

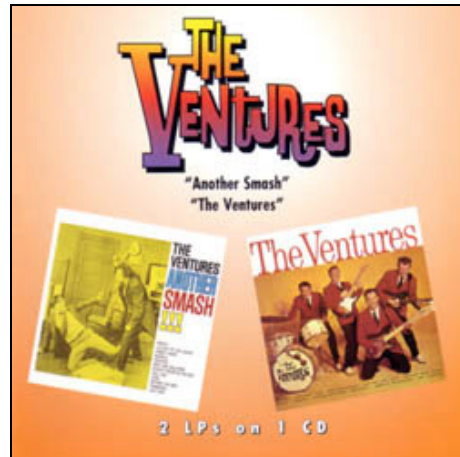
1961

ALBUM TRACKS

July 1961 LP

The Ventures

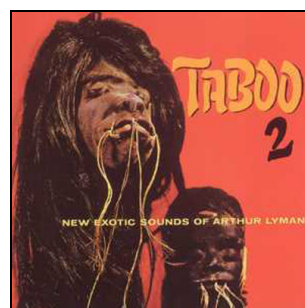
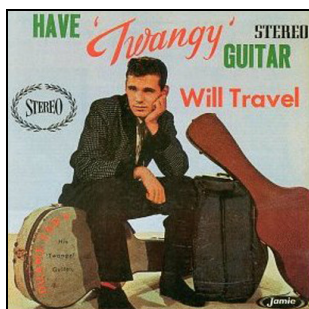
Dolton BST 8004 Stereo/ BLP 2004 Mono



This second album, which must have occasioned disappointment in terms of its chart performance (peaking at a mere #105, on chart for 14 weeks in all), differed from its predecessor in a number of ways. Reproduction was crisper and better focused (cf. p.25 below), and the set seems to have been put together with some care and attention to detail, even if there was not a single in-house composition — though the glorious UPS 'N DOWNS does not sound that far removed stylistically from a typical Ventures romp. The rocked up PERFIDIA was joined by the group's interpretations of other 'standards' originating in the pre-pop era, HAWAIIAN WAR CHANT, BLUE TANGO and the more sedate MOON OF MANAKOORA; the Baker Knight song [61/9], though then only a few years old, is closer in spirit to these than to the rest of the programme. Again, relatively new numbers where the saxophone had played a dominant or at least (in the case of Duane Eddy's DETOUR) conspicuous role (THE SHUCK, RAM-BUNK-SHUSH, WAILIN'; also HARLEM NOCTURNE in its most recent airing from The Viscounts) were recast as guitar intros pure and simple in the broad manner of another inclusion, The Fireballs' TORQUAY.

<<<<CHOICE CUTS>>>>

PERFIDIA is a must-have. While **RAM-BUNK-SHUSH** too was issued as a single and sets an enviably high standard in guitar-led instrumentals, **UPS 'N DOWNS** and **WAILIN'** are hard to beat for their sheer drive and exuberance.



1 [61/1] THE SHUCK (Gary Paxton/ Don Markham)

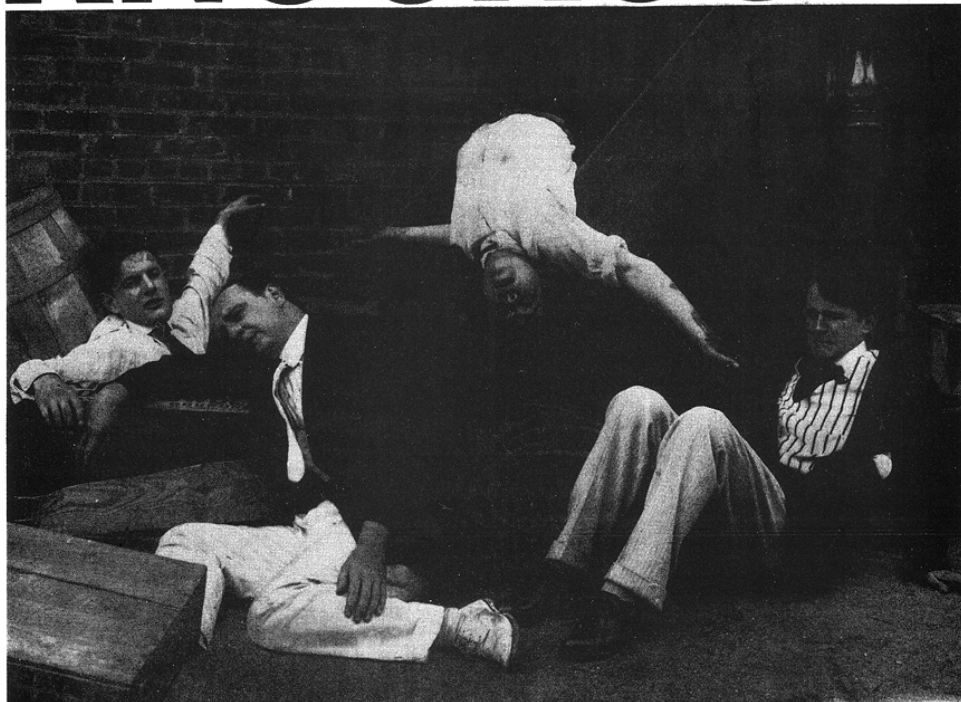
Don Wilson commented thus¹ on THE SHUCK: “It was written by Don Markham who was a sax player who played with us for a while on the road in 1961” (viz., the tour of 1960/1961²). In fact, the number, led by Markham’s tenor sax, was put out in 1960 on the Donna label as an A-Single by Don Markham & The Marksmen³. If a full biography is ever written about the colourful character Gary Paxton, the co-composer and producer of this side, it is unlikely to merit more than a passing mention. Jaunty as it is, with a cosy-sounding country air, it does not make an especially riveting album-opener for North America’s high-flying intro group of the moment, though the nifty solo break at 1:07 does lend it some welcome oomph. Don Wilson (article cited above) relates the title, as a noun generally denoting a ‘pod’ or ‘husk’, to the American slang verb ‘to shuck’ i.e. ‘to fool’, ‘to dupe’.

2 [61/2] DETOUR (Paul Westmoreland)

Westmoreland’s composition was recorded early on, in 1946, as a jolly countrified ditty by Spade Cooley, and the rhythm guitar accompaniment to Duane Eddy’s 1959 version (a B-side, but also one of the tracks on his US #5 debut album *Have ‘Twangy’ Guitar Will Travel*), which must have been the chief inspiration here, certainly has something of a Luther Perkins groove to it. On top of that, one might feel that this is one of those many cases when the sax is hogging just a bit too much of the limelight for a record boasting a guitar-man at the helm. The Ventures take some care to frame their rendition very differently, and the effect, short as the number is, is striking. With Don Wilson playing lead on this occasion, here is an example of the group at its motoric best. Swept along throughout by a crisp and taut accompaniment from Howie Johnson, Nokie on bass springs to life at 0:19 and again at 0:49, and the rhythm guitar, already very much a prominent part of the production, asserts itself even more vigorously from 1:04 as the number is drawing to an emphatic close.

3 [61/3] RAM-BUNK-SHUSH
(Henry Glover/ Lucius 'Lucky' Millinder/ Jimmy Mundy)

KNOCKOUT!



THE VENTURES HIT AGAIN **RAM-BUNK-SHUSH**

b/w *Lonely Heart* Dolton #32

Picked by Billboard as "the most promising instrumental group of the year," the Ventures follow up their smash *PERFIDIA* with another winner.



**CURRENT BEST
SELLING LP**

"Walk, Don't
Run"
Dolton BLP-
2003/BST-8003

Look To LIBERTY In '61



**JUST
RELEASED**

"The Ventures"
Dolton BLP-
2004/BST-8004



The Cash Box—January 28, 1961

Bill Doggett's 'Honky Tonk' (cf. [60/12]) made a deep and immediate impression on record-buyers; but none of the follow-up singles, including 'Ram-Bunk-Shush' in 1957, for all its laid-back elegance and an appealingly growlin' sax with its stylish improvising break, followed up at once with a nifty guitar solo, could rise to that classic's dizzy heights. However, living to fight another day, it gave The Ventures a

credible Top 30 hit early in the year, remaining on chart for nine weeks. Their guitar-led version, recorded in November 1960 (Nokie to the fore, it is generally agreed), really boogies. It sticks to the steady pace of the original but gives it an entirely different complexion by injecting an insistent thrust into the clever call and response patterning from the lead instrument, a thrust reinforced by forceful percussion and rhythmic accompaniment. Give this one a bit of bass lift and it's all systems go Ventures-style, right up to the wavering pitch of the closing flourish.

4 [61/4] HAWAIIAN WAR CHANT

(Leleichaku/ Johnny Noble/ Ralph Freed)

North American musicians and their public naturally felt a closer affinity with Hawaiian-sourced music than their British counterparts, and this particular number had certainly gone the rounds and been treated in all sorts of styles before The Ventures took it in hand (see further on track 12). Based ultimately on a tranquil melody penned by Prince Leleichaku in 1869, The Tommy Dorsey Orchestra had a resounding hit with it in 1939 in a swinging tour de force in which tom-toms played a prominent role (cf. under 1960 p.14 for Don Wilson's interest in the Dorsey sound). A winning feature of our version, where the lead guitar adopts a strikingly tart tone in keeping with the martial title, is the dexterous interplay across the stereo channels of tom-toms (left) and a hammering rhythm accompaniment (right), while Nokie's beautifully judged slapping bass runs at 0:24 and again at 1:01 take us firmly and with great aplomb into beat group territory.

5 [61/5] PERFIDIA

(Alberto Dominguez)



The Ventures took this hoary standard ("Five versions hit the Top 15 in 1941" the *Billboard* annotators declare) by the scruff of the neck. Treating it in the broad manner of their spectacular [60/6] WALK, DON'T RUN, they raced through it in top gear, refrained once more from taking excess baggage on board, musical or otherwise, and turned it into one of the most exhilarating couple of minutes in the history of guitar instrumentals. Hitting the UK No.4, it out-performed at around this time both 'Man Of Mystery' and 'FBI' from the Shadows, who had the benefit of fierce publicity and who were also on the spot!

In the US it fared less well, peaking at #15 and remaining on chart for 13 weeks. Like its brilliant predecessor referred to above, with which it can be combined almost seamlessly, it has become a recurrent element in medleys performed on stage.

Bob Bogle commented: “We had ‘Perfidia’ worked out before we ever released ‘Walk, Don’t Run’... It was part of our original repertoire, as was most of the material from the first two albums. I played lead on those things because Don and I already had those things worked out” (liner notes to EMI *Legendary Masters* CD).

As with [60/6] WALK, DON’T RUN, it is not without interest to plot the UK chart attainments of this stellar performance. In a market where tunes without words were enjoying some vogue but still very much in the minority, it held up well in competition with other instrumental acts with a longer track record on the UK scene (Johnny & The Hurricanes, Duane Eddy) or, in The Shadows’ case, a group with an immense home following and constant radio/TV/live concert exposure. The Top 20 placings from 10 December 1960 through to 4 February 1961 were (*Record Retailer*, *NME* in brackets): — (20), 16 (13), 15 (10), 12 (12), 9 (8), 10 (5), 4 (8), 7 (11), 17 (17). For most punters of the time then PERFIDIA climbed to 5 rather than 4, stopped in its tracks by strong vocal presences, Johnny Tillotson, Elvis Presley, The Drifters and Cliff Richard (in *Record Retailer*’s case, a week later, by Tillotson, Richard and Matt Monro).

6 [61/6] HARLEM NOCTURNE

(Earl Hagen)

Hagen’s smooth and dreamy slab of mood music, composed in 1939 for saxophonist Jack Dumont of The Ray Noble Orchestra, attracted a steady stream of imitations, most pertinently for our purpose a minor hit single in 1959/60 for The Viscounts whom we have already encountered in the entry [60/7] NIGHT TRAIN on the *Walk, Don’t Run* album. (For an extended profile of the group consult Colin Mackenzie in *New Gandy Dancer* 79⁴.) Their version’s distinguishing features were the sultry sounding sax of Harry Haller, the shimmering vibrato of Bobby Spievak’s guitar, and Clark Smith’s use of beaters on tom-toms and cymbals. Spievak’s tone is reflected to some degree by Don Wilson as he embellishes Bob Bogle’s delicately crafted lead lines. However, The Ventures go for a sound that is sharply-etched and forward rather than silky-smooth and evocative of the sleepy night hours. Still, it is tame stuff indeed compared with their remarkably unconventional workout from 1965 (the year as it happens that The Viscounts’ version was re-released and peaked at #39 in the US national charts, though its stay was a fleeting one). Issued on the CD *In The Vaults Volume 2* in 1999 in the wake of a Ventures Club cassette of limited distribution (see *Pipeline* 26⁵ for closer details), it is a feisty, menacing, clangorous performance, evoking the murky and forbidding world of Gotham City rather than a somnolent Harlem, cf. the *Vaults* commentary by Dave Burke and Alan Taylor — an absolutely sensational track.

7 [61/7] BLUE TANGO

(Leroy Anderson/ Mitchell Parish)

A very recent high-profile small-group version of Leroy Anderson’s elegant orchestral blockbuster from the early 50s was that of Bill Black’s Combo (charting at the end of 1960, it climbed to #16), bearing his characteristically stuttering hurdy-gurdy style, no doubt hugely popular in fairgrounds across the land. One feature of it was actually alarming: the organist took the principle of ornate flourishes to truly comical lengths, to a degree unparalleled elsewhere to my knowledge in Black’s fairly extensive recorded works. This great melody deserves better, and gets it: with The Ventures it does not stutter, it struts, propelled by crisp percussion, forceful rhythm

guitar and welling bass, a full-bodied chorus engaging from time to time (and for the first time on LP for the group) to lend added colour.

8 [61/8] UPS 'N DOWNS

(Chadrick Rogue)

“This peach of a track opens with marching snare drum and guitar then moves into a briskly paced rocker with a twangy lead and, best of all, that rhythmic drive which Bob and Don had developed to perfection on this album ...”.⁶ And how about that wonderful flourish at 1:28–1:29 as the group flex themselves to swing into the closing portion of this exhilarating example of RI? — a flourish incidentally that must reinforce the feeling that Nokie is on lead for this display of exceptionally nifty guitar picking. It was clear from a number of their early tracks that The Ventures were definitely here to stay. This is one of them: it would have made a good lead single (cf. p.25 below).

9 [61/9] LONESOME TOWN

(Baker Knight)

The first of a string of Baker Knight songs to be recorded by Ricky Nelson, this mellow ballad had hit #7 in 1958. The tastefully subdued background vocals from The Jordanares on that are matched here by a forward-sounding, and latterly rather persistent, female presence which detracts somewhat from the honeyed melodiousness of the lead lines and the shimmering rhythm accompaniment, the latter pleasingly varying the dry acoustic guitar of the original.

10 [61/10] TORQUAY

(George Tomsco)

‘Torquay’ was the first of three US hit singles from The Fireballs between 1959 and 1961 — the most modest of them, just getting into the Top 40 late in the year, but at least providing nationwide exposure for a group format that pointed to a new direction in instrumental music (in the UK The Drifters/ Shadows still had some way to go before grabbing centre-stage in their own right). The Fireballs’ three guitars + drums line-up offered a fresh-sounding, cleaner-cut alternative to the various sax or organ dominated compositions (or, in Duane Eddy’s case, guitar intimately welded to sax) of the second half of the 50s. The technique of lead guitarist George Tomsco in evidence on this number and on BULLDOG (see entry [61/16]) contributed greatly to the group’s appeal. Dave Burke⁷ offers a discerning appraisal of his “characteristic method of working up riffs around the beat and using damped strings to emphasise the percussive element to a tune, often adding little fills on the high strings by way of reply and contrast”.

The Ventures followed on soon afterwards. They proved to have a fuller-bodied sound and greater drive, and were certainly more versatile by far, with the foresight from the first album on to offer a blend of individualism and material selected from the century’s rich and varied musical heritage or from the current big sellers. George Tomsco⁸ was dismissive of “cover versions”: “I couldn’t see the point when I could come up with my own tunes”. That was surely one of the miscalculations of the group’s career. The two most distinguished proponents of guitar-led RI, The Ventures and The Shadows, both owed their market penetration and their staying power not just to their ability to come up with a significant number of ‘originals’, but also, and equally if not more so, to the fact that they were prepared to draw on and remould what other gifted and/or successful composers had to offer. The Fireballs may have

displayed a certain amount of verve, but the notion that variety is the spice of life was patently not part of their world picture.

To return to the present number, while the Tomsco arrangement remains more or less intact, the lead lines are more distinctively articulated and the overall performance is perkier. But it is not one of the stand-out tracks on our album.

11 [61/11] WAILIN'

(Rich Dangel/ John Greek)

The original stems from The Fabulous Wailers, commonly referred to as just The Wailers, whose gigs were immensely popular in the American Northwest in the late 50s/early 60s (see the interview and profile in *Pipeline* 25⁹). Driven at times by an almost manic energy, this sax/piano/guitar powerhouse could only chalk up a couple of Top 40 successes nationwide with the same track, 'Tall Cool One', in 1959 and again in May 1964. The latter, the fourth of four of their numbers picked up by The Ventures (the second was [62/3] ROAD RUNNER, the third [62/11] SHANGHIED), was covered on *The Fabulous Ventures* set from August 1964: see entry [64/18].

The original 'Wailin' is an astonishingly vibrant piece with a no-holds-barred rawness that verges on the scary, a quintessential specimen of the uninhibited face of rock 'n' roll. The Ventures wisely do not attempt to compete with The Wailers on their own terms, but work it up into a sophisticated guitar-led tour de force, the nifty lead lines racing along to a pulsating rhythm accompaniment and weaving bass-lines (apply a slight lift for maximum slam), sounding initially rather like an 'In The Mood' in hyperdrive. This scintillating track, one of the finest early examples of The Ventures in their inimitable powerhouse mode, was stashed in Dave Burke's bag of All Gold Ventures and pulled out for commendation in *New Gandy Dancer* 45¹⁰: "Clanging guitar introduction and then it's off to a thunderous racing rhythm as Bob tears out the lead to this explosive instrumental. Another fine example of The Ventures taking a good instrumental ... and making it great. Highlighted by a brief Howie Johnson drum fill and also by one of the first vocal appearances of The Ventures demonstrating an early aptitude for numeracy by yelling out '6-5-4-3-2-1-Yeah!'"

12 [61/12] MOON OF MANAKOORA

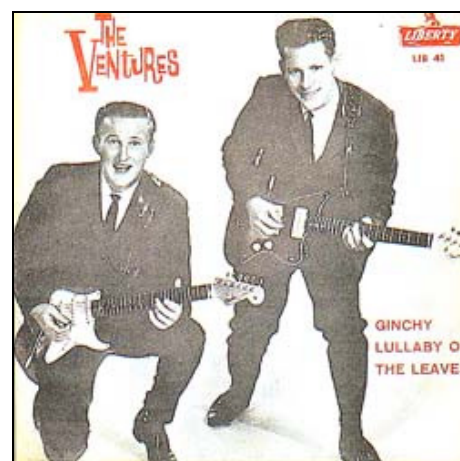
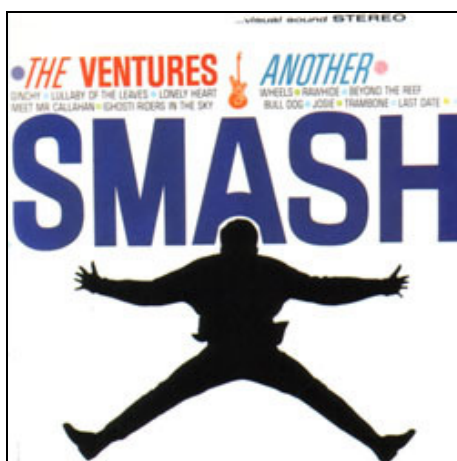
(Frank Loesser/ Alfred Newman)

Written for the exotically romantic South Seas movie *The Hurricane* (1937) and popularised by star Dorothy Lamour, the number was taken up by such luminaries as Bing Crosby, and there was a notable vocal/guitar pairing from Les Paul & Mary Ford in 1951. According to Don Wilson (quoted in Halterman 135) the immediate inspiration for The Ventures was Jerry Byrd's version of 1958 (LP *Hi-Fi Guitar*). Indeed, the group also recorded a trio of numbers featured on steel guitar virtuoso Byrd's 1961 Monument album *Byrd Of Paradise*: see [61/18] BEYOND THE REEF, [61/39U] ADVENTURES IN PARADISE, [61/47U] HAWAIIAN WEDDING SONG. The approach on MOON OF MANAKOORA has something in common too with that of The Arthur Lyman Group. Lyman, primarily a vibraphonist, was a gifted and prolific musician specialising in Hawaiian-sourced/-flavoured material, and the various striking effects achieved with their richly varied instrumentation was specifically targeted at the nascent stereo market: see the informative sketch by George Geddes in *Pipeline* 41¹¹. They were currently very much in fashion and actually broke into the singles arena in mid-1961 with 'Yellow Bird' (see entry

[61/34]). Their mellow ‘Moon Of Manakoora’ had appeared on the 1958 album *Taboo 2*.

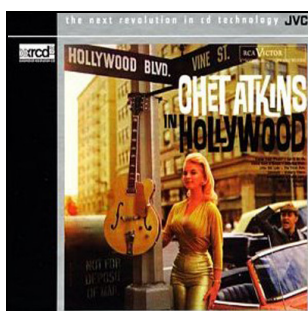
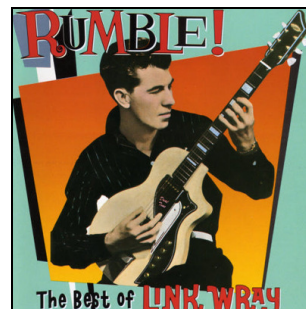
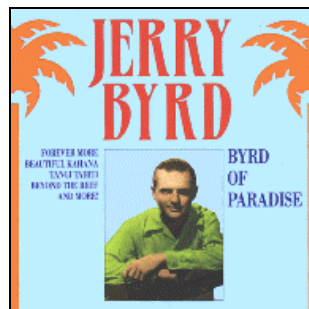
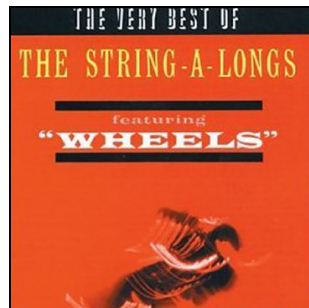
The Ventures’ rendition, though not inelegant by any means, is a less restful affair than either the Byrd or the Lyman versions. Del Halterman¹² quotes Bob Bogle (the quotation is undated) as ascribing the lead guitar part to Nokie Edwards, but the latter seems never to have laid claim to it. However that may be, it is a mite deliberate sounding with tubby bass-lines and lusty backing vocals savouring of a big production number for the silver screen, raising the expectation of the onset of lush orchestration any moment — the energetic ‘Hawaiian War Chant’ (track 4 above) can likewise be contrasted with Byrd and Lyman’s distinctly laid-back accounts from 1961 and 1959 respectively.

September 1961 LP
Another Smash!!!
 Dolton BST 8006 Stereo/ BLP 2006 Mono



The single most noteworthy departure in this, the third of the group’s albums, which fared well by climbing to #39, staying on chart for 14 weeks, is the incorporation of string accompaniment, with or without choral support, some months before the furore in the conservative UK press ignited by Norrie Paramor’s direct involvement in Shadows’ numbers. The by now familiar guitar/drums line-up is adhered to throughout, but strings contribute quite tellingly to the evocation of eeriness in the opening track, and are ideally suited to the ambience of the Hawaiian-related

BEYOND THE REEF, while spotlighting the group's mellower side on the emotive LAST DATE and the tender JOSIE. Side by side with these, the speciality of the house is served up in the form of a clutch of scintillating uptempo numbers: BULLDOG, LULLABY OF THE LEAVES, RAW-HIDE and GINCHY; the more refined MEET MR CALLAGHAN and TRAMBONE provide a touch of class; the insipid WHEELS is over with early on and its disagreeable taste soon blotted out by the treats in store. There is also a shift in emphasis in programme selection. With RI catching on in a big way, we find the group looking to The Ramrods, The String-A-Longs, The Fireballs, Link Wray and Bert Weedon. Other popular instrumentalists also figure: Chet Atkins is recalled once more, together with his associate Floyd Cramer, and also very probably Arthur Lyman. Unusually, both group-generated compositions are smooth and tuneful and not high-powered belters.



<<<<CHOICE CUTS>>>>

LULLABY OF THE LEAVES for its inventiveness and sheer bravura, BULLDOG for its dynamism, MEET MR CALLAGHAN for its poise and the wonderfully resonant sheen of its lead guitar.

1 [61/13] (GHOST) RIDERS IN THE SKY

(Stan Jones)

The song, whose lyrics harbour a variation on the widespread 'Wild Hunt' folk myth with fearsome and lurid imagery and grim warning message, invites sound effects on a grand scale, and this is exactly what The Ramrods had done with it earlier in 1961, going to great lengths to give aural substance to the evocation of an other-worldly commotion. Shorn of the lyrics, though, the whole thing sounds more than faintly comic: with the flavour of a spoof horror movie, the immoderate bovine rumpus made it seem horribly (and I mean horribly) tiresome and dated not many moons after it first saw the light of day. The Ventures' version, featuring Don Wilson on lead, mirrors, and upstages, the twang, while the background effects, both choral and orchestral, are less obtrusive and at times aptly atmospheric if not exactly spine-chilling. The rhythm section seems more recessed/ less punchy than it need have been.

2 [61/14] WHEELS

(Jimmy Torres/ Richard Stephens/ Norman Petty)

The composer credits are given as officially logged: but see Dave Burke in *Pipeline* 73¹³, where the group is profiled in great detail. It is hard to argue with success: The String-A-Longs' 'Wheels' chart showing was impressive, with its US #3/UK #8 in 1961 setting it up for inclusion on innumerable compilations. But I will argue anyway, with the comment that it has always seemed to me to be about as twee and airless as instrumentals can get (with different imagery, "a watery weak number" in the eyes of Dave Peckett¹⁴). Is that a second lead guitar or even a third I hear creating some interesting patterns in their recordings? Yes, but on the other hand isn't that a 'Perfidia' running smoothly along on ... wheels? Much of their music seems to me to have a strangely (literal) mechanical feel to it. Are not 'Red River Twist' and 'Save The Last Dance For Me' the last word in (rock steady) pistonic motion? The Ventures have a knack of snatching apparently hopeless cases from the doldrums, but this one is surely beyond sensible help. In fact, The String-A-Longs' version sounds far crisper, particularly in the percussion department, for what that's worth.

3 [61/15] LONELY HEART

(Bob Bogle/ Don Wilson)

This was the B-side of a charting US single: see entry [61/3] RAM-BUNK-SHUSH. A composition from within the group (in another life it was a Don Wilson vocal with lyrics by his mother Josie entitled 'Dear Miss Lonely Heart'), the first on LP since the debut set, that combines tunefulness with ebullience. (Note the introduction of a quite unexpected, beautifully resonant chord with judicious use of tremolo at 0:49–0:50.) It is a charming medium-paced little gem with a brisk, incisive rhythm accompaniment. The deeply intoned backing vocals are unflagging and pronounced but add a winning warmth to an exceptionally attractive melody.

4 [61/16] BULLDOG

(George Tomsco)

The Fireballs' 'Bulldog', the group's second big-selling single, entered the US charts in the first month of 1960, three months before [60/6] WALK, DON'T RUN was recorded for Blue Horizon. Alan Taylor & Dave Burke home in on one of its most distinctive aspects in the liner notes to the 2007 Ace CD *The Birth Of Surf*: "It features passages of George Tomsco's snappy and heavily echoed damped picking, which was the precursor of the damped reverb guitar work found on many surf

recordings". It climbed to #24, thereby providing a close precedent for the brand of high-performing exciting guitar-based instrumental in which The Ventures would very soon lead the field. With this version of BULLDOG our third album comes to life. It would be an exaggeration to say that it is street aheads of the model, but it is ahead alright: it takes a gloriously catchy tour de force, which is surely the equal of such classics as 'Pipeline' and 'Wipe Out', by the scruff of its neck and injects it with that distinctive Ventures tightness and drive and poise, with Don Wilson's driving rhythm guitar very much in evidence. What is more, an invigorating breath of fresh air is introduced by an extended improvising break at 1:21 (clearly Nokie Edwards is on lead here, as he himself would recollect, see Introduction to December 1960 LP *Walk, Don't Run*), an element notable for its total absence in The Fireballs' rigidly structured rendition.

5 [61/17] LULLABY OF THE LEAVES

(Bernice Petkere/ Joe Young)

How much mileage could The Ventures wring from their debut single and still keep their fans begging for more? Quite a lot in fact (this had charted as a single in April, peaking at #69, though at a mere five weeks on chart its staying-power proved feeble), thanks to the brilliance of the original, the shrewd choice of material on which to graft it, the ingenious and daring arrangements, and, not least, the dynamism of the performances. For this particular title Don Wilson (quoted in the Introduction to the *Walk, Don't Run* album above) referred to a recording by Chet Atkins. His influence on tune selection can be seen elsewhere on this album: cf. his 'Trambone' (1956) and 'Meet Mr Callaghan' (1959).

"Oh sing me to sleep, / Lullaby of the leaves" is the song's refrain. There's not even a remote chance of drifting off here, as The Ventures, tongue-in-cheek, entered the recording studios in March 1961 to turn this wistful ballad from the 1930s into an uninhibited and exhilarating belter, going way beyond the mild degree of pep injected into it by certain swing bands of that era. The WDR-style intro sets up a tremendous clatter, Nokie's bass pounds away, and the tremolo arm is tugged vigorously and repeatedly at phrase-ends in line with the sheer exuberance of the ensemble performance. With practically no supporting airplay that I can recall, and with a modicum of promotion in the music press (though *NME* confidently forecast a hit), it entered the UK charts for a brief spell in May 1961, peaking at #43. In their own country, where it scored less highly, the group was already focusing on albums, which they would produce in profusion from this point on.

6 [61/18] BEYOND THE REEF

(Jack Pitman)

Pitman was a Canadian who visited Hawaii in 1943 and thenceforth cultivated an Hawaiian style, broadly speaking, in his many songs. 'Beyond The Reef', his most familiar, was written in 1948 and recorded among others by Bing Crosby in 1950. The idea for the cover probably stemmed from Jerry Byrd (see the comment on [61/12] MOON OF MANAKOORA), and possibly also The Arthur Lyman group, who put out a well-known version of the number in 1959. The song is gently romantic, and both Byrd's and Lyman's versions are mellow, in fact mellow to a fault, soporific even. Typically with this kind of material The Ventures paint in bright colours and broad sweeps: loud crashing waves at start and finish, in league with sharp, heavily emphasised lead lines together with prominent orchestration and backing vocals.

7 [61/19] RAW-HIDE

(Milt Grant/ Link Wray)

'Raw-Hide' may not have been as dirty-sounding or rasping as Link Wray's first and greatest hit from 1958, 'Rumble', but it was dynamic enough with its crashing power chords and pounding piano accompaniment to earn him a high 20s placing in the US charts the following year. If the great axeman appealed to leather-jacketed males on motorbikes, The Ventures catered for those with more conservative tastes, for theirs is a spruced-up workout majoring on slickness and pace, though its lines are not as clean-cut as those of The Fireballs' version released in 1963. At 0:34 the first of Bob Bogle's two nifty solo excursions wrings maximum twang from his Fender, Nokie's racing bass-lines acting as a propellant rather than a mere underpinning, while the call and response sequence involving lead and drums at 1:06 adroitly serves as a momentary brake to pave the way for the feverish race home. The track is generally well liked in Ventures circles: I am wholly at a loss to see how the performance merits the term "wooden"¹⁵.

8 [61/20] MEET MR CALLAGHAN [listed as 'CALLAHAN']

(Eric Spear)

Featured on Chet Atkins' *In Hollywood* album from 1959, this is actually the title of a 1954 British film featuring Slim Callaghan, a private detective in the American mould, the brainchild of novelist Peter Cheyney. As most famously with [60/6] WALK, DON'T RUN, The Ventures simplify their Atkins model: on this occasion the arrangement and tempo are adhered to quite closely, but there are no strings, the melody comes over as less fussy, and the overall approach is much more robust, akin to Les Paul's sprightly version of 1952. Part of the Bogle-Wilson repertoire in their pre-recording days, it is a stylish number stylishly played, with a gorgeously creamy tone from the Bogle Fender and deft use of the tremolo arm, particularly from 1:25 on.

9 [61/21] TRAMBONE

(Chet Atkins)

In its composer's hands this is a jazzy, rather arty-sounding piece, one whose technique would one day appeal to Paul McCartney who cites it as one of the influences on his 'Michelle'. No less fluently played than the previous track, The Ventures cut down on a variety of Chet's characteristically tricky embellishments, beef the whole thing up (the stereo soundstage is particularly full and vibrant) and make a swinging beat number of it, as The Spotnicks would with a somewhat heavier touch a couple of years further on. In Duane Eddy's version of 1959 on the other hand the tune had been slowed down to a tiresome and airless drone, drained of all vitality.

10 [61/22] LAST DATE

(Floyd Cramer)

It was at Chet Atkins' prompting that Floyd Cramer penned this piece as an example of his 'slip note' technique (George Tomsco it seems attempted to imitate the effect on guitar in The Fireballs' version released in 1963: not a happy experiment). Cramer entered the US charts with it three months after [60/6] WALK, DON'T RUN, and both were halted at #2. Its haunting melody, which would provoke many an imitation, including an early one from Lawrence Welk who just missed the Top 20 with his version in 1960, is beautifully captured by the warm, full-bodied guitar tone, not at all overshadowed or undermined by the fairly muted vocal support or the swirling string

accompaniment, prominent as that is (though it would have been better swept across the soundstage, as in the Cramer original, rather than lodged firmly in one of the channels).

11 [61/23] GINCHY

(Bert Weedon)

This was the B-side of a charting US single: see entry [61/17], LULLABY OF THE LEAVES. By early 1961 the singles market in the UK was beginning to buzz with instrumentals in various styles, and it was Bob Reisdorff, ever on the lookout for fresh material, who got to know of the tune from one of his contacts there and put it The Ventures' way¹⁶. 'Ginchy' was in fact one of the less sought-after, entering the charts in February and peaking at #35 (though *NME* gave it a week at #29) as their [61/5] PERFIDIA was slipping from view. The rasping flautist did it absolutely no favours. Bert Weedon was a guitarist of an earlier generation who was not wholly focused on modern trends; it cannot have helped to have record labels advertising in tea-party fashion 'Bert Weedon with instrumental accompaniment'. He had made the Top 10 in 1959 just before the dawn of a new era and had been struggling since, his quaintly-styled and sorry-sounding 'Apache' remarkably making #24 by riding on the back of The Shadows' blockbuster hit. Still, 'Ginchy' was definitely one of the better ones. Possessing real pace and clout, it suited The Ventures down to the ground, though the lead lines do not seem quite as smooth and assured as they might have been.

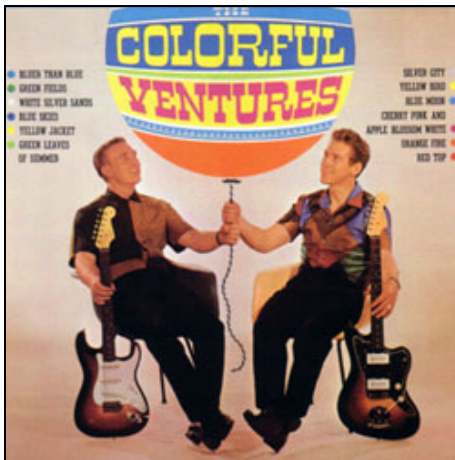
12 [61/24] JOSIE

(Bob Bogle/ Don Wilson)



The title of this charming ballad, well served by the stylish string accompaniment, which lends a touch of serene majesty, refers to Don Wilson's mother, who assumed a pro-active role in overseeing the enterprises of the Bogle and Wilson duo early on and continued to do so when The Ventures rose to national prominence.

October 1961 LP
The Colorful Ventures
 Dolton BST 8008 Stereo/ BLP 2008 Mono



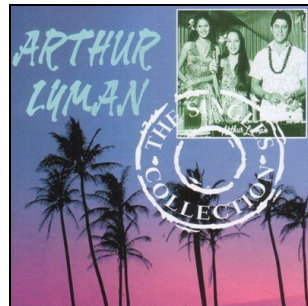
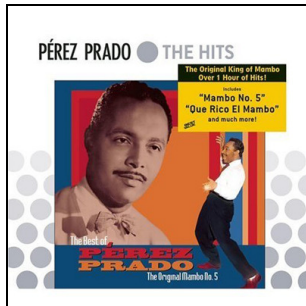
Don Wilson, interviewed in 1981¹⁷: The first three albums ... all contained material that was included in the group's stage repertoire ... "After the third album ... I can remember going up to Bob Reisdorff ... and telling him we didn't know what to do next. We had run out of songs to record. Bob told me that there was a lot more sounds in our guitars than we could imagine. He was right."

Two high-powered originals (YELLOW JACKET, ORANGE FIRE) are complemented by two very different tunes from individuals close to the group and their recording environment (BLUER THAN BLUE and SILVER CITY). The expected standards from some while back are there, BLUE SKIES and BLUE MOON (the latter having been very much in the public eye earlier in the year), together with an old, originally jazz-flavoured piece (RED TOP). The remaining programme embraces chart-related covers from 1955 (CHERRY PINK ...), 1960 (GREENFIELDS from The Brothers Four, prompting another from the same source, THE GREEN LEAVES ...), 1960 again (WHITE SILVER SANDS), 1961 (YELLOW BIRD). Four tracks are furnished with orchestral accompaniment by Hank Levine, ostentatiously on his own composition SILVER CITY, discreetly on the mellow THE GREEN LEAVES ... and GREENFIELDS, rather gracelessly on BLUER THAN BLUE.

The album peaked at #94 and was on chart for 17 weeks.

<<<<CHOICE CUTS>>>>

YELLOW JACKET and **BLUE MOON** would prove their worth in years to come with some dazzling onstage performances, but the outstanding highlight of this set, for the imaginative arrangement, the togetherness, and the flair that pervades the performance, is The Ventures' tribute to true genius, the wonderfully uplifting **BLUE SKIES**.



1 [61/25] **BLUE MOON** Album Version

(Richard Rodgers/ Lorenz Hart)

By 1961 'Blue Moon' was famous, revered even, recorded by many of the brightest lights in the world of music. It had been written as a gentle ballad, but in March of this year doo-wop group The Marcels — much to Richard Rodgers' publicly-voiced disgust — subjected it to a comprehensive verbal and rhythmical mauling, and were rewarded for their pains by topping the charts both in the US and the UK. It was still in the US charts in July. Shortly thereafter The Ventures recorded it as an eye-catching album opener and also released it, in slightly different form, as an October single (see entry [61/37S]). Harking back to an arrangement devised in 1960¹⁸, they shrewdly called once again upon structural elements reminiscent of their breakthrough single to produce a thoroughly engaging confection, rocking it up and making robust use of the tremolo arm to lend added sonority to the killer melody. Nokie's bass contribution has attracted glowing praise from Dave Towers¹⁹.

2 [61/26] **YELLOW JACKET**

(Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Don Wilson)

Playing this gem at high volume on a powerful amp, with a touch of bass boost, allows one to form an early impression of the kind of sheer power The Ventures projected on stage, this pulsating opus, recorded in June 1961, being one of their showpieces. Its title presumably meant to evoke the image of the wasp which relies in attack on its potent sting, it exudes pure energy from start to finish, with the entire group firing on all cylinders, the thrusting, aggressive, almost snarling sequence at 1:35 being particularly spectacular (Nokie Edwards on lead: see Introduction to December 1960 LP *Walk, Don't Run*).

3 [61/27] **BLUER THAN BLUE**

(Dick Glasser/ Tommy Allsup)

This was the B-side of a charting US single: see entry [61/36] **SILVER CITY**, and also p.25 below. As Dave Burke remarks²⁰, reproduction is slightly muffled and phasey in places. Hank Levine's first orchestral intervention on this set is not too impressive either: his accompaniment sounds oddly remote, detached, as if dubbed on as an afterthought. Moreover, though the song from Allsup, then record producer and

session guitarist at Liberty Records (Tom Wills & The Texas Playboys issued a swinging vocal version under his guidance) and producer/ Liberty staff-writer Glasser is diverting enough, the group performance seems a mite pedestrian and even laboured in places: emphatically not one of their best efforts.

4 [61/28] CHERRY PINK AND APPLE BLOSSOM WHITE

(Louiguy/ Jacques Larue/ Mack David)

First published in Paris with words by Larue and music by Louiguy (Louis Gugliemi), Mack David wrote the English lyrics in 1951. It was a big 1955 hit for 'The King Of Mambo', Cuban Perez Prado & His Orchestra. With a very up-front and much admired trumpet solo by Billy Regis, it was lodged at #1 in the US for ten weeks and in the UK for two (trumpet maestro Eddie Calvert followed soon after with a similarly styled version and made it to the top as well). To turn to The Ventures in 1961, their version has much more zip and zest to it. In this respect it is close to that of harmonica trio Jerry Murad's Harmonicats who had a Top 20 album out with this tune as its title just a few months before our guitar heroes went into the studio to record theirs. It provides the first pronounced example of the infectiously 'chugging' accompaniment that is one of the trademarks of The Ventures' playing to this day.

5 [61/29] THE GREEN LEAVES OF SUMMER

(Dimitri Tiomkin/ Paul Francis Webster)

This soothing, reflective piece, with piquant lyrics by Webster, served as a telling prelude, and counterpoint, to the ferocity of the massacre which brought the 1960 John Wayne movie *The Alamo* to a resounding climax. The Brothers Four version and their fourth single (see track 7 below) did not make much of an impression on the charts, but the group performed the Oscar-nominated song on the 1961 Academy Awards television broadcast. The melody is undoubtedly beguiling, and the light orchestral and choral accompaniment to The Ventures' rendition allows its delicate textures to shine though radiantly.

6 [61/30] BLUE SKIES

(Irving Berlin)

After BLUE MOON, BLUE SKIES, and The Ventures are moving once again in a decidedly upmarket direction, to dizzy heights in fact. They rise to the occasion: with no trace of routine, they come to grips with one of the great songs of the twentieth century and treat it to a startlingly adventurous makeover. Don Wilson's pulsating rhythm guitar raises the spirits in line with the song's unalloyed optimism. The lead guitar work is nothing short of inspired, assured, breezy, dazzlingly exploiting tonal variation, with greater reliance on string-bending (some tremendous improvising here) than on tremolo arm: Nokie is in the driving seat for sure.

7 [61/31] GREENFIELDS

(Terry Gilkyson/ Richard Dehr/ Frank Miller)

Washington State folk group The Brothers Four had a US #2 in 1960 with this song, written in 1956 by Terry Gilkyson & The Easy Riders (Rich Dehr was their lead vocalist), who exerted a strong influence on The Kingston Trio amongst other folk luminaries. It is a melancholy tale of a lover forsaken (tinged with the faint hope of an eventual happy outcome), the green fields and other haunts now gone. The Ventures capture the wistful mood of the Brothers version; Hank Levine's recessed orchestral accompaniment and the soft background vocals help to build a brooding atmosphere.

8 [61/32] RED TOP

(Ben Kynard/ Lionel Hampton)

In 1961, as Bill Black for one demonstrated (Black would release an attractively laid-back version of this particular number in 1963), there was still some mileage left in the routine of a shuffle beat, assorted lead instruments with sax commonly playing a prominent role, and from time to time some person(s) shouting out the tune title in the manner of one offering an *aide memoire*. This guitar-led specimen, with the kind of presentation one could imagine going down a treat at a Freshmans dance, is lively enough and quite catchy once it moves past the first minute. The original, in spite of, rather than because of, the lyrics (“My little red top/ See how you got me spinning/ Going round and round/ And I don’t want to stop ...”), is very much grittier. It was a hit, his first, back in 1947 for Gene Ammons (son of boogie-woogie pianist great Albert Ammons), tenor/baritone saxophonist and gravelly vocalist; co-composer Hampton came up with an orchestral version later that same year. Ventures product misattributes to <Woody> Herman — his is a different ‘Red Top’.

9 [61/33] WHITE SILVER SANDS

(Chuck ‘Red’ Matthews/ Gladys Reinhardt)

This song got off to an auspicious start when big-voiced New York baritone Don Rondo, supported by a jazzy guitar and fulsome-sounding Hammond organ, had a #7 hit with it in 1957. Bill Black’s Combo followed that up in 1960 with a chugging version notable for the clipped, stuttering organ and thoroughly engaging sax part, their biggest hit at #9 (#1 R&B chart), and arguably their finest two and a half minutes ever. With The Ventures it is more sprightly, Don Wilson engaging in stretches of a call and response nature with the lead, and alternating with some vigorous chording as things get more animated.

10 [61/34] YELLOW BIRD

(Marilyn Keith/ Alan Bergman/ Norman Luboff)

Hard-boiled instro fans can thank their lucky stars that The Ventures only exercised their vocal chords on the rarest of occasions and never went down the road of this polite enquiry directed at an unsuspecting bird on a banana tree: “Did your lady friend/ Leave the nest again?/ That is very sad/ Makes me feel so bad”. Still, strip away the lyrics and you have a tranquil, mellifluous tune (it was based on a nineteenth century Haitian song), as Arthur Lyman perceived when he adopted it as his signature tune. It was a US #4 for him, entering the charts shortly before the present album was recorded. Chet Atkins would catch up with it the following year (album *Caribbean Guitar*), heavily ornamenting a simple melody as was his wont. A tasteful ensemble performance from The Ventures (in this case, as Del Halterman explains²¹, three guitarists together with crooner Vic Dana contributing extempore percussion!), its shimmering gentility enhancing the stylistic diversity exhibited by this album. GW observes that the number “was featured in their first visit to Japan in 1961 (just Don and Bob with a local drummer and bass player)”.

11 [61/35] ORANGE FIRE

(Nokie Edwards)

The title of this number suggests incandescence, not a bad image to apply to a blistering tour de force which positively careers to a close, and which sees Howie Johnson hammering away as if there was no tomorrow. It is stylistically similar to [61/26] YELLOW JACKET from which it followed on at the recording session²²,

though less assured in places. Two lead guitars are at work, perhaps both played via overdubs by Nokie Edwards: it is definitely Nokie cutting in in the searing sequence at 1:26.

12 [61/36] SILVER CITY

(Hank Levine)

This had entered the charts as a single in August (B-side: [61/27] *BLUER THAN BLUE*). It peaked at #83 in September, only lasting three weeks in the listings.

The album closes with a western-styled tune notably lacking in special effects, suitably grand with a proud, domineering sweep to the orchestral accompaniment, which takes in amongst other things bursts of noble French horns. It is well in keeping with the expectations of the genre and the perceptions of the relevant period of American history nursed by Americans and indeed most people. *Silver City* is in Grant County, New Mexico, nestling in a valley which once served as an Apache settlement. In fact, the city's founder Captain John Bullard was killed by an Apache raiding-party in 1871. The 1951 Western film *Silver City* adduced in Halterman 62 may or may not have suggested the title. It could conceivably have been written for one of the numerous TV pilots of the period that never got off the ground. (Barry Spence²³ talks cryptically of Levine's "TV Western theme": what TV Western was this?) DB thinks that the resources lavished on this number suggest it was written for a film that never materialised (see p.25 below for further details).

1961

FURTHER TRACKS

October 1961 Single, Dolton 47

[61/37S] BLUE MOON

Alternative Version

(Richard Rodgers/ Lorenz Hart)

[61/38S] LADY OF SPAIN

(Tolchard Evans/ Robert Hargreaves/ Harry Tilsley/ Stanley Damerell)

Charting in October 1961, this single peaked in November at #54; weeks on chart: 6. Both sides are conveniently available on (A) the 2005 CD *In The Vaults Volume 3*; (B) the 1997 CD *In The Vaults*.

The mono single version of *BLUE MOON* differs from the album take (see track 1 of *The Colorful Ventures*, [61/25]) in having extra guitar work in the middle section and a slick quick-fire run of notes at the close rather than a WDR-styled ending.

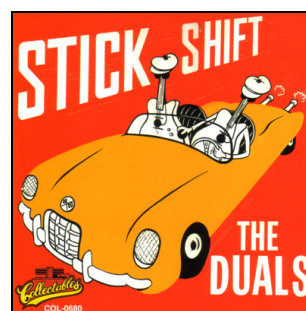
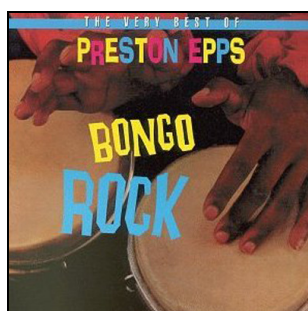
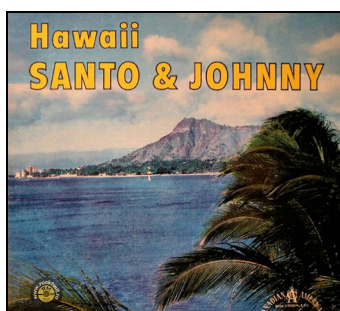
Les Paul's 1952 rendition of 'Lady Of Spain' would have been the most familiar guitar-led version of this English-composed song, which was popularised most notably by Eddie Fisher, and was also a favourite (the scourge according to some) of the accordion. There is nothing of Paul's busy (fussy?) delivery of course in this *Ventures'* workout. It is a specimen of pure beat music of the twangy sort, with sparing but effective deployment of the tremolo arm and with all *The Ventures'* panache in evidence, set off by some remarkably spirited drumming which lends the piece tremendous momentum; add to that effective extra lead guitar fed in from 1:24, adventurous bass-lines, and some trademark pattering rhythm work from Don Wilson. It appeared in America in 1961 only as a B-side, hence it has evolved into a relative

rarity over the years. It would have been good to see this on an album to have it in stereo. For an unreleased version see p.25 below and under 1962, p26.

1961

POST-60s RELEASES

All but three of the items considered here saw their first release on the 1996 CD *In The Vaults Volume 2*, a splendid collection that has provoked much lively comment in specialist publications (as well as some curious approaches to chronology). One thorny issue it raises needs to be addressed at this point. As many have pointed out, certain of the numbers have Howie Johnson's contribution (brushes in particular) very prominent in the mix, and, while some critics have contented themselves with expressing surprise or claiming to have got used to it with extended listening, Gerry Woodage²⁴ has protested that such recordings are the mark of material never seriously considered for release. The issue is not clear-cut. In extreme form, in a cluster of recordings that do not seem to be very far removed in time one from the other, we have, among entries [61/40U] through to [61/55U], GREENSLEEVES, HAWAIIAN WEDDING SONG, TAMMY and TRUE LOVE, at a less obtrusive level but still as a pronounced presence BLUE HAWAII, DANNY BOY and GOLDEN EARRINGS, with DEEP PURPLE somewhere in between. The problem with dismissing all or some of these is that [61/31] GREENFIELDS on the October 1961 *Colorful* set is scarcely free of the flaw, if such it is, and indeed the same goes for [61/53U] THE WAY YOU LOOK TONIGHT, passed for release by Don Wilson in 1977. Perhaps it was a phase they were going through, in which case the underlying point of the Burke/Taylor appraisal stands: "Howie Johnson's rim-shots (even with brushes!) really shouldn't work with ballads at all. Most drummers would lay back and disappear into the background on slow numbers like these. Not Howie! ...".



[61/39U] ADVENTURES IN PARADISE

(Lionel Newman/ Dorcas Cochran)

First released commercially 2005: CD *In The Vaults 3/5*

The theme for the ABC TV series of this name, set in Polynesia, which ran from 1959 to 1962. "Probably recorded in 1961, it would have been particularly at home on the band's second album, sharing as it does a similar South Seas feel to [61/12] MOON OF MANAKOORA"²⁵. Cf. the comment on that number for the probable influence here of steel guitarist Jerry Byrd. A pleasant number embellished with string accompaniment from Hank Levine, hardly more, but judged prize enough by the group to merit inclusion on their *White Album* of 1966 (which also accommodated a

hitherto US single-only release, [62/49S] GENESIS), a set of mellow numbers put together for their own satisfaction and issued in very limited quantities — but then the collection could hardly be said to represent them at their very best by any stretch of the imagination.

[61/40U] BLUE HAWAII

(Leo Robin/ Ralph Rainger)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/14

Dave Burke/Alan Taylor report that this number (together with DEEP PURPLE and GOLDEN EARRINGS) was recorded in June 1961 — the month that a version by Santo & Johnny hit the shops, see further on HAWAIIAN WEDDING SONG below — clearly as part of the material being accumulated for *The Colorful Ventures* set which would see the light of day in October. It was thus not prompted by the Elvis film, as the music for that, though recorded in March, did not surface on album until October, the film itself put on release in November. The song goes back to 1937 when Bing Crosby recorded it and had a #5 hit; Billy Vaughn had climbed to #37 with an orchestral version as recently as 1959. The importance of orchestras like Vaughn's in American popular music — he and others like him were certainly taken seriously and satisfied a substantial public demand; Vaughn himself was turning out hits as late as 1966 — should not be played down. There is ample evidence in The Ventures' early albums to support the view that the group had catholic tastes and absorbed music of many complexions, not just the poppier, beat-orientated music associated primarily with the youth market. Of the various Hawaiian flavoured pieces fielded by the early Ventures this is perhaps the most attractive and certainly has an alluring melody, the lilting middle eight being especially beautiful.

[61/41U] BONGO ROCK

(Preston Epps/ Arthur Egnoian)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/11

A recording date of October 1961 is assigned by annotators Dave Burke and Alan Taylor to this number along with FORTY MILES OF BAD ROAD, STICK SHIFT, TEEN BEAT [but see DB in *Pipeline* 46²⁶?] and VENTURES STOMP (on all of these see comments below). DB now corrects the point that this track and STICK SHIFT featured an “extra guitarist”, Ramon Rivera: “Ramon Rivera was professionally known as Ray Rivera and he was actually a percussionist which makes it most likely that he only played on BONGO ROCK”.

Bongo solos are very much an acquired taste, and while the single ‘Bongo Rock’ from the pen of Egnoian (an assumed name of Art Laboe) and Epps himself more than dented the charts by climbing to #14 in 1959, other pieces like ‘Bongo, Bongo, Bongo’ and even ‘Hully Gully Bongo’ made little or no impression with anybody anywhere, any more than did attempts at diversification via the importation of strings, flutes and a variety of outlandish noises. Still, The Ventures' version rattles along proficiently enough matching the stridulation of a bush cricket. The twangy power-chord contribution seems pretty reasonable to me, a far cry from Richie Podolor's insipid playing on the original, but John Gray²⁷ is less taken.

[61/42U] DANNY BOY

(Trad., arr. Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Don Wilson/ Howie Johnson)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/21

Dave Burke & Alan Taylor argue persuasively for a 1961 recording date for this number together with two others, HAWAIIAN WEDDING SONG and TRUE LOVE, despite their being housed on a tape dated 1965 (the date the tape was *compiled* by EMI from disparate sources, DB now explains) — a compelling inference given the style, definitely Bob Bogle and Don Wilson meshing so expressively in these dreamy, lazily romantic creations! Conway Twitty had made the US Top 10 with this great melody in 1959, and Duane Eddy had a version out in 1961: Jim Grant²⁸ compared The Ventures' version unfavourably with Duane's, describing it as "an ordinary interpretation" without explaining exactly what is meant by "ordinary". No incongruously hoarse sax cutting in (twice), maybe? The number, though it does not sound unduly tentative, only just makes the one and a half minute mark and is presented with an uncharacteristically abrupt fade.

[61/43U] DEEP PURPLE

(Peter De Rose/ Mitchell Parish)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/7

See the comment on [61/40U] BLUE HAWAII above. A very laid back [60/10] SLEEPWALK-like approach this, with that trademark sharply-etched sound to the lead, the melody firmly holding the attention despite the fact that neither rhythm nor drums are exactly in the background feature category. "The early trademark interplay between lead and rhythm is well in evidence here with nicely paced drums and bass" as John Gray²⁹ put it. The spur may well have been Santo & Johnny, who had put out a lush but relaxing version of the tune in 1960.

[61/44U] FORTY MILES OF BAD ROAD

(Duane Eddy/ Al Casey)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/3

Duane Eddy's original hit single of 1959 (US #9/ UK #11) was as much if not more notable for its honking sax and concomitant hollering as for the twang. The Ventures come up with a cleaner-cut but clinical-sounding cover, with Howie Johnson drumming away doggedly and obtrusively with military precision and not a lot going on in the rhythm department (Dave Towers³⁰ surmises that Don Wilson plays lead here). Two and a half minutes seems overlong for this one. The Lively Ones would take it to the three minute mark to good purpose in 1963 (rich guitar sound, adventurous sax, no yells).

[61/45U] GOLDEN EARRINGS

(Jay Livingston/ Ray Evans/ Victor Young)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/1

See on [61/40U] BLUE HAWAII above. Victor Young wrote the score for the 1947 escapist spy film of this name starring Ray Milland and Marlene Dietrich, who played a gypsy, relevant to this romantic song's lyrics; Peggy Lee had a hit with it in 1948. This is an especially striking example of the fledgling Ventures' very vivid and sharply-etched presentation, the lead guitar ringing out startlingly like a pealing bell, with the firm rhythm guitar, here markedly jazz-based, as Dave Burke and Alan Taylor point out, very much part of the action and not a mere adjunct. If it all sounds a mite deliberate, that is a recurrent attribute of these early years. I don't see it as "a

rather nervous run-through” as Dave Towers³¹ opines, though if the slight but unmistakable traces of distortion at the start were on the master tape it seems unlikely that the cut would have been released as it stands. A terrific rockier version of the tune—Nokie might well have dealt with it similarly had he been on lead—had been released by UK guitar group The Hunters in March 1961.

[61/46U] GREENSLEEVES

(Trad., arr. Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Don Wilson/ Howie Johnson)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/10

Maybe not part of the assemblage of *Colorful* material, Dave Burke/ Alan Taylor point out. An atmospheric adaptation of this traditional piece (see the background provided by Rob Bradford in *Pipeline* 72³²) is reviewed under November 1965 (*Christmas Album*), [65/46] SNOWFLAKES. Here Howie Johnson (or the sound engineer: see above!) makes his presence felt very forcibly indeed, incongruously some might feel given that this sweetest of melodies is played absolutely straight, with the lead/ rhythm guitar interplay much more subdued or less in your face than usual, aside from the closing flourish that is. It is hard to see the rationale behind Jim Grant’s remark³³ that it was not considered suitable for release at the time, as being “‘tea dance styling’ and not rock ’n’ roll!” [his exclamation mark, to which one might well append a few extra] — as if everything released by the group around this period (or any period for that matter) came into the latter category.

[61/47U] HAWAIIAN WEDDING SONG

(Charles E King/ Al Hoffman/ Dick Manning)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/19

See on [61/42U] DANNY BOY above. This piece from 1926 gave Andy Williams a near Top 10 hit late in 1959 (surely one of the supreme examples of the genre of the saccharine love song). That same year Billy Vaughn too brought out an orchestral version and Arthur Lyman a monumentally soporific one. It was an important ingredient in the Elvis film, but we do not know if The Ventures’ rendition antedates this: see above on [61/40U] BLUE HAWAII. Santo & Johnny had both these pieces on their *Hawaii* set released in June, and it could well be that it was they as well as Jerry Byrd (he included a dreamy version on his 1961 album *Byrd Of Paradise*, see the comment on [61/12] MOON OF MANAKOORA) who inspired The Ventures to record HAWAIIAN WEDDING SONG as well at this time. In any event, with The Ventures the tone is dulcet, silky-smooth but not unduly so, with Howie in assertive form (it seems, see the introductory remarks) and the interplay between Bob and Don delicately crafted.

[61/48U] MR BLUE

(DeWayne Blackwell)

First commercial release:

2006 CD (Magic Records) *The Colorful Ventures*

The inclusion of this number in the survey is owed to its being lifted from a fan cassette by Magic Records, qualifying it for a legitimate release: the rights and wrongs are not material here. The original is a romantic ballad from Dolton’s two girls and a guy close harmony group The Fleetwoods, who had had a #1 with it in 1959 (it was on chart for 17 weeks into the bargain); the song had been taken up and given a similar styling by Liberty’s Bobby Vee on his debut LP of 1960. Despite the limited dynamic range/ low output level and the distortion, reproduction is good

enough to show that this is one that got away and should never have been allowed to, for it is vintage Ventures. Rocked up and invested with a WDR-styling to the point where it is virtually unrecognisable beside the vocal version, it is a splendid instrumental that may have fared very well indeed had it been properly worked up and released in the early 60s.

[61/49U] STATION BREAKS

(Nokie Edwards)

Rel. 2007: CD *In The Vaults* 4/4

A re-casting for a radio advert of [61/35] ORANGE FIRE on *The Colorful Ventures* set, see the Burke/Taylor note. This is a brisker workout with a number of minor variations, a match for the album cut in vibrancy and clout.

[61/50U] STICK SHIFT

(Henry Bellinger/ Johnny Lageman)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/2

This instrumental from the black duo of Bellinger and Lageman of Los Angeles, The Duals, broke into the national singles listings in September 1961, entered the Top 40 in October, and climbed to #25. The Ventures picked it up pretty smartly, cutting it in early October, but did not get round to releasing it; possibly it got overlooked when they turned their attention to assembling material for the *Twist* sets next in line. It is an attractive alternative to the stylish original with its funkily played lead lines. Less breathless in delivery but punchy and vibrant, there is well judged bike noise and Howie Johnson is in stonking form (there is a brief drum interlude in WDR mode thrown in for good measure). The voices at the close are identified by Rocky Prior (*Pipeline* ref. just cited; cf. too Del Halterman in *Ventures Resurgence* 57³⁴) as “from the original US version of ‘Mr Custer’ by Larry Verne ... An early piece of sampling, I think”.

[61/51U] TAMMY

(Jay Livingston/ Ray Evans)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/17

In these formative years the group certainly had an ear for pretty tunes, and here was one such, the title song of the 1957 film *Tammy And The Bachelor*, which starred Debbie Reynolds who sang it. It was a five-week US chart topper for her (# 2 in UK), and also gave The Ames Brothers a #5 hit later that same year. In The Ventures’ hands it is lilting and alluringly mellow, Howie Johnson’s prominent brushwork perhaps (see comment above on this aspect) designed to ensure that things never become too cloying.

[61/52U] TEEN BEAT

(Sandy Nelson/ Arthur Egnoian)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/5

Maybe not as crisp and focused as the original Sandy Nelson hit of 1959 (US #4 and also a UK #9, with a re-entry at #25 in 1960 as the instro craze took hold there) or the stereo re-recording of 1960, but Howie Johnson drums robustly and the guitar trappings are incisive with some attractive chiming effects. It is a more worthy effort by a long chalk than the later Nelson cover [63/11] LET THERE BE DRUMS on the *Play Telstar* album of January 1963.

[61/53U] THE WAY YOU LOOK TONIGHT

(Jerome Kern/ Dorothy Fields)

Rel. 1977 (but see below for the version in question)

Dave Burke and Alan Taylor, liner notes to CD *In The Vaults* [track 4]: “The 1977 publishing date ... belies the fact that it was probably recorded as early as 1961. The previous year this Jerome Kern standard had been revived by close harmony group The Lettermen in the States and it was doubtless this chart success which prompted The Ventures to record their own version. Howie Johnson is clearly identifiable on drums and the track sounds as though it was cut at the same sessions that produced their *Colorful Ventures* album. The track finally emerged on a Japanese album — *Last Album On Liberty* [1982] — and also as a single in 1977 [B-side to ‘Amanda’s Theme’: United Artists CM 95]”.

The 1961 date sounds about right, for here is as fine an example as any of the early trademark expressive interplay of rhythm and lead from Don and Bob noted elsewhere, especially striking when the pace is relatively sedate and the melody a strong one.

Two further points call for comment. (i) The Lettermen charted in September 1961, but Howie Johnson’s contribution has affinities rather with a cluster of tunes recorded around June, hence The Lettermen’s version may be a false scent — this beautifully crafted 1936 song is after all one of the timeless standards of American music-making. See the introductory comments to this section. (ii) The version offered on the 1997 CD *In The Vaults* is not “Don Wilson’s studio remix [the ‘Liberty’ version above, that is], but a stereo mix of the original 1961 recording minus strings!!” Dave Towers³⁵; Gerry Woodage³⁶ adds: “The non-orchestral version was first heard on our Resurgence cassette of Ventures rarities [viz., not on commercial release]”.

[61/54U] TRAVELIN’ MAN

(Jerry Fuller)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/9

A chart-topper for Ricky Nelson in May 1961, The Ventures probably picked up on the song pretty quickly — certainly this same year (Dave Burke and Alan Taylor think on stylistic grounds of a date “slightly earlier” than October). A Nelson song, [61/9] LONESOME TOWN, appeared on the June set *The Ventures*, and maybe that led to the Fuller number being bypassed though it is by far the worthier of the two. The lead guitar sound is captivating, not too cloying, and Howie Johnson lends a welcome touch of bite.

[61/55U] TRUE LOVE

(Cole Porter)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/4

See on [61/42U] DANNY BOY above. In mid-1961 and thereabouts the group, and in particular Bob Bogle and Don Wilson, appear to have spent considerable time working on arrangements for ballads in this same broad mould. This Porter classic is alluring — it was the most striking of the songs he wrote for the film *High Society*, and its stars Bing Crosby and Grace Kelly had a #3 with it in 1956 — but this particular rendition, radiant as the guitar tone is, seems mannered and rather listless in places, much resembling Ricky Nelson’s on his first album from 1957. On top of that, the lead lines are not altogether assured, and of course the expressive lyrics, which contribute so tellingly to the fabric of the whole, are not there.

[61/56U] VENTURES STOMP

(Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Don Wilson/ Howie Johnson)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/6

See under [62/43] GANDY DANCER.

1961

DAVE'S VIEW FROM THE VAULTS

1

In an interview conducted by Dave Towers for *Pipeline* 34 in 1997, Don Wilson suggested that it was the band's third LP, *Another Smash!!!*, which was the first to be recorded in Hollywood. However, the evidence indicates that it was actually their second, eponymously titled LP. There is a distinctive sound to all of the tracks on this album with the sole exception of 'Perfidia'. Even the band's third 45 'Ram-Bunk-Shush' has that same 'family' sound, and so the conclusion based on the aural evidence is that 'Perfidia' was recorded in Seattle and the remainder of the tracks in Hollywood. Further evidence is provided by the engineers' names, Henry Lewy and Bob Golden, who were credited on the sleeve of the second album. Henry Lewy was an established engineer in Hollywood so it seems unlikely that he would have travelled up to Seattle to work on tapes by what was then little more than a one-hit band. I suppose it could be argued that the tracks were recorded in Seattle and then transported to Hollywood for mixing, but there is an improved clarity and transparency about the very sound of the second album which also suggests that it was recorded in one of Hollywood's better equipped studios. To further establish their LA credentials, Henry Lewy also engineered *The Colorful Ventures* while Bob Golden mastered *Another Smash!!!*, and session contracts establish that both of those LPs were cut in Hollywood.

2

When Malcolm opines that 'Ups 'n' Downs' from the second album would have made a good single he is very much on the money because the band recorded the tune again during August 1961, along with 'Lady Of Spain'. The second album was issued in July 1961, and so it seems likely that the band were considering both titles for a potential single. These tracks are currently unissued and were cut at the same session, with 'Lady Of Spain' being a different version to that which was later released. Bob, Don and Nokie were joined by drummer Ed 'Sharky' Hall. He was one of the top session drummers at the time and he held 'the throne' until rivals like Earl Palmer and Hal Blaine came along to muscle in on his territory.

3

I obtained session info for both 'Raw-Hide' and 'Blue Moon' because I suspected that there may have been an additional guitarist present, but the personnel on both is the usual one of Bogle, Wilson, Edwards and Johnson alone. However, 'Silver City' certainly throws up a surprise as former Buddy Holly and The Crickets guitarist Tommy Allsup joined the line-up while Sharky Hall replaced Howie Johnson. 'Silver City' was an unusually big production, including three French horns, four violins and two cellos led by the well known session violinist Sid Sharp, with an arrangement by pianist and composer of the tune Hank Levine. It's also likely that 'Bluer Than Blue' featured Sharky Hall, as early recordings of the tune (prior to the strings being dubbed on) are logged under the title of 'Sharky'.

In August Nokie Edwards was moonlighting with his own band The Marksmen. His partner in the group was fellow Oklahoman Gene Moles who had already made a name for himself as one of Bakersfield's foremost guitarists and had also recorded with Buck Owens for Capitol in Hollywood during the fifties. Together Edwards and Moles recorded 'Night Run' and 'Scratch' which were released as a 45 on Josie Wilson and Bob Reisdorff's Blue Horizon label. Drummer Bill Graham was hired to play on the date, and there was also an unknown keyboard player present on recordings made early the following year which included 'Peace Pipe', 'Sunny River' 'Joey's Theme' and two originals. Both guitarists were steeped in country music, as one of the unissued tracks demonstrates particularly well, and these titles are currently still in the vaults — although the tape for 'Joey's Theme' (presumably the Bill Haley & The Comets tune) is believed to have been lost.

REFERENCES IN TEXT

H *Del Halterman's Ventures book*
 NGD *New Gandy Dancer*
 P *Pipeline*
 VR *Ventures Resurgence*

- 1 *P* 34 [1997] 10.
- 2 H44.
- 3 H60.
- 4 *NGD* 79 [2006] 7ff.
- 5 *P* 26 [1999] 62–63.
- 6 Dave Burke, *NGD* 45 [1995] 43.
- 7 *P* 19 [1993] 50.
- 8 *P* 70 [2006] 17.
- 9 *P* 25 [1994/95] 8–13.
- 10 *NGD* 45 [1995] 42.
- 11 *P* 41 [1998] 44–45.
- 12 H135.
- 13 *P* 73 [2007] 7–17.
- 14 *NGD* 15 [1980] 11.
- 15 John Beddington, *VR* 67 [2002] 18.
- 16 H55.
- 17 *VR* 91 [2008] 11.
- 18 H63.
- 19 *P* 46 [1999] 42.
- 20 *P* 16 [1992/93] 36.
- 21 H61–62.
- 22 H63.
- 23 *P* 73 [2007] 28.
- 24 *VR* 57 [1999] 26.
- 25 Dave Burke, *P* 26 [1995] 62.
- 26 *P* 46 [1999] 5.
- 27 *VR* 56 [1999] 20.
- 28 *VR* 56 [1999] 15.
- 29 *VR* 56 [1999] 20.
- 30 *P* 44 [1999] 29.
- 31 *P* 44 [1999] 29.
- 32 *P* 72 [2006] 20–21.
- 33 *VR* 56 [1999] 14.
- 34 *VR* 57 [1999] 12.
- 35 *P* 36 [1997] 65.
- 36 *VR* 49 [1997] 10.