

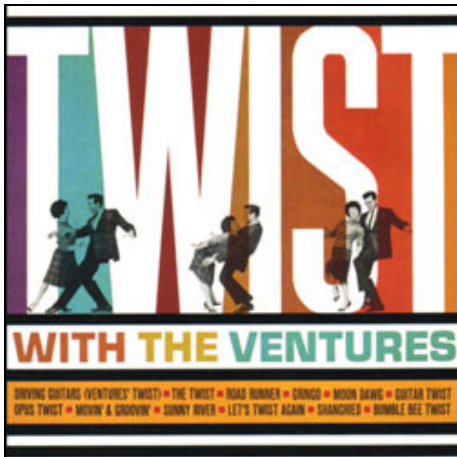
1962

## ALBUM TRACKS

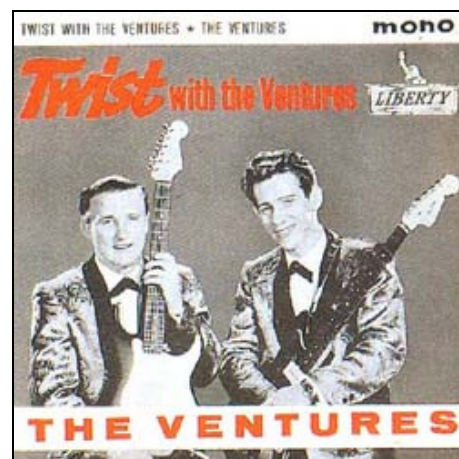
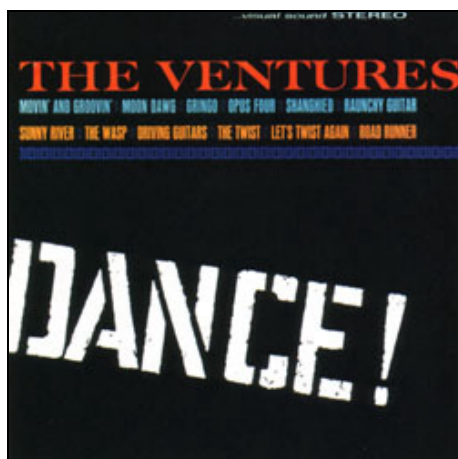
January 1962 LP

### *Twist With The Ventures*

Dolton BST 8010 Stereo/ BLP 2010 Mono



This new album differed markedly from the four previous sets in projecting an uncompromising image of the group as a powerhouse in touch with one of the current dance crazes (“Thirty minutes of solid Venture up tempo!” the record sleeve proclaimed). Two of the twist’s staple numbers are included in the programme, but the emphasis is on material from group members or group associates, supplemented not by reworked standards (there is only an in-house arrangement of a celebrated classical piece), but by a clutch of the most invigorating if not always widely known instrumental outings from the past few years. The programme proved appealing enough to net the group a #24 with 29 weeks on chart.



Hank Ballard’s up tempo 12-bar blues ‘The Twist’ (represented on this set), written in 1958 as a throwaway number for his Midnighters to gyrate to onstage, was consigned to a B-side in 1959 but was taken up in 1960 by Chubby Checker, whose hit launched a dance craze of staggering proportions. By the time this Ventures set

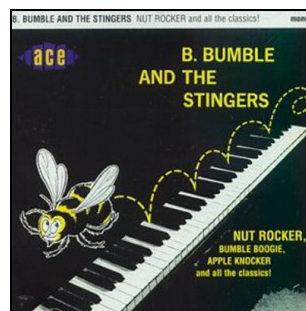
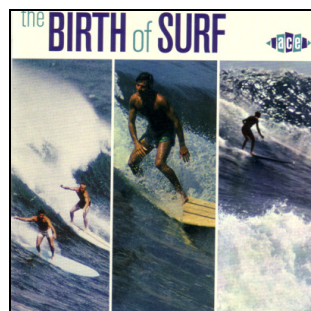
appeared, Checker's 'The Twist' had hit US #1 in 1960 and again, sensationally, early in 1962 (in the intervening year his 'Let's Twist Again', also covered here, surprisingly stalled at #8 , but made #2 in the UK).

Severely circumscribed as the twist was in terms of movement, it was flexible in its capacity to suck in all manner of musical styles amenable to a strongly rhythmical, swinging treatment, ranging in tempo from fast and furious to relatively leisurely and untaxing. The Ventures (not surprisingly, for they had shown themselves to date at their finest with fast-paced material) use the dance-fashion as a peg on which to hang a series of belters, with only SUNNY RIVER slackening the pace somewhat. Two titles come from within the group (DRIVING GUITARS, BUMBLE BEE TWIST, the latter an adaptation), others are the work of individuals linked in one way or another to the group at the time: guitarist Gene Moles (GRINGO and, with Nokie, SUNNY RIVER), a member of Nokie Edwards & The Marksmen, who were engaged in a busy recording schedule themselves during the making of the *Twist* album (August/September); Glasser and Allsup (GUITAR TWIST) discussed in entry to BLUER THAN BLUE; Allsup and Crickets drummer Jerry Allison (OPUS TWIST). On top of these, we have a shrewd and expertly reworked selection of instrumentals from relatively recent times: one from Duane Eddy (1958), two from The Wailers (1959) and one from The Gamblers (1960).

The group line-up this time was different (see further on [62/9] SUNNY RIVER for some uncertainties attaching to the personnel employed), though there is no radical disruption or lack of continuity in the set as a result. Dave Burke has shown in an authoritative article<sup>1</sup> (cf. further p.26 below) that this album engaged the services of three different drummers (Howie Johnson; M.C. Berry, more commonly known as Muddy Berry; Edward Hall, usually known as Sharky Hall). Much more important than this is the dramatic improvement in the overall sound. Stereo reproduction on the first four albums, while rarely disconcertingly poor, had been pretty basic — as 60s stereo often was, even late on in the decade in some quarters. On this new album on the other hand there is a much tighter, cohesive, dynamic soundstage, with more natural spatial separation: for the most part the various instruments are readily distinguishable but not artificially distanced one from the other.

### <<<<CHOICE CUTS>>>>

**Three of the borrowed numbers stand out by their excellence: ROAD RUNNER, MOVIN' 'N GROOVIN', and SHANGHIED.**



### **1 [62/1] DRIVING GUITARS (VENTURES' TWIST)**

(Don Wilson/ Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards)

Pounding tom-toms ushering in lead lines tinged with a note of breathless urgency and menace, aptly enough stronger on drive than on melody, shortly picked up by energetic if rather recessed rhythm guitar, buoyant bass punctuated by fraught echo-laden shrieks, and a damped second guitar pattering away in the break at 1:01 — all of this contributes to the awesome aural assault promised by the title, which characterises the set as a whole. Del Halterman<sup>2</sup> speaks of “the perfect instrumental rocker with the perfect name ... To fit the album concept, the tune was alternately named ‘Ventures Twist’ until the popularity of the dance was forgotten. ‘Driving Guitars’, however, lived on and on.”

### **2 [62/2] THE TWIST**

(Hank Ballard)

Ballard's own version is pretty raw and earthy, Chubby Checker's lighter and more bouncy with a fun feel to it, displaying a *joie de vivre* that is mirrored on this Ventures cut, where it is ably supported by an expert rhythm section and enlivened with enthusiastic vocal interjections for good measure. Now, where are those dancing shoes ..?

### **3 [62/3] ROAD RUNNER**

(Rich Dangel/ John Greek)

A seriously heavyweight piece of beat music provides a stark contrast with the previous jolly romp. The Wailers' wonderful 1959 original (see on LP *The Ventures*, under [61/11] WAILIN') is, by their standards, and despite a gloriously vibrant if brief sax solo, a fairly laid-back effort in terms of presentation. Here the number is positively set alight, with a bravura display from start to finish: the introductory insistent tap-tap-tapping from drummer M.C. Berry is taken up by the halting, thrusting lead lines, while Don Wilson's hammering rhythm is very much in the foreground. At 1:06, there is a dazzling guitar break, which must be the work of Nokie Edwards, becoming so propulsive (1:26) as to seem unstoppable, until the pace is arrested by a return to the staccato main theme at 1:47.

### **4 [62/4] GRINGO**

(Gene Moles)

Moles, a session guitarist with Capitol in the 60s, worked with country singer Buck Owens (as did Nokie Edwards) as well as with Merle Haggard, both associated with the Bakersville Sound, which eschewed polished string-laden productions in favour of more stripped-down songs laced with sharp hard-biting guitar riffs — though some took a softer approach. GRINGO has a slight Latin/Mex flavouring but also something of a breezy country swing to it (Owens' Buckaroos released instrumental sets with twangy guitar and driving rhythms very much in evidence). Don Wilson provides robust backing and there is a nifty solo break from Nokie at 0:54.

### **5 [62/5] MOON DAWG**

(Derry Weaver)

Dave Burke puts the case for eloquently<sup>3</sup>: “One of the most electrifying openings in rock: Howie Johnson's blurringly fast single stroke roll, sharply accentuated with bulletlike rim shots, rents the air; Nokie adds throbbing bass and finally Don Wilson's urgent, racing rhythm climaxes the introduction and it boils over into a driving, primitive instrumental, with splashing cymbals, torrid lead and The Ventures 'aahing'

in the background.” All terribly forced, too frantic and undisciplined for this listener: though it is rather more refined than The Gamblers’ original from 1960 (conveniently available on the excellent *Birth Of Surf* compilation pictured above), the vocal parts on which would be at home in the Hammer House Of Horrors, or for that matter The Beach Boys’ even more dismal extravaganza from 1962 — one would surely need a dose or two of hallucinogens to twist to this one. It took The Surfaris to lift it securely out of the realm of trivia and turn it into something really worthwhile (LP *Fun City U.S.A.*, 1964).

### **6 [62/6] GUITAR TWIST**

(Dick Glasser/ Tommy Allsup)

Another one that goes to show that anything with a decent beat will do for present purposes. This is a raw belter with a naggingly infectious ‘What’d I Say’-like riff at start and finish. It is given real muscle by the nimble lead guitar passages at 0:44 and 1:07, the latter positively whisked along by a wonderfully bobbing bass-line from a hitherto low-profile Nokie Edwards.

### **7 [62/7] OPUS TWIST**

(Tommy Allsup/ Jerry Allison)

Markedly less characterful than the previous track, a very basic opus with absolutely no twists and turns and too monotonous to sustain repeated listening, with some uninspired soloing at 0:51 (could this really have been a Venture at work?); it is rescued from total banality by the vigorous rhythm accompaniment.

### **8 [62/8] MOVIN’ & GROOVIN’**

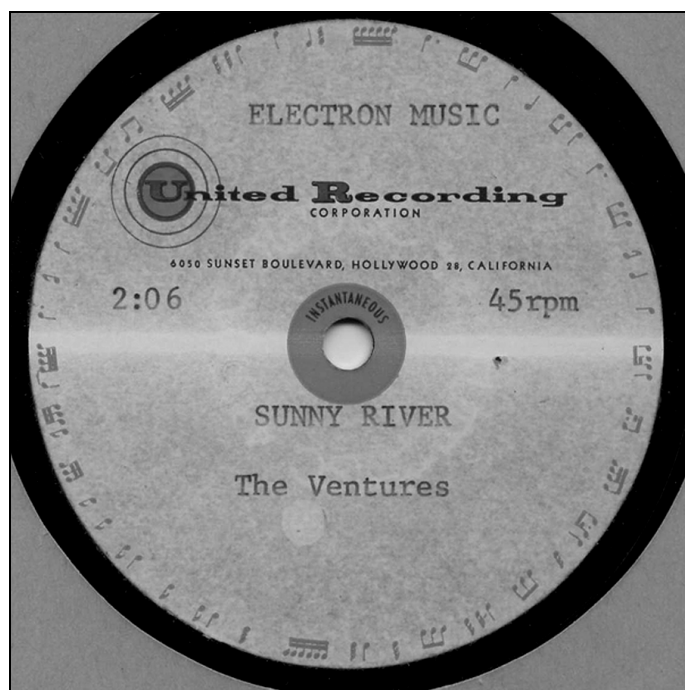
(Lee Hazlewood/ Duane Eddy)

This one picks off where ROAD RUNNER left off: another judiciously chosen number with a high reputation in instrumental circles into which The Ventures breathed new life.

Many in the early 60s looked back with respect and affection, if not unadulterated awe, to records such as this throbbing, reverberating 1958 A-side from Duane Eddy, which rose only as far as #72 in the national charts but raised public awareness of him as a prelude to his Top 10 ‘Rebel Rouser’. But it and others like it were ripe for exploitation. The fully fledged guitar outfits which sprang up in abundance in Eddy’s wake could effectively reconstitute his versions by stripping them down to bare essentials. They achieved this notably of course by dispensing with the habitually in-your-face, often incongruously raucous and increasingly mannered saxophone passages, but also by economising on, if not entirely eliminating, the unending stream of backing vocals and inarticulate whoops, yells and so on. Consequently, and even more importantly, the focal point was now the lead guitar, with players ready, willing and certainly able to exploit the full potential and tonal variety of six strings, at times reinforced by a few more in the form of overdubs.

The Ventures’ MOVIN’ & GROOVIN’ is a fine example of adroit reworking. With the saxophone buried, the twistin’ and turnin’ battery of sound (Movin’) gives way to some funky soloing (Groovin’) on treble strings endowed with a metallic twang to die for. Yes, human vocal chords *are* exercised here — but they are outrageously tongue-in-cheek, the ghoulish laughs and giggles tying in well with the cheerful high spirits radiating from the music itself. Move over now Duane ...

**9 [62/9] SUNNY RIVER**  
(Nokie Edwards/ Gene Moles)



See on [62/4] GRINGO above. Edwards and Moles were close friends. Both had been active as accompanists on the Bakersville country scene, and were operating at the time this Ventures album was being put together as The Marksmen, who also cut a version of SUNNY RIVER (after that of The Ventures): see Dave Burke in *Pipeline* 44<sup>4</sup>. This is a pretty twee-sounding affair played on acoustic lead guitar with an electric piano doggedly supplying fills throughout the main theme; the solo compensates to a degree as it is much more free-flowing and shakes off the keyboards.

As for The Ventures' version, its imagery and country styling do strike a slightly discordant note in a 'twist' album, accommodating as the dance was to music of different complexions. In any event, it is an agreeable if not exceptional piece, a gentle swinger with a slick solo at 1:03, taking in a fine note-bending flourish at 1.25-1:27 — Nokie is in the driving seat for this one from the sound of it. According to Del Halterman<sup>5</sup>, Moles recalled playing on both this track and on GRINGO, but he does not specify in what precise capacity. See further the same writer's *The Story Of The Ventures* 68–69, where he outlines the various hazy recollections of who played what on certain tracks in this set but wisely does not pronounce firmly on what is surely destined to remain an impenetrable tangle.

DB adds this comment on The Marksmen: "The exact relationship between Nokie and Don Markham remains uncertain. My assumption that Nokie was a member of Don Markham's Marksmen was refuted by Bob Spalding who said that Nokie and Gene just thought The Marksmen 'to be a marketable name' [cf. now Halterman 60]. It seems very strange to me that Nokie — who obviously must have known Markham reasonably well — should choose to pinch Markham's band's name without any justification, but maybe so ... It's certainly true that Nokie and Gene with drummer Bill Marshal were recording as The Marksmen in the same time frame as Nokie was recording with The Ventures".

### **10 [62/10] LET'S TWIST AGAIN**

(Kal Mann/ Dave Appell)

One of the very catchiest of the twist numbers penned by Cameo Parkway Records' incredibly industrious in-house songsmiths, this was the Checker song that appealed most to British record-buyers; it was denied the top spot in early 1962 by Cliff Richard's 'The Young Ones'. As with THE TWIST, so here chirpy backing vocals, sparingly deployed, lend their support to a powerfully, and in places slickly, performed intro, with Don Wilson laying down a sturdy, rock-solid accompaniment from start to finish. And those lead lines/ solo break must be down to Nokie once again.

### **11 [62/11] SHANGHIED**

(Richard Dangel/ John Greek)

The Ventures had the perspicacity and vision to know that they were on to a good thing with The Fabulous Wailers — a superlative group beyond question. Their 1959 rendition of this storming number must constitute one of their most electrifying performances, Rich Dangel offering what is surely his most exciting guitar work. And The Ventures? If you revel in raw power, then The Wailers deliver the goods with a vengeance. Our version has other, quite different virtues: sheer clout, crispness and polish, with a sustained, biting solo from 0:37 through to 1:13 (Nokie beyond a doubt), propulsive rhythm, relentlessly thudding bass, driving percussion from M.C. Berry, all careering to a gloriously resounding close.

### **12 [62/12] BUMBLE BEE TWIST**

(Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov, arr. Don Wilson/ Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards)

One of the most well-known orchestral interludes in the classical canon, the colourful 'Flight Of The Bumblebee' has been played for public consumption on a bewildering array of instruments ranging from Joe Satriani on electric guitar to Barry Manilow on kazoo (plus orchestra!). The immediate pop-era precedent for The Ventures will have been B. Bumble & The Stingers' 'Bumble Boogie' from the previous year, though they may also have recalled the 40s big-band version by Alvino Rey with its trickily executed guitar break. One of its attractions for the virtuoso is of course the velocity with which it can be performed, but on that score The Ventures' outing is fairly conservative, with the emphasis on gliding over the fretboard to produce the crucial buzz. It has to be said that the creature's decidedly wobbly aerial path was considerably smoothed when Nokie came to play the number live (see Index Of Titles), but as a fun novelty number with a degree of punch it rounds off the twist programme nicely enough.

May 1962 LP

### ***The Ventures' Twist Party Vol.2***

Dolton BST 8014 Stereo/ BLP 2014 Mono

The group talks in the liner notes of "the sheer force of unleashed beat" as a crucial ingredient in their work, and evidence of that abounds here, in an album that climbed to #40 and was eleven weeks on chart. But whereas the first *Twist* set drew directly on a couple of songs associated with the current craze, with this new album we may as well forget twist altogether, except as the nominally binding theme: 'twist' is tacked on to three of the titles, another is presented as TWISTED but could have been called



one hundred and one other things, while THE TWOMP certainly and INSTANT GUITARS very probably allude to related dance fashions.



In fact, what is on offer is a programme of beat instrumentals fifty per cent of which revamp and modernise traditional melodies from America and beyond, or melodies from America's rich musical past: MY BONNIE LIES, BESAME MUCHO (essentially American by now), BLUE TAIL FLY, SWANEE RIVER TWIST, DARK EYES TWIST, RED WING TWIST. The remaining six stylistically varied tracks provide the largest concentration in any of the albums to date of group-sourced compositions.

The question of overall style needs to be addressed at greater length. Nokie Edwards, whose sheer speed and dexterity would presently play a key part in some of The Ventures' most distinctive recordings, both in the studio and onstage, had gradually been assuming the role of lead guitarist, leaving bass duties to Bob Bogle. He had contributed a certain amount in that capacity to the first five albums. The precise extent is disputed. Some would go so far as to say that he played lead on nearly everything from the July 1961 set *The Ventures* onwards — a view that runs counter to Bob Bogle's repeated claim in interviews that he played lead on "those early albums". Whatever the truth of the matter (and there is definitely room for debate, see the Introduction to the December 1960 album *Walk, Don't Run*), it seems as certain as anything can be that on this *Twist Party Vol. 2* set Nokie has to all intents and purposes taken over the reins. There is evidence throughout the set of a greater

fluency and inventiveness, in solo breaks most especially. More than that, some of the pieces have a country flavour, not pronounced but tangible, and this ties in with Nokie's keen interest in the genre, with his work as a session man in that area, and with the specific leanings he would show from time to time in the future.

Picking up the story of recording personnel from the previous album, there was a significant change of drummer: Dave Burke, *Pipeline* article cited earlier, assigns BLUE TAIL FLY to Howie Johnson, THE TWOMP to Edward Hall, but the remainder of the set to Mel Taylor. The latter talks about his recruitment to The Ventures, and offers his own list of contributions to this album (which must however be incomplete) in the liner notes to the EMI *Legendary Masters* CD.

### <<<<CHOICE CUTS>>>>

**The quality of the recasting of traditional/older material is exceptional, lifting this album above the level of its immediate predecessor, outstanding as much of it was. DARK EYES TWIST and the remarkable SWANEE RIVER TWIST are perhaps the finest, though MY BONNIE LIES, BLUE TAIL FLY, and RED WING TWIST run them close. In a wholly different style, the in-house TWISTED provides a splendid example of the group's dynamism.**

#### **1 [62/13] MY BONNIE LIES**

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

Coincidentally, Tony 'Mr Twist' Sheridan's 1962 German Polydor album which included 'Let's Twist Again' and 'Top Ten Twist' also offered the now famous 'My Bonnie' with The Beat Boys (the future Beatles). He recorded two versions in fact, one officially labelled 'twist', and also a swinging 'Swanee River', cf. [62/18] on our set.

Seeing off with consummate ease its most notable RI precursor, Duane Eddy's 'Bonnie Came Back' (early 1960), The Ventures' version moves along at a cracking pace with a truly energising accompaniment from Don Wilson, not to mention the new drummer. There's a stylish solo break too at 0:55. Dave Peckett<sup>6</sup>, in speaking of a later live performance, exclaims: "I cannot in any way imagine a top guitarist like Nokie ... playing 'My Bonnie Lies Over The Ocean'!". Well, he is not playing that of course, so let's not think of Max Bygraves or Pipe Major Malcolm MacKenzie here, but rather of a Ventures' makeover of a Scottish folk song which is about as stylistically remote from its first beginnings as anything could be!

#### **2 [62/14] TWISTED**

(Don Wilson/ Bog Bogle)

Not quite as dynamic a start as that gracing [62/3] ROAD RUNNER on the earlier *Twist* set, but still arresting. Hammering drums and twangily struck chords usher in the intro equivalent of the one of those riff-laden truck-drivin' songs that cruises along with a nagging insistence, the biting lead lines and rhythm accompaniment alternating between channels as the ground is covered. There is also a more than faint 1950s feel to this one at times; with its tellingly repeated motifs and the unfussy but riveting solo break at 1:01, there are shades of those irrepressible Wailers too.



### **3 [62/15] THE TWOMP**

(Don Wilson)

This one is pretty daft, but that's the point. (It can hardly have been a serious attempt to start a new craze, as some seem to believe!) The lucid explanation of the outlandish title at the outset is greeted by the voice of clean-cut American youth in eager assent — not the kind of fare likely to invite repeated listening over the years. It is a catchy and lively number nonetheless, with a strong ensemble performance, set off by a superbly slick if short solo break at 0:57. There is an interview with Don Wilson and Bob Bogle in *Pipeline* 34<sup>7</sup> filling in some background detail on the number. Don Wilson's early vocal version has been made conveniently available on the 2007 CD *In The Vaults Volume 4*.

### **4 [62/16] BESAME MUCHO**

(Consuelo Velázquez)

This evergreen by the Mexican songstress (much better served as a song by the original euphonious Spanish lyrics than any English rendering) became a massive big band hit during World War II, and it has proved hugely popular in various genres, including RI, from the 1960s till the present day. The emergent beat groups took it up, including The Beatles who performed it onstage regularly and recorded the number in 1962 in the wake of an alternative version by The Coasters from 1960, giving it a pronounced Latin swing.

Dave Peckett<sup>8</sup> speaks of The Ventures' version as "making mincemeat of the Jet Harris treatment". Direct comparison here is difficult, since the ex-Shadows first UK hit as a soloist in 1962 is quite differently — and idiosyncratically — crafted: the pace is sedate, with the spotlight on the booming bass and much use made of backing vocalists pressing home a catchy refrain and eventually breaking out into fulsome song. The Ventures on the other hand, after a brief but stately-sounding Spanish-flavoured intro, launch into a brisk beat number with some nice tremoloed flourishes. Unless a further guitarist was drafted in, probably Bob Bogle and Nokie Edwards share lead duties via overdubs (the latter is on bass too by the sound of it), while Mel Taylor obviously revels in the swing of it all.

### **5 [62/17] BLUE TAIL FLY**

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

The American popular song of this name first attested in the 1840s hints darkly at the sinister side of the slave-master relationship, but its tone was generally light and jaunty: with its naggingly repetitious "Jimmy crack corn and I don't care" and its colourful imagery it gained currency as a children's song (associated with Burl Ives, not to mention Bugs Bunny), and was taken into the repertoire of the blues, bluegrass, Dixieland jazz and other genres. It was a sitting duck for the manic enterprise of Johnny & The Hurricanes and had emerged in 1960 in a boisterous rocked-up form as 'Beatnik Fly', winging its way to US #15/UK #8. On the styling of this super-slick version by The Ventures, embellished by some flamboyant bouts of string-bending from Nokie, see next entry *ad fin*.

### **6 [62/18] SWANEE RIVER TWIST**

(Stephen Foster, arr. Don Wilson/ Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards)

The most engrossing number on this album on the score of style. This composition from 1851, even more so than the previous track, has traversed every imaginable contour of the musical landscape, sprouting in the process titles such as 'SR

Blues/Boogie/Hop/Rag'. A notable recent example had been a fairly laid-back bluesy delivery from Ray Charles in 1957, with gospel-styled female backing and a smooth sax solo (under the name 'Swanee River Rock' quaintly enough), which would be picked up in instrumental form by Duane Eddy.

For The Ventures' highly imaginative treatment though we have to look elsewhere. It shares something in common with the rhythmic drive of country swing bands, but, with a remarkable crossing of generic boundaries, it most resembles both in sound and in ethos Dixieland jazz — and yes, once upon a time there was a 'Swanee River Dixie' from the Dukes Of Dixieland! Substitute the requisite instruments and one could be forgiven for mistaking this for the Dixie-derived trad jazz sound of Acker Bilk or Kenny Ball from 1962 or the year before (note especially 0:57 onwards); alternatively, just imagine a banjo in there instead of rhythm guitar. To borrow a description from Derek Taylor in his book *Beat Music* (surveying the trad scene), our Ventures number is "happy-go-lucky party music, to which the fans ... could dance ..." Looking back, there is more than a trace of this flavouring in the preceding track, though there is more of a countrified swing to that, as well as some great soloing from Nokie.

### **7 [62/19] INSTANT GUITARS**

(Don Wilson/ Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards)

This composition (credited to group members, but in fact an adaptation of Chet Atkins' brisker and exceedingly arty-sounding *City Slicker* from 1953<sup>9</sup>) suffers by being sandwiched in between two brilliant interpretations of older works. It is an entertaining if unexceptional example of Ventures beat with a marked twang and a leaning towards country, this no doubt owing much to Nokie Edwards. The title may have been suggested by a related dance craze, the Mashed Potato. (The Ventures would follow up with their own [62/33] INSTANT MASHED, cf. Chris Knox's 'Instant Mashed Potato' and 'Instant Mashed Potato 2'.)

### **8 [62/20] DARK EYES TWIST**

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

For a wealth of data on this composition see Piet Muys in *New Gandy Dancer* 78<sup>10</sup>. A notable precursor in considering The Ventures' approach to this Russian folk song (literal title 'Eyes Of Black', itself rather a dark, brooding piece) is the 1955 recording by Chet Atkins under the Russian title 'Ochi chyornye' (a version from around the same period has also appeared on video/DVD): it fairly jogs along with the Gretsch's tremolo arm providing the occasional tasteful embellishment. The Ventures do not deal with it quite as briskly and give the melody cleaner lines; the tone is more intense, verging on the majestic, Nokie's lead guitar endowed with an imposing resonance. It was left to The Spotnicks in 1964 to beef it up thoroughly, and Rautalanka groups would build whole careers out of streamlined and robust beat-laden arrangements like theirs; cf. The Mustangs' variation 'Dark Eyes Stomp'.

### **9 [62/21] COUNTERPOINT**

(Bob Bogle)

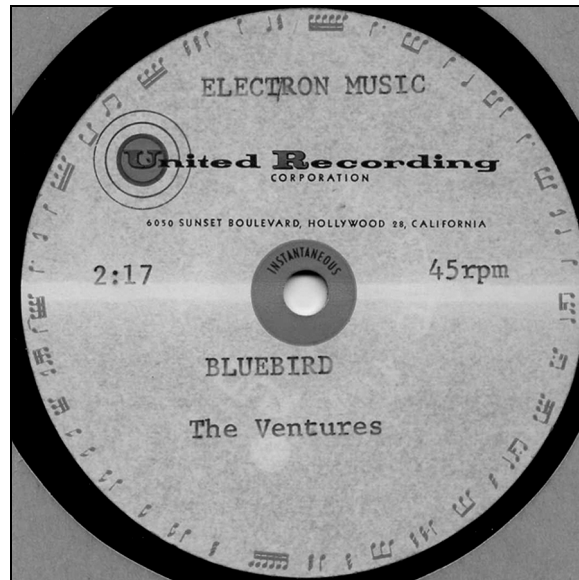
An unusual and classy track with scudding twin leads in close harmonic relationship (central image), themselves in counterpoint to a weaving bass-line (left channel), and Mel Taylor providing the whole with a forceful cohesion (right channel). Here is one case where mono is a definite no-no, a muddle in fact! A bit hectic for the twist, but who cares?

### 10 [62/22] KICKING AROUND

(Don Wilson/ Bob Bogle)

A bluesy mid-tempo number with call and response routines from dual leads, one richly vibratoed, the other super-twangy. Cool jangly soloing from 0:41, during which the rhythm accompaniments switch channels, becoming more intense and providing a beefier sound. Neat.

### 11 [62/23] BLUEBIRD



(Nokie Edwards)

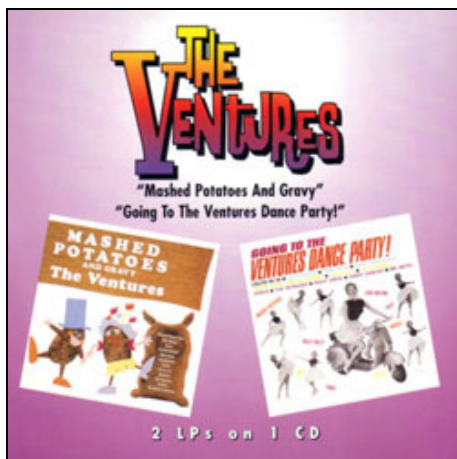
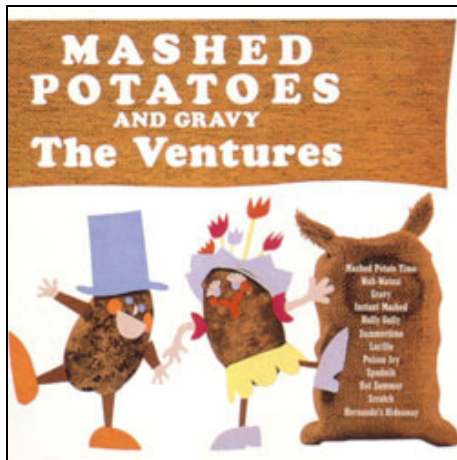
A pleasant tune with a countrified tinge is not exactly a compelling choice for the favourite dance of the moment. However, fans of the western bluebird to which the title presumably alludes will revel in the imitation of the creature's call, a swiftly rising and falling 'kew' sound as ornithologists call it, or rather a succession of repeated sounds, a notable feature of our piece. There is a stylish but tantalisingly brief outro.

### 12 [62/24] RED WING TWIST

(Thurland Chattaway/ Kerry Mills, arr. Don Wilson/ Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards)

This song from 1907 was actually conceived as a solemn piece, bearing a motif that resurfaced in pop in the early 60s: an Indian squaw loses her loved one in battle and is left to lament in mournful isolation. Our version turns its back on this tale of woe and brings the second batch of twist numbers to a rousing close by conjuring up something more resembling a cavalry charge, with Mel Taylor's sturdy drumming, the propulsive rhythm, and the surging advance of the tune itself; there is some swaggering solo work at 1:47 and thereabouts. The one blot is the excessively recessed bass: it needs, and merits, a degree of lift to compete on equal terms with the rest.

August 1962 LP  
***Mashed Potatoes And Gravy***  
 Dolton BST 8016 Stereo/ BLP 2016 Mono



The Mashed Potato was one of the many dances to gain prominence in 1962: Dee Dee Sharp's 'Mashed Potato Time' and 'Gravy (For My Mashed Potatoes)' from this same year (both represented here) serve to illustrate our LP's title. It seems that somebody at Dolton thought better about linking the album explicitly to one out of many current crazes, however popular, and quickly altered it to *The Ventures Beach Party*, "cashing in on the rising popularity of surf music?" (AT). In the process an eye-catching cover shot of a happily dancing Mr & Ms Potato Head (the latter rather immodestly clothed) was replaced by a bracing shot of a young couple (decently clad) in bathing costumes wading through the surf. In any event, the album made #45 and lasted twelve weeks on chart.

In fact, as with the twist sets, the tie-in with a specific dance is at times pretty tenuous if not unsustainable. If the classic LUCILLE is taken at a pace keyed to one or two of the current dance favourites, others such as HERNANDO'S HIDEAWAY and SUMMERTIME, though danceworthy, do not readily suggest themselves as springboards for the Mashed Potato, while THE WAH-WATUSI and (BABY) HULLY GULLY steer us to particular dances whose link with the MP resides only in their being species of the same genus. In fact, the set is not weighted in favour of new fads. It is a combination of highly regarded standards/rock/pop (the three mentioned

above plus POISON IVY) and a clutch of in-house compositions which could be divorced from the professed theme at the drop of a hat: most obviously SCRATCH and SPUDNIK, the latter resurfacing in due course elsewhere with a change of title quite unrelated to dance.

Still, The Ventures were not the first and would not be the last to stretch the concept of thematic unity, and in the end what matters is the listenability of what is on offer. This set has not weathered the attentions of critics especially well, partly, I suspect, because they have not approached it in the spirit in which it must have been produced. It is suggested in the comments below that tracks representing the various dance crazes, 2, 4, 8 and 11, the first three most especially, share a common approach: they are all, particularly where the vocal backing is concerned, extremely brash in comparison with their models — in your face if you like to the point of vulgarity. This must be the group's (or somebody's) idea of dealing in a light-hearted, tongue-in-cheek or parodic way with dance records which were themselves conceived in a spirit of fun.

Dave Burke<sup>11</sup> has reviewed the pool of musicians contributing to recordings in the course of 1962 (see Halterman 79 for further background). The core line-up of Bob Bogle, Don Wilson, Nokie Edwards and Mel Taylor was fluid, to the extent that certain other sessioneers might be called in as and when: there was substantial input from David Gates, Billy Strange and Ervan Coleman (see further p.28 below).

The bass playing on the album has been reviewed by Dave Towers<sup>12</sup>. In the course of a discussion where one might have hoped for greater clarity despite the formidable problems thrown up by the question of the group's line-ups in the first few years, he takes a severely, and to my mind excessively, dim view of the capabilities of the players involved on this album and its successor.

### <<<<CHOICE CUTS>>>>

**SPUDNIK, the later SURF RIDER, fully warrants the high regard in which it is held among fans; the oldie SUMMERTIME is given an invigorating makeover in the best Ventures tradition; the highly distinctive HOT SUMMER is refreshingly different and stylishly performed.**

#### 1 [62/25] LUCILLE

##### Album Version

(Albert Collins/ Richard Penniman)

The Ventures shy away from the agitated, excitable delivery of the Little Richard original and stand closer to The Everly Brothers' effortless cruise through one of rock's great classics. The relatively laid-back styling adopted here, with the focus on interesting tonal effects ("... growling notes at the bass end, .. string bending on the treble"<sup>13</sup>), is presumably tailored to the album concept, for the MP was on the whole one of the least flamboyant of the rash of new or revived dances going the rounds. This is the undoctored version. When it was put out as a single (see [62/51S]), somebody decided to give it a facelift, making it more (MP) dance-flavoured by overdubbing female backing vocals, and horribly twee they sound too.

## **2 [62/26] GRAVY (FOR MY MASHED POTATOES)**

(Kal Mann/ Dave Appell)

Dee Dee Sharp's second US MP hit, which made a creditable #9 in 1962. Not a world of difference melodically from her first incursion into MP territory (see on track 4 below), though the utter playfulness of it all is more in the open, the girly-sounding chorus (actually three girls and a guy: The Orlons, see on track 8 below) interjecting with admirable aplomb the priceless "So gimme gimme gimme gimme gravy tonight" before the sax intervenes to blow us all away. And The Ventures? Well, for a parodic piece it is not too bad, for that is what it must be. The super-twangy lead guitar has some stiff competition in the form of strident backing vocals, suddenly resolved into an ever-so-soulful growl reminiscent of James Brown at 0:57. The snappy bass runs at 1:05 lend an arch touch and Mel Taylor's hell-for leather skin-bashing to bring the number to a close (1:44) is entirely in line with the outrageously over-the-top approach.

## **3 [62/27] HERNANDO'S HIDEAWAY**

(Richard Adler/ Jerry Ross)

It would take a degree of special pleading to slot this wonderfully stylish tango into the category of current dance crazes, though some of them, outlandish as their names were, seemed ready to absorb anything going. Certainly the annotator of the original LP seemed to imply that over-fine distinctions are not apt here. The song dates from 1954, stemming from *The Pajama Game* (award-winning Broadway musical then film), pianist Harry Connick's performance described by *The New Yorker* as "thrilling" and "one of the few genuinely show-stopping musical moments in recent years". The Ventures play this one straight and tight, not too hurried, with an exceptionally attractive resonant tone from the lead Fender, and with occasional effective note-bending and stretches of a dual lead working in unison reproduced via opposite stereo channels.

## **4 [62/28] MASHED POTATO TIME**

(Jon Sheldon/ Harry Land)

A US #2 earlier in 1962 for Dee Dee Sharp, a thinly concealed imitation of that charming Motown chart-topper from the year before, The Marvellettes' 'Please Mr Postman' (ex-Marvellette Georgia Dobbins is said in some sources to have had a hand in producing the Dee Dee number!). It was proficiently delivered with smooth backing vocals and a punchy sax break. The tactics here are the same as for track 2. The fluffy original is roughened up more than somewhat, this time with an even more strident lead guitar and even more intrusive gravel-throated/ hollering backing vocals (*so* over the top), a sort of MP for bikers perhaps. There is a flippant-sounding outro too.

## **5 [62/29] SUMMERTIME**

(George & Ira Gershwin/ DuBose Heyward)

Increasingly over the years The Ventures, without reference necessarily to dance trends of any description or any period, would specialise in upping to differing degrees the tempo of relatively sedate or even tranquil/ reflective standards, investing them with a very distinctive robust accompaniment from rhythm guitar and percussion. Here is splendid example of the type, a worthy precursor of Billy Stewart's winningly rocked-up version of 1966. 'Summertime' (from the 1935 opera *Porgy And Bess*) is by any standard a beautifully crafted melody, recorded by a



dazzling array of artistes even before the 60s. Here it is given a modern styling for the 3+1 line-up. After a gentle start, it turns out to be punchy, funky even, with tricky little bass runs interposed along with snatches of a second lead, and a solo as fluent and effortlessly executed as it is expressive. At 1:51 it seems to inspire the entire group to move up a gear, to tremendous effect. Once again, the binding link with MP and the rest is non-existent, but was anybody bothered?

#### **6 [62/30] HOT SUMMER (ASIAN MASHED)**

(Ervan Coleman)

Ervan 'Bud' Coleman (see Introduction to this album) was a multi-instrumentalist who played on many of Herb Alpert's recordings (he wrote 'Tijuana Taxi' amongst other well regarded pieces), and also worked in the studio with Billy Strange in the 60s. Perhaps more of a very mild stomp than an MP workout, this ruggedly built tune proceeds determinedly nursed along by a pronounced bass-line and robust percussion until relieved by some dexterous jangly faux-oriental ornamentation from duetting guitars in the break at 1:16. And all before the days of The Ventures in Japan.

#### **7 [62/31] POISON IVY**

(Jerry Leiber/ Mike Stoller)

This was a 1959 US Top 10 hit (Top 20 in the UK) for The Coasters. Leiber and Stoller furnished The Coasters with supremely goofy lyrics (sometimes also mischievously arcane, sometimes commenting perceptively on the problems of youth), commonly clothed in breathtakingly extravagant imagery and served up in ingeniously delivered spoofs of R&B with potent instrumental backing. The Ventures have only this last element to call upon, and they deliver the goods within this framework: a punchy, hard-hitting version, with a wonderfully fruity-sounding lead guitar effectively capturing the great tune underpinning those striking lyrics. It is not all deadly serious though, as the tone is lightened for a while by the more loosely structured departure from the main theme at 1:54.

#### **8 [62/32] THE WAH-WATUSI**

(Kal Mann/ Dave Appell)

The Orlons accompanied Dee Dee Sharp on the two hits considered above (tracks 2 & 4), and in 1962 had a US #2 hit themselves with this breezy, chirpy piece serving the solo dance the Watusi. Again backing vocals (at times rather throaty, and supplemented by yells, as if there was that much to get excited about) are called in to provide some diversification, sorely needed, as there is not much of a tune: the reason why Nokie with his customary inventiveness turns to improvising for an extended spell at 1:07 in a glorious flurry of note bending.

#### **9 [62/33] INSTANT MASHED**

**Album Version**

(Bob Bogle/ Don Wilson/ Nokie Edwards)

This slight number is taken at a sedate pace, not too strenuous. It ambles along amiably enough; we wait expectantly for a solo break, but none comes. A good one for MP learners who don't need distractions, not too engrossing for the sedentary listener. For the single version released earlier in the year see entry [62/50S].

### 10 [62/34] SCRATCH

(Nokie Edwards/ Gene Moles)

This is a more ambitious species of MP. Nokie Edwards had released a version of it with Gene Moles as The Marksman in 1961 (Halterman 59; now conveniently available on the 2007 CD *In The Vaults Volume 4*). Bobby Troup's 'The Girl Can't Help It' seems to be on call for one of the prominent hooks, but the chiming lead guitar and more particularly the extended solo outing at 0:54, full of tricky twists and turns, are exquisite.

Absolutely essential listening for those with an interest in The Ventures and their influence: The Surfari's, who picked this one up a couple of years further on and turned it into an exhilarating belter (LP *Hit City* '64).

### 11 [62/35] (BABY) HULLY GULLY

(Fred Smith/ Clifford Goldsmith)

Listed in Ventures product as 'Hully Gully (Baby)', but the parenthesis needs to be moved forward. This is a cover of The Olympics' '(Baby) Hully Gully' from 1960 which sparked an interest in this particular dance form (it has nothing to do with The Dovells' US # 2 'Hully Gully Baby', which in any case appeared too late in 1962 to be an influence). As for musical content, whereas The Olympics are ever so slightly animated, The Ventures are laid back to a fault, making this one for those who go in for dancing of the strictly listless variety (the Hully Gully itself was not noted for its athleticism).

### 12 [62/36] SPUDNIK

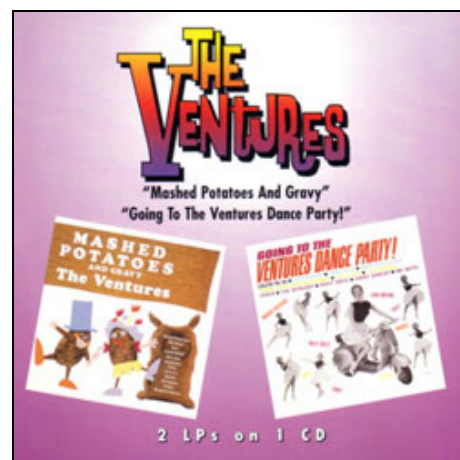
(Nokie Edwards)

Not the most subtle of puns. In the 60s word-play involving Sputniks was disconcertingly rampant, though at least in this case the spud-element, the brainchild of Josie Wilson, is not wholly alien to the proceedings! The set ends on a real high with this elegant piece (recorded April 1962); it would be renamed SURF RIDER for the *Surfing* album in April 1963, see the extended comment there.

November 1962 LP

### *Going To The Ventures Dance Party!*

Dolton BST 8017 Stereo/ BLP 2017 Mono

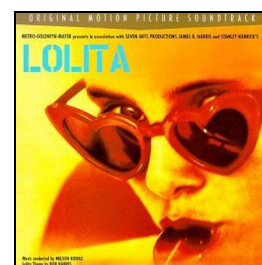


For this album, which peaked at #93 and was on chart for a mere eight weeks, the dance concept is kept alive a bit longer and dealt with in a broadly similar fashion, since, as before, two different strands are discernible. On the one hand, certain of the tracks fully satisfy our expectations of The Ventures' music and musicianship: MR MOTO, THEME FROM 'COME SEPTEMBER', NIGHT DRIVE, VENUS, GANDY DANCER.

These are offset by less disciplined and in some cases distinctly odd numbers, some of which forge explicit links with current dance fashions. Here the influence of Billy Strange and certain other individuals outside the core Ventures may be discerned, and Nokie Edwards is notable for his almost total absence (cf. p.28 below): YA YA WOBBLE, THE INTRUDER, SWEET AND LOVELY, LIMBO ROCK, LOLITA YA YA, THE LOCO-MOTION, GULLY-VER. At times the standard of playing seems less than assured, and the overall approach is different. There is heavy reliance on backing vocals, some of them generally not so much decorative or indicative of mood as boisterous or downright intrusive, and also an inclination to treat the material in a tongue-in-cheek or even mischievous fashion — but much more heavy-handedly than was suggested for the preceding album. There are some interesting and imaginative touches, but when all is said and done what we are hearing here from 'The Ventures' is something several steps removed from the genuine article. For musicians involved consult the Burke/Towers articles referred to in the Introduction to the previous album.

#### <<<<CHOICE CUTS>>>>

**GANDY DANCER** is unmatched, **MR MOTO** and **NIGHT DRIVE** furnish examples of The Ventures at their potent, atmospheric best.



#### 1 [62/37] MR MOTO

(Paul Johnson/ Richard Delvy)

'Mr Moto' first saw the light of day in 1961 as a guitar-led single from The Belairs and would be remade by the group that evolved from them, The Challengers, on their 1963 album *Surfbeat*, one of the foremost representatives of surf music and said to have shifted 200,000 copies (see the brief but incisive profile of the group's activities and style by Alan Taylor in *Pipeline* 25<sup>14</sup>). The version which directly concerns us

here, itself often touted as the first <instrumental> surf record, makes use of twangy guitar, sax and, very distinctively, piano to produce a raw and punchy tour de force that compares well with better-known giants of the genre such as 'Pipeline' and 'Wipe Out'.

The Ventures deal differently with it, and not just in respect of instrumentation. It sounds very much like an early example of what would prove to be a group speciality, the hard-hitting theme tune ([69/19] HAWAII FIVE-0 is the classic example). MR MOTO motors for sure: it gives nothing away in drive, boasting a beautifully rounded, thrusting lead, robust rhythm, thudding bass and powerful percussion. All this is embellished by superbly arranged vocal support crafted to strengthen the oriental colouring, putting us in mind of that inscrutable Japanese secret agent whose name graces the work.

## **2 [62/38] THEME FROM 'COME SEPTEMBER'**

(Bobby Darin)

Bobby Darin & His Orchestra released a version of his film theme in 1961; Billy Vaughan & His Orchestra followed suit, with a very similar guitar-led arrangement, and outsold Darin. The Ventures pretty well follow in their footsteps, unlike Santo & Johnny (1961: more free-wheeling, very stylish) and Chet Atkins (1962: more ornate), and they are very much in their element. Mel Taylor is significantly more prominent in the mix than his orchestral counterparts — to tremendous effect — while the lead guitar (not especially distinctive on the two big productions mentioned above) positively peals out, and the whole is solidly underpinned by rhythm and bass. A classy track.

## **3 [62/39] YA YA WOBBLE**

(Bob Bogle/ Billy Strange/ Mel Taylor/ David Gates)

There was Lee Dorsey's 'Ya Ya' in 1961, people danced the Wobble (and the Wibble Wobble), Petula Clark revamped Lee Dorsey for the UK market as 'Ya Ya Twist' in 1962. Looking back, 'Ya Ya Wobble' seems somehow inevitable somewhere along the line. Credits: the unique team of four (on the personnel see the Introduction to the previous album) strongly suggests that we are dealing with a jam — a supposition strengthened by the quality of the result, which sounds, not to put too fine a point on it, pretty casual (cf. now Halterman 80; also 378 for personnel). There is no Nokie here, and not a lot of music either, though David Gates' short tricky-sounding bass runs (cf. track 2 of the previous album) are unusual, certainly for The Ventures. The brash-voiced girlie chorus proficiently adds to the fun, or the tedium, depending on your tastes in comedy. To dance, or not to dance ...

## **4 [62/40] NIGHT DRIVE**

(Nokie Edwards)

From the trivial to the sublime in one swift step. This piece, recorded in August 1962, is surely one of Nokie's very best efforts for The Ventures up to this point, and indeed one of his best compositions ever. The relatively leisurely and strikingly atmospheric Wailers-cum-Henry Mancini-styled intro (The Wailers' 1959 gem 'Tall Cool One' was clearly in Nokie's sights) allows us to fasten our seat belts before cruising along in the night hours to the accompaniment of a pulsating guitar line; the revs are increased as we hit the freeway (0:41), at which point the rhythm guitar steps up a few gears, and the powerful forward momentum is sustained then stepped up with the exhilarating thrust afforded by the swaggering solo break at 1:42; the outro briefly

picks up the theme of the opening bars as man and machine recede into the dark distance ... See further Dave Burke in *New Gandy Dancer* 48, and also *Pipeline* 31<sup>15</sup>.

### **5 [62/41] VENUS**

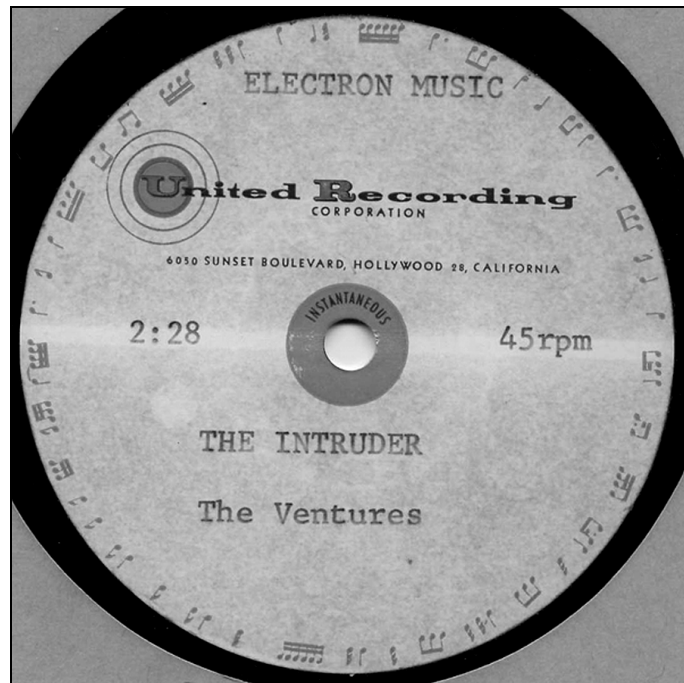
(Ed Marshall)

Frankie Avalon's 1959 US #1 (it made the UK Top 20, where it was in direct competition with a cover version by Dickie Valentine) had one of America's teen idols of the moment earnestly, and implausibly, imploring the goddess of love in language and imagery reminiscent of Roman poetry (and Greek poetry long before that) to deliver a "little girl"/ "lovely girl" into his arms with the promise that he would cherish her forever. The melody however is not without charm, though the saccharine delivery and the even more saccharine female backing vocals do not bring out the best in it. The Ventures (here with Howie Johnson on drums) shrewdly turn it into a catchy beat number, deploying a silky guitar tone (cf. Santo & Johnny's version from 1960) with an occasional degree of bite and some WDR-flavoured chords reinforced by punchy drumming.

### **6 [62/42] THE INTRUDER**

(Billy Strange)

This one certainly rings the changes, a lowering piece that evokes an atmosphere of menace. It moves along haltingly, throwing out amidst all the shimmer strident bursts of sullen sound, and ending on a note of palpable uncertainty. A piece of mood music yes, but (as the last track on Side 1 of the LP, as AT notes) it is akin in tone to the closing track GULLY-VER, and it would in fact more or less fit the Hully Gully — one of the less demonstrative dances of the 60s.



### **7 [62/43] GANDY DANCER**

(Don Wilson)

If this stellar piece does not represent the pinnacle of guitar-led RI, it is hard to see what does. In his scrutiny of the capabilities of bassists from this period, Dave

Towers<sup>16</sup> comments that the bass comes in fractionally late here. “Fractionally” is the operative word, and in the grand scheme of things this must be regarded as having no more significance than a pea in a river, and less significance than a minor Marvin fluff in one of The Shadows’ classics.

Dave Burke<sup>17</sup> characterises the track thus: “Some nifty drums from Mel lead the way for this engaging Don Wilson penned melody ... Unusual and original use of hi-hat cymbals create a quirky, off beat feel and Nokie delivers the intricate lead with unstumbling dexterity...” A further, curious aspect of the composition is the sequence from 0:51, whose style and tonality bear the imprint of East rather than West. Interestingly, this stretch is absent on an earlier version titled [61/56U] VENTURES STOMP and credited to Bogle, Edwards, Johnson & Wilson. It is exciting but much less tricky and ornate in execution (Don Wilson on lead). Instead there is simply a run of heavily strummed chords, a sequence that recurs towards the close. The track, accessible on CD *In The Vaults Volume 2*, is clearly unfinished, and when it came up for revision the connection with three of the group has been either forgotten or ignored. That is not to say that, had it been followed up at the time, fully-fledged lead lines would necessarily have been overlaid on the passages mentioned above, as Clive Poole<sup>18</sup> argues: such lack of adornment, with the emphasis on raw rhythmic elements, is not at all alien to the ‘stomp’ genre in its various manifestations. Still, it is a marvellous find, one of the most exciting of the items unearthed from deep within the archives.

As for the new title, the complexion of the piece is far removed from the brand of music it evokes. Whatever the precise origin and etymology of the term ‘gandy dancer’ for a species of railroad worker, it is generally agreed that the all-black teams went about their business to the accompaniment of a repertoire of call and response work songs prefiguring the blues.

### **8 [62/44] SWEET AND LOVELY**

(Gus Arnheim/ Harry Tobias/ Jules Lemare)

A much recorded song from a team fronted by influential bandleader Gus Arnheim, a major force in launching Bing Crosby’s career. Bing was one of the many who recorded the song, which also became a jazz standard and found its way on to Bugs Bunny cartoons. What has influenced The Ventures though is the slinky 1962 version by Nino Tempo and April Stevens, its climb to a modest #77 in the national charts at least securing some national publicity for their distinctive brand of music-making. The Ventures have of course rocked it up for dancers in accordance with their brief. Dave Towers (article cited above) detects errors in the bass playing, and in fact the whole approach is brash, the raucous backing vocals (where did they get these ladies from?) competing strenuously with the piercing lead guitar. There are some interesting touches in there though, just a pity about the overall implementation.

### **9 [62/45] LIMBO ROCK**

(Billy Strange)

Here is a number that has attained a popularity out of all proportion to its merits, and the performance, a featureless piece of inconsequentiality tricked out with individuals bawling to order upfront, is just not worthy of The Ventures. The Champs charted at #40 for a week in August 1962 with a weaker-kneed version, the torpor of the music-making hardly redeemed by the tiresomely forced whoops and shrieks (it is fair to add that it is actually admired by some: I just cannot see it). Then, a couple of months further on, Chubby Checker was on his way to US #2, so all the hullabaloo proved



worthwhile after all, the more so as people queued up to record it. Billy Strange talks about his self-confessed ‘Monotonous Melody’ in *Pipeline* 44<sup>19</sup>.

### **10 [62/46] LOLITA YA YA**

(Nelson Riddle/ Bob Harris)

This had been put out as a lead single in August 1962; it peaked at #61 the next month and stayed on chart for seven weeks. Somebody somewhere has spoken admiringly of the loping bass-line and baby doll vocalising of the Nelson Riddle original penned for the 1962 Stanley Kubrick film *Lolita*. It is indeed a very striking composition in its evocation of childish innocence: mellow, wistful, haunting. So far from producing “an accurate cover”, as Del Halterman<sup>20</sup> terms it, the ensemble (personnel: see p.28 below) deal cavalierly with it by coarsening it. Whoever dreamt up this line of attack either had a quirky sense of humour, or more likely just misread what was going on. The baby doll is replaced by an affectedly puerile-sounding girlie chorus (Darlene Love & The Blossoms) set on giving the term ‘shrill’ a whole new meaning. The music, relegated to secondary status amidst all the hollering, is strident and in your face. A truly terrible track — don’t ever put this one in the path of a Nelson Riddle devotee: that would be tantamount to asking devoted Abba fans to ditch their collection and surrender themselves to The Darkness.

DP disagrees: “It was a very brave attempt to do something entirely different”, while DB detects “a wistful, almost sad note in the middle passages: what a contrast there is between that and the frothy main theme”.

### **11 [62/47] THE LOCO-MOTION**

(Gerry Goffin/ Carole King)

One of the stellar classics of the decade, a US #1 (and UK #2) in 1962, a stupendously catchy composition with a dance conjured up to go with it. While it is true that the piece is very much in ‘girl group’ territory and derives much of its impact from that, this Ventures effort once more allows attention to be deflected from the lead guitar, the instrumental ‘voice’ (and there are some *very* nice tonal variations), by a veritable welter of over-enthusiastic, and not awfully accomplished, female vocalising. A throwaway, no substitute for the original’s fervid youthful energy.

### **12 [62/48] GULLY-VER**

(Carol Bedford)

Neat title from the composer of the splendid [63/53S] DAMAGED GOODS (Claude Bolling would record a ‘Hully Gulliver’ on his *Hully Gully* EP from 1963). Something of a dark-toned vibrato-laden stalker delivered with twin leads and exiting with an ominous-sounding fade, it is a piece rhythmically well in keeping with the line dance aspect of the Hully Gully. See on track 6 above.

1962

## FURTHER TRACKS

February 1962 B-Single, Dolton 50  
**[62/49S] GENESIS**  
(Hank Levine)



The flipside of [61/26] **YELLOW JACKET**. An imposing opus, certainly wholly out of kilter with Ventures music of that period and arguably of any, it is stylistically comparable, but only at a pinch, to certain of the more severe pieces of theme music turned out by them in the 70s and beyond. **GENESIS** probably reflects the current fad for biblical-related titles, see *Pocket Guide To Shadow Music* under 1962, p.72 for a brief discussion. The solemn, brooding melody is traced by low-register lead guitar to a tremulous, metallic-rattling accompaniment temporarily quelled by the intervention of equally sombre, and ample — arguably over-emphatic— strings, with a piano joining in to accentuate the theme's relentlessly beating pulse. **GENESIS** is so lofty that it surely needed a film or TV feature with subject-matter grave and momentous enough to take the weight. As it is, it has had to dragged into the glare of day periodically by collectors of rarities. It is conveniently available on the 1997 CD *In The Vaults*.

May 1962 A-Single, Dolton 55  
**[62/50S] INSTANT MASHED**  
**Single Version**

(Bob Bogle/ Don Wilson/ Nokie Edwards)

Not an awful lot to choose between this and the album version [62/33] which would appear on *Mashed Potatoes And Gravy* in August. There are additional drums at the start of the single, presumably to arrest the attention, whereas the lead guitar is more twangy on the album or, put another way, the sound on the single is denser in texture. But whatever the trimmings, neither can be said to be top-drawer Ventures or anything remotely approximating to it. This alternative version is conveniently available on the 2005 CD *In The Vaults Volume 3*.

September 1962 B-Single, Dolton 60

**[62/51S] LUCILLE**

**Single Version**

(Albert Collins/ Richard Penniman)

The B-side of the charting [62/46] LOLITA YA YA. For the singles market the opener of *Mashed Potatoes And Gravy* from August 1962 is furnished with vocal overdubs, much to its detriment: see comment at [62/25]. It is conveniently available on the 2005 CD *In The Vaults Volume 3*.

November 1962 Single, Dolton 67

**[62/52S–53S] THE 2000 POUND BEE**

**[62/52S] PART 1** (Mel Taylor)

**[62/53S] PART 2** (Don Wilson)

Some entertaining thoughts on this minor hit (it peaked at #91 in February 1963, and was four weeks on chart) are offered by Dave Burke<sup>21</sup>: “This still takes your breath away! Superlative individual performances from everyone on this celebrated Ventures’ original — stunning bass playing, aggressive drumming, devastating lead and of course, the first appearance of the thick, heavy sounding fuzz guitar. There’s just so much to listen to on this high energy stinger of a single... Even Janice Nicholls, an unlikely heroine, was moved to give this ‘foive’ as it swept the board on ITV’s *Thank Your Lucky Stars* to become their ‘Single Of The Week’ — remember?” (Editor Dave Peckett comments: “I do and does everyone recall Kent Walton on TV’s *Discs A Go-Go* playing both sides before and after the advertising break?”) DP now adds: “Another example of The Ventures’ refusal to tour here costing them a potentially big UK hit”.

The fuzz guitar, according to Don Wilson<sup>22</sup>, was the idea of electronics wizard Red Rhodes. Both sides deploy the same basic but amazingly mesmeric riffs, anticipating the craze that developed as the 60s wore on (though the novelty element should not be overstated: the group’s recent dance albums had dealt in motifs just as unaffected as these). Part 2 is the more invigorating of the two, coming over in places like a cross between Johnny Otis and Bo Diddley! Dave Towers provides further illumination<sup>23</sup>: “On his first recording he [Mel Taylor] took along an idea which Don liked but wanted done differently, hence ... Part 2. The ‘fuzz’ sound was made by plugging the guitar into a box belonging to Red Rhodes that ‘had wires everywhere’ to quote Bob Bogle”.

Both tracks are conveniently available on the 1990 EMI CD *Walk, Don’t Run (Legendary Masters)* and the 1996 One Way CD *Walk, Don’t Run/ Walk Don’t Run Volume 2*. Recorded during October 1962 (p.23 below), slightly different mixes of Part 2 have been preserved: see Dave Burke in *Pipeline* 9<sup>24</sup>, and also Halterman 81–82 for additional background.

**1962**

**POST-60s RELEASES**

**[62/54U] DELICADO**

(Waldir Azevedo)

Rel.2007: CD *In The Vaults* 4/2

The baião 'Delicado' is one of this prolific Brazilian composer's most celebrated and elegant pieces. He wrote and recorded it in 1951 and it was an immediate hit in South America. Percy Faith picked it up the following year and enjoyed enormous success with it in the Americas and Europe. The Ventures (joined by Billy Strange, who evidently shares lead guitar duties) turn in a fine account of it, giving orchestral versions a good run for their money by creating an ample and variegated soundstage. The sharply-etched percussion emerging forcefully from both channels is especially imposing, while the resonance of the melody is enriched by discreet use of the tremolo arm. Markedly more muscular and vibrant than Chet Atkins' relatively recent rendition (album *The Other Chet Atkins*, 1960), it nonetheless exudes an air of airy sophistication in keeping with the title, unlike the boisterous version from Carol Kaye (on lead guitar) three years later.

**[62/55U] ORIGINAL NUMBER ONE**

Rel.2007: CD *In The Vaults* 4/15

Recorded in July 1962 at the same session as tracks for the *Going To The Ventures Dance Party!* album, this unused piece, uncredited but presumably a group composition, retains its working title. Simply constructed and with a strong 50s styling, it sounds very much like a studio jam. Even so, there is usually plenty to savour even in relatively unambitious Ventures workouts — in this instance the neat call and response patterns from lead guitarist and drummer, the nifty lower-register runs on damped strings from the lead guitarist, and the loping bass-lines.

**[62/56U] TABOO**

(Margarita Lecuona/ Sydney K. [aka Bob] Russell/ Al Stillman)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/20

Cut in September 1962, with the participation of Billy Strange, David Gates and James Burton (Burke/Taylor annotation), the latter presumably feeding in the incisive second lead lines (see below). Margarita Lecuona, distant cousin of Ernesto of 'The Breeze And I' fame, wrote the music for this evocative work in 1941 and it soon entered into the ranks of much recorded mood pieces. One of the most celebrated stemmed from Arthur Lyman in 1958, with whom The Ventures seemed to have a special affinity (cf. the entry at [61/12]), though their renditions are very different tonally and stylistically. Lyman's version, decked out with calls of the (South Seas) wild, belongs to the realm of exotica. The Ventures rock it up, though only slightly. (For a really zippy rendition look no further than Johnny Smith's 'Tabu' from 1952!) They dispense with external adornment and juxtapose their trademark metallic twang with a marvellously resonant low register passage at 1:26 (this cutting in from the second lead: James Burton? He must also be involved in the superbly executed interweaving at 2:29). Another stellar performance, the best of The Ventures' Lyman-related pieces by a fair margin, this one somehow got left behind.

**[62?/57U] TOSSIN' AND TURNIN'**

(Ritchie Adams/ Malou Rene)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/12

Brisker than the 1961 seven-week chart-topping vocal from Bobby Lewis. Nokie's clipped/quick-fire fingerwork is a pure delight, as is Mel Taylor's stickwork. The CD annotators put the recording date at late 1962. In line with this Dave Towers<sup>25</sup> states categorically that it formed part of the *Going To The Ventures Dance Party!* sessions of that year (Clive Poole's suggestion that it emerged from the *Country Classics* sessions, so indicating a recording date of 1963, is found persuasive by Dave Burke<sup>26</sup>). Another stylish performance that was presumably edged out by the sheer volume of music being produced over this period.

**[62/58U] WALKIN' WITH MY ANGEL**

(Gerry Goffin/ Carole King)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/8

To this number, which they note involved sessioneers Billy Strange and Patrick Vasquez (better known as Pat Vegas, later of Redbone), the *Vaults* annotators assign a recording date of July 1962. ("Sounds like the same session as brought forth [62/34] SCRATCH [on the August 1962 LP *Mashed Potatoes And Gravy*]. Definitely Mel on drums" remarks Clive Poole<sup>27</sup>.) They opine that the group will have heard this Bobby Vee number when they toured with him that year (according to Dave Towers<sup>28</sup> they played it with him on stage). In any case it was already accessible not only on the other side of the 1961 #2 single 'Run To Him' (it made #53 in its own right in January 1962) but also in the set *Take Good Care Of My Baby* which was itself charting in the early months of that year. With a countrified air, it is approached in an even more upbeat and chirpy manner than the original, where it might be felt that the strings detract from its youthful spontaneity. There is a sudden and telling switch to a fruity low-register guitar sound at 0:59; add to that a stretch of inspired rhythm accompaniment at 1:41, and it is hard to see why this one was put to sleep in 1962.

**[62?/59U] WHAT'D I SAY**

(Ray Charles)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/15

Dave Towers<sup>29</sup> maintains without any qualification that this number formed part of the *Going To The Ventures Dance Party!* sessions of 1962, the actual album released in November. A 1963 date was suggested with "confidence" by Burke/Taylor, who linked the number to the *Let's Go!* sessions, while Clive Poole thought of the *Bobby Vee Meets The Ventures* set from earlier this same year. It would be good to know what documentation if any exists. In any event, it's an exhilarating piece of RI with funky lead guitar breaks (the call and response patterns are particularly catchy) and an appealing tightness and bounce; it all sounds merely exciting until 1:18 — then it becomes superbly slick into the bargain.

1962

## DAVE'S VIEW FROM THE VAULTS

### 1

Dance was obviously the focus for the band during 1962, with all four of the albums released this year being directly related to this universally popular mating ritual. American teenagers seemed to have been far more obsessed with the topic than their UK counterparts, presumably because US television promoted the activity whereas the BBC only broadcast a weekly *Come Dancing* show which concentrated on ballroom dancing with participants in formal black tie and tails and grand sequined dresses. As a consequence I still cannot tell the difference between the Wah-Watusi and the Mashed Potato. The Ventures were obviously keen to exploit such a commercial phenomenon and not only contributed their original composition 'Instant Mashed' to the pot, but even launched their own dance creation 'The Twomp'. In fact the link with dancing was fairly tenuous as most of the titles on these albums were either original compositions or sourced from other areas, as Malcolm so illuminatingly identifies. However, dancing certainly proved to be a good hanger for instrumentals because the musical merits of the quartet of albums they produced in 1962 have long outlived the Hully Gully and, indeed, the Ya Ya.

### 2

There has been much speculation about the musicians featured on 'Opus Twist' and 'Guitar Twist' from the *Twist With The Ventures* album. The writing credits of Tommy Allsup and Jerry Allison have fuelled much heated debate within Ventures circles, where it is believed by many that they also played on the tracks. To add to this, in Michael Kelly's book on the history of Liberty Records Allsup makes the claim that he played on both. It's all tantalisingly possible as Allsup headed up Liberty's country division and also did production work for the label during this period. Both he and Jerry Allison also played on sessions and, indeed, Allsup did appear on 'Silver City'. However, there are two titles — 'Opus 1' and 'Opus 2' — listed on a session contract dated 22nd August 1961 which I have taken to be 'Opus Twist' and (less certainly) 'Guitar Twist' which name Bogle, Wilson, Edwards and Sharky Hall as the musicians. To confirm this I asked the acknowledged expert on Hollywood sessions, Russ Wapensky, to check out who played on 'Guitar Twist' and the answer came back — Bogle, Wilson, Edwards and Hall. So it's a great story, but the evidence we have suggests that it is not true. Further tracks for the *Twist With* album — 'Movin' 'n' Groovin', 'Road Runner' and 'Shanghaied' — plus 'Lady Of Spain' were recorded on 6th September by Bogle, Wilson and Edwards in the company of Muddy Berry. The latter was a drummer in the Gene Davis Band who had a residency at Hollywood's top hangout for local musicians, the Palomino Club, where the band would later find Mel Taylor. It was actually Muddy Berry who played on the issued 'Lady Of Spain' single and not Howie Johnson.

### 3

Further titles recorded during October 1961 were 'Ventures Stomp', 'Beatnik Fly', 'Forty Miles Of Bad Road', 'Moondawg', 'Bongo Rock', 'Stick Shift', 'Venus', 'Mexico', 'Teen Beat', 'Driving Guitars' and 'Bumble Bee'. All of these were recorded by Bogle, Wilson, Edwards and Johnson at Liberty Custom Recorders, with Ray Rivera being added to play percussion on 'Bongo Rock'. Of course 'Moondawg', 'Driving Guitars' and 'Bumble Bee' were used for the band's *Twist With* LP, while



‘Mexico’ appeared on the *Telstar* album and ‘Venus’ on *Going To The Ventures Dance Party!* This illustrates rather well how in the early days the band were recording continuously with tracks being subsequently selected by the producer and then packaged up in a topical commercial context, often merely by way of some creative titling. The idea that the band normally went in to record tracks for a specifically themed album such as, for example, the *Twist With* LP is not really accurate. When looked at closely both of the band’s twist albums contain only two titles that relate directly to the dance (‘The Twist’ and ‘Let’s Twist Again’), and these would probably have been recorded anyway because they had been such enormous hits. This also explains why so many tracks were simply forgotten, with some of the aforementioned titles not being released until 1999 when they were finally liberated on the *In The Vaults Volume 2* CD. ‘Beatnik Fly’ was based on Johnny & The Hurricanes’ rendition of ‘Blue Tail Fly’ and features the same guitar figure that dominates the Hurricanes’ hit — which makes it slightly different to the version issued by The Ventures. Presumably the change of title and arrangement were made to enable The Ventures to claim the royalties as it was a traditional tune with no copyright affiliations.

#### 4

During January 1962 the band recorded an unreleased original penned by Hank Levine. This features not only an unusual drum sound which dominates the track but also, perhaps not unexpectedly, a sympathetic string arrangement. Levine was a pianist and composer for hire in Hollywood who had already penned ‘Silver City’ and ‘Genesis’ for the band and also wrote the string arrangements for several tracks on the *Another Smash!!!* and *The Colorful Ventures* albums. Previously he had worked on arrangements for Phil Spector, and had also written ‘Forbidden City’ in the late fifties which was issued by composer Barry deVorzon under the name of John Buck & The Blazers (later re-mixed and released by Kalasandro). Bob Reisdorff put out several of Levine’s 45s on Dolton, while ‘Soupy’s Theme’ and ‘Baby Elephant Walk’ were released by Levine under the name of The Miniature Men — the latter title making number 87 in the US Top 100 during 1962. He also composed the occasional song with hit writers Steve Barri and Nick Venet as well as contributing music to a couple of early teen films (*The Young Swingers* and *Raiders From Beneath The Sea*). He later wrote ‘What Are We Going To Do’ for The Monkees, as well as early political satires such as ‘The Immortal Words of LBJ’ and humorous songs like ‘Candy Is Dandy (But Love Don’t Rot Your Teeth)’. For most instrumental fans though he is best remembered for his wonderful 1961 single ‘Image (parts 1 & 2)’ which he recorded as The Hank Levine Orchestra — actually a bunch of Hollywood session men including saxman Plas Johnson and drummer Earl Palmer. In later years he turned to the cinema and produced several low budget films.

#### 5

Mel Taylor made his first session contract appearance on February 1st when he recorded three originals and the Latin standard ‘Besame Mucho’ with Bob, Don and Nokie at RCA studios. Four days later they all returned to cut ‘Mocking Bird’ (aka ‘Candy Apple Racer’), ‘Dark Eyes’, ‘My Bonnie Lies’ and ‘Red Wing’. All but one of the titles were used on the band’s *Twist Party Volume 2* LP, the odd one out being ‘Mocking Bird’ which was not issued until 1965 on a Japanese 45 as ‘Candy Apple Racer’. Secreted away at the very end of the *Twist Party Volume 2* tape is an unreleased original. It’s a nice riff-driven number featuring some of Nokie’s trademark note shifts (sometimes executed by loosening and tightening the string at speed) and was obviously cut before the other tracks because it features Howie

Johnson on drums. On March 21st Bob, Don, Nokie and Mel recorded 'Home On The Range', 'Good Old Summertime' and 'Instant Mashed'. Sadly there is no trace of the first two of these titles in the vaults.

## 6

In May 1962 the band arrived at the RCA studios in a rather different formation to record the *Mashed Potatoes And Gravy* LP. Nokie Edwards and Mel Taylor were joined by guitarists Billy Strange, David Gates and Ervan 'Bud' Coleman to cut 'Summertime', 'Spudnik', 'Hot Summer', 'Lucille', 'Mashed Potato Time', 'Hully Gully', 'Wah-Watusi', 'Gravy', 'Poison Ivy', 'Hernando's Hideaway', 'Scratch' and an unreleased original. Presumably Bob and Don were either away on tour or working on promotional duties. David Gates was from Tulsa where he played in local band The Accents with Leon Russell. Both had attended Tulsa's Will Rogers High School and played on the busy local scene in the mid-fifties before later moving to Hollywood to seek their fame and fortune — a quest that eventually found full fruition in the early seventies when Russell launched his solo career and Gates formed Bread. Californian Billy Strange was from a showbiz country background (his parents performed a touring cowboy act), and he became well known through his appearances on Cliffie Stone's *Hometown Jamboree* radio and TV show. Bud Coleman was also from a country background and later became Herb Alpert's guitarist with the Tijuana Brass and composed several hits including 'Tijuana Taxi'; he also wrote 'Hot Summer' for The Ventures. Sadly he died in 1967 after a routine operation on his ear went tragically wrong. Unsurprisingly The Ventures' unreleased original bears the same characteristic sound as the rest of the *Mashed Potatoes* album, although at one point it was considered for inclusion on the *Country Classics* LP.

## 7

The quirky 'Lolita Ya Ya', which tends to galvanise fans into either hate it or love it camps, was recorded on June 25th 1962. On the session at United Recorders were Bob Bogle, Mel Taylor, Billy Strange, David Gates and Hank Levine who played harpsichord. The number is legend on the on-line Underground Fire 2 discussion group where Grant Gottgetreu (known as 'The General') has tirelessly championed the track as the pinnacle of Ventures recordings in a good-natured amusing way, often to the chagrin of others who do not share his opinion! In July Bob, Mel and Billy Strange were joined by Pat Vegas to record 'Stranger On The Shore', 'Blue Star' and 'Walkin' With My Angel'. 'Stranger On The Shore' and 'Blue Star' are actually earlier versions than those that appeared on the *Walk Don't Run Volume 2* set.

## 8

In July and August the band worked in the RCA studio on tracks which would later appear on *Going To The Ventures Dance Party!* The tracks listed as 'Original 1' and 'Original 2' on the session sheet of July 16th are the basic tracks for 'Gandy Dancer' and 'Night Drive' which were cut alongside 'Mr Moto', 'Come September' and 'Limbo Rock' by Don, Bob, Nokie and Mel. A little later, on August 9th, Bob and Mel re-convened at RCA in company with Billy Strange and David Gates to add finishing touches to 'Gandy Dancer' and 'Night Drive' as well as laying down 'Ya Ya Wobble' and 'The Intruder'. Most likely Billy Strange had his composition 'The Intruder' already written, but 'Ya Ya Wobble' sounds as though it was created on the spot — something that the Bogle, Strange, Taylor, Gates writing credit tends to confirm as they were the musicians in the studio at the time.



## REFERENCES IN TEXT

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

- 1     P 44 [1999] 10-11.
- 2     H67; cf. id.70.
- 3     NGD 48 [1996] 9.
- 4     P 44 [1999] 10.
- 5     VR 42 [1995] 12.
- 6     NGD 11 [1978] 11.
- 7     P 34 [1997] 12.
- 8     NGD 42 [1994] 23.
- 9     H74.
- 10    NGD 78 [2006] 4-8.
- 11    P 44 [1999] 10-11.
- 12    P 30 [1996] 20ff.
- 13    Glynn Beddington, VR 44 [1996] 4.
- 14    P 25 [1994/95] 45-46.
- 15    NGD 48 [1996] 9; P 31 [1996] 40.
- 16    P 30 [1996] 20.
- 17    NGD 48 [1996] 9.
- 18    P 46 [1999] 4.
- 19    P 44 [1999] 16.
- 20    H80.
- 21    NGD 45 [1995] 42-43.
- 22    P 34 [1997] 12.
- 23    P 46 [1999] 43.
- 24    P 9 [1991] 38.
- 25    P 44 [1999] 29.
- 26    P 46 [1999] 4 & 5.
- 27    P 46 [1999] 4.
- 28    P 44 [1999] 29.
- 29    P 44 [1999] 29.