, in that the tendency of the three guitarists to line up, stand stock-still (constantly tapping feet and occasional sidelong glances apart) and just let rip with no 'stage presence' to speak of is set in sharp relief by the editing, for the camera homes in for extended periods on the head and shoulders and/ or largely impassive facial expressions rather than on musical technique (fingerwork most obviously: the hordes of Japanese wannabees must surely have found such inattention to detail bitterly disappointing!). No matter:

just lend an ear to 'Bulldog', and expect to be amazed at how the group, in the wake of a relatively serene extended mock-orientalising interlude from Nokie Edwards, erupt explosively and power their way unstoppably to the close— a breathtaking fusion of musical styles.

