

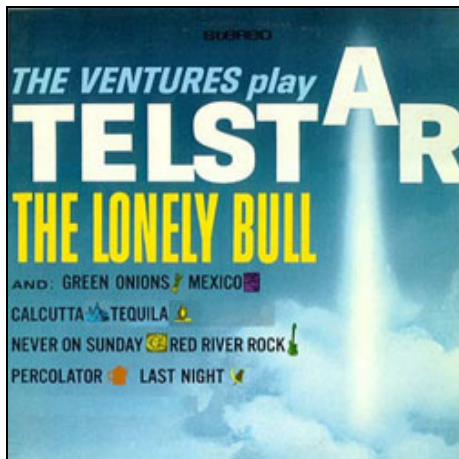
1963

## ALBUM TRACKS

January 1963 LP

### *The Ventures Play Telstar: The Lonely Bull*

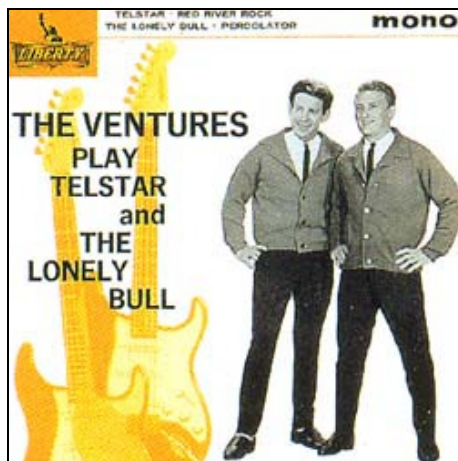
Dolton BST 8019 Stereo/ BLP 2019 Mono



The story is frequently told (in close detail by Dawn Eden in the liner notes to the 1992 EMI '2 for 1' *Telstar/ In Space* CD) that the group personally kept a close eye on the up and coming hits of the day with a view to recording them for their albums: it seems that Don Wilson's decision to press for a version of 'Telstar' was responsible for the original idea of a Latin Hits album (according to others, a Hits Of The Sixties collection) being dropped in favour of something of wider appeal. This set is indeed replete with US big-sellers, but only three of the twelve were chart entries within the last quarter of 1962 when the *Telstar* set was put together: Booker T & The MGs 'Green Onions' (September), Herb Alpert 'The Lonely Bull' (October), The Tornados 'Telstar' (November; August in the UK). The remainder had made their chart debuts some way back, in order of appearance: 1958 'Tequila'; 1959 'Red River Rock'; 1960 'Never On Sunday', 'Calcutta'; 1961 'Apache', 'Last Night', 'Mexico', 'Let There Be Drums'; 1962 (February) 'Percolator'.



In any event, it was the relatively new blockbusters ‘Telstar’ and ‘The Lonely Bull’ that were naturally given star billing, and they were selected as the opening numbers of the set. The former was #1 by 22 December. ‘The Lonely Bull’ had reached its highest point of #6 by 8 December; but on top of that there was the debut album of the same name which charted this same month, eventually peaked at #24, and enjoyed a lengthy stay in the best-seller lists, though surprisingly sales only exceeded the million mark by 1967. The Alpert album deserves more than a cursory mention, because it also offered, in addition to ‘Mexico’ and ‘Never On Sunday’ (see tracks 3 and 6 below), ‘Limbo Rock’ penned by Billy Strange, which had appeared on The Ventures’ previous album [62/45]: see the commentary on November 1962’s *Going To The Ventures Dance Party!* for this influential figure’s further involvement. Bud Coleman, another Alpert associate, had been part of the circle of busy sessioneers on that set. To illustrate these interconnections further, note that of the numerous other musicians contributing to this latest Ventures album assembled by Dave Burke<sup>1</sup> in *Pipeline* 44 (cf. also p.31 below), ubiquitous sessioneer Leon Russell (keyboards), Al Porcino (trumpet) and David Gates (guitar) also worked with or were closely associated with Herb Alpert.



On the face of it, the idea of rounding up an assortment of the home country’s instrumental successes from a wide spectrum of musical styles has to be a winning one, and in fact the *Telstar* album made #8 by February. A glance at the album chart at precisely this time reveals the reason why. By Ventures standards this set is extremely conservative, nearly all of it distanced from the hard-hitting RI at which they had proved themselves so adept. It is, broadly speaking, the kind of fare that was packing the upper reaches of the current album charts, where an Elvis soundtrack was about as pop-orientated as they got, dominated as they were by the likes of Peter, Paul & Mary, Stan Getz, Tony Bennett and Allan Sherman.

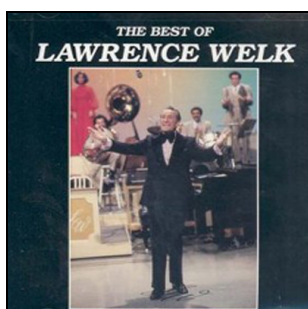
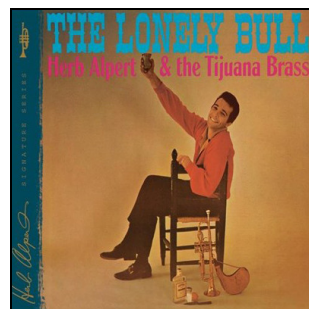
“... one of the group’s finest records, jam-packed with some of their best songs” enthused one American reviewer, in accord with the record-buying public at large, who lapped up this bumper package of high fliers, nearly all the work of their own country’s artistes and all of them Top 20 (the positions attained were: 1, 6, 7, 1, 2, 19, 1, 3, 10, 5, 7, 3): see Halterman 83 for its popularity in the US and elsewhere. British fans in particular have not been so appreciative, being at times completely dismissive, and not just because half of the selection had never seen chart action here (in fact this Ventures’ album, with its “inane psychedelic cover” as DP describes it, only saw UK release in 1968; an associated EP appeared in September 1963). Over the years a

steady stream of contributors to specialist RI publications have repeatedly declared themselves intolerant if not downright contemptuous of cover versions as a class, with a predisposition, thinly disguised if it is disguised at all, to view ‘group originals’, with a matching lack of discrimination, in the most charitable light.

In this particular case, my own view is that the truth lies somewhere between the extremes: the set is definitely not one of the wonders of the music world, but neither is it a total waste of effort. Whereas certain of the numbers strike me as feeble (LET THERE BE DRUMS), crude (CALCUTTA), or even desperate (APACHE, not that desperate admittedly if you can stomach the Ingmann version; RED RIVER ROCK), the remainder do not compromise quality unduly in the quest for reaching out to a wider public. In any event, the question in most need of addressing is how The Ventures and their team of sessioneers have gone about adapting the models for their avowed purpose, that is of creating an attractive, commercially viable and stylistically diverse selection of familiar material in instrumental mode.

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

**TELSTAR** is undeniably adventurous, with a real effort made to match the drive and imaginativeness of the original; of the rest, typical Ventures fare it may not be, but **LAST NIGHT** isn’t a bad shot given the opposition, while the elegant rendition of **NEVER ON SUNDAY** compares well with the multitude of versions floating around in the first two or three years of the decade.



### 1 [63/1] TELSTAR

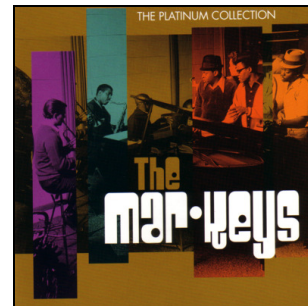
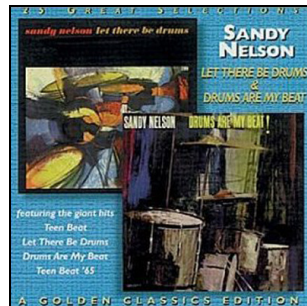
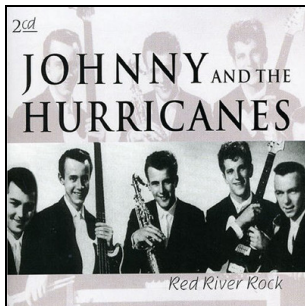
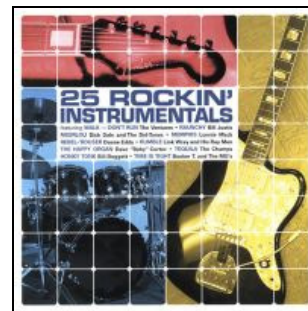
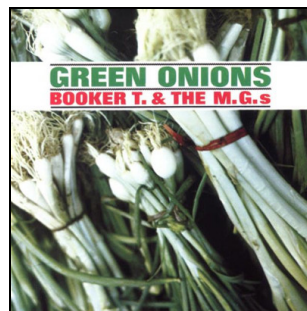
(Joe Meek)

The Tornados’ ‘Telstar’ betrays its patchwork origins — clavioline main melody, backing track and guitar part, a battery of sonic manipulations from Geoff Goddard and the composer himself; the lengthy process of piecing together is described in Alan Taylor & Dave Burke’s liner notes to the 2CD collection *Ridin’ The Wind*. Yet it still emerges from its unsettling and ill-coordinated murk with the power of an unstoppable dynamo, and the improvised other-worldly sound effects are exactly right



— unnatural and downright weird. The Ventures turn this concoction into a squeaky-clean tour de force, possessing enough brute energy (heralded by blast-off produced by Don Wilson releasing foam from a fire extinguisher, as he would often reflect later!) to offset the inevitable process of sanitisation.

“Telstar”’s impact on a pop scene barely touched by outside influences was such that American imitations of various complexions came in a flood in the course of 1963 and into 1964, with strong representation naturally from RI: The Challengers, The Champs, The Lively Ones, The Routers, The Virtues amongst others. The Ventures themselves though were exceptionally quick off the mark with their organ-led cover: “I heard it in the car in 1962 before it hit the charts and drove straight to the office to begin recording it” (Don Wilson). Whatever may be thought of the *Play ...* album as a whole, this, unlike the original with its limited dynamic range, is a carefully measured and powerfully implemented imitation which verges on the positively scary at high volume levels: “... a formidable attempt with harps, celestial sounding guitars, and a huge cinemascope-like organ ...”, as Dave Burke fearlessly put it<sup>2</sup>. Not everybody reacts favourably to this version. DP characterises it as “a totally pedestrian, bland cover totally missing the (musical) points that the original had, and that made it #1, i.e. Clem Cattini’s drumming, the ‘clavioline’ keyboard and that amazing rhythm”.



## 2 [63/2] THE LONELY BULL (Sol Lake)

Faced with a different agenda, The Ventures with Nokie to the fore might well have presented this as a (moderately) rocked-up guitar intro along the lines of the catchy UK Eagles version of August 1963: see entry [66/41L] for a live workout in this vein. As it is, while it would be going too far to talk of cloning, the arrangement adopted by The Ventures is not guitar-led: it is very close to the Alpert original, which was clearly subjected to keen scrutiny, with the incorporation of crowd noise, guitar break (nice rounded Fender tone), backing vocals and various other trappings. What does sharply distinguish the two though is the overall mood. (Alpert himself has often recounted how he was inspired by his first bullfight in the spring of 1962 to capture the “feeling” of the afternoon.) His trumpet sound strikes a subdued, dignified note,

whereas that of the imitation blares assertively. Put another way, the one gives the impression of viewing events through the eyes of the bull standing firm as it is isolated before the watching throng, the other from the standpoint of a sporting event with spectators baying for blood.

Although the point has been questioned from time to time, it may be taken as certain (contrast Halterman 74) that drummer Mel Taylor played on the Alpert version. GW reports that on one of his visits to the US, Mel “showed him a recent birthday card from Herb with the sentence: ‘The Bull would have been Lonely without you’”.

### **3 [63/3] MEXICO**

(Boudleaux Bryant)

Bob Moore (a well-known bassist who worked with such luminaries as Elvis Presley, Brenda Lee and Roy Orbison) & His Orchestra made US #7 in late 1961 with this agreeable number, also included on the Alpert debut album mentioned above. The main theme is catered for by mariachi horns giving off something of a glare in places (not unattractive), picked up by mandolin. Add to the rich orchestration a thoroughly infectious beat and you have a winner of wide appeal. The Ventures, with a rather more muted approach and a less vibrant soundstage, deploy acoustic guitar with a mandolin-like tone (a point confirmed by Don Wilson<sup>3</sup>) and have a second guitar providing fills. Not bad, but the original’s breeziness is in short supply here. Later in the year The Lively Ones would take the number into territory more congenial to enthusiasts with a liking for RI laced with convivial background hubbub.

### **4 [63/4] CALCUTTA**

(Heino Gaze)

This German composition from Laurence Welk & His Orchestra hit the #1 spot in February 1961 (his *Calcutta* album also made #1). It featured harpsichord as well as accordion (Welk’s own instrument), and true to its origins it jogged along not too hurriedly to the accompaniment of la-la-las, hand-clapping and other expressions of merriment — more like a Bavarian beer-party than ‘Champagne Music’, the label applied to Welk’s bubbly creations. The Ventures’ guitar-led rendition gives it a more pronounced beat, while female backing vocals contribute their concentrations of la-la-las with a truly disarming earnestness. (Dawn Eden cited on track 1 above thinks them “tongue-in-cheek”, an appraisal which seems out of tune with the overall approach both on this number and the rest.) All extremely twee.

### **5 [63/5] APACHE**

(Jerry Lordan)

By 1963 the work of The Shadows, by whatever route it came to their attention, evidently meant something to their American cousins (see on [64/30] BLUE STAR; [63/55S] THE SAVAGE). But The Ventures’ treatment of APACHE, produced for an album devoted to high performers in the instrumental galaxy, is stylistically worlds apart from the UK group’s moody-sounding masterpiece, which The Ventures had not heard. Their APACHE recalls rather the Ingmann version so alluring to the American market. This was more of a novelty piece really, decked out with the contrived mimicry of whistling arrows reminiscent of a turkey in heat — an ingredient recurrent to varying degrees (ranging from fairly muted to downright intrusive and irritating) in subsequent Ventures renditions, both in the studio and in concert as well, the number becoming a stage-favourite early on. It is worth stressing that American as well as Japanese audiences did seem to savour this fearsomely trivial specimen, whereas had

The Ventures ever set foot on The British Isles they would surely have sparked a riot if they they tried this one out. Dawn Eden<sup>4</sup> records an example off how a later recruit to the group reacted while performing it in a concert many years down the line: “<Gerry> McGee, looking bemused at the crowd’s enthusiasm, plays note-perfect leads almost offhandedly”.

#### **6 [63/6] NEVER ON SUNDAY**

(Manos Hadjidakis/ Billy Towne)

A number of vocal versions sprang up in the wake of the popular film of this name starring Melina Mercouri. Among the instrumental renditions, Don Costa & His Orchestra & Chorus climbed to #19 in the US charts of 1960 and went on to sell in excess of a million copies. His is a lush, expansive production with sweeping strings. The Ventures, in their mandolin-led version courtesy of Hank Levine<sup>5</sup> (a bit thin-toned, the sonority of a bouzouki would have worked better), naturally scale things down. Everything sounds much less imposing and more breezy, aptly enough, and an awesomely/ extravagantly presented celestial chorus is dispensed with in favour of well disciplined and sweet-toned female backing vocals. Given the group’s brief here, their version strikes me as well crafted.

#### **7 [63/7] TEQUILA**

(Chuck Rio)

Five weeks at #1 in 1958 is not bad going for an instrumental, though The Champs’ other recordings can scarcely be said to have lasted the course. It is hard to fathom the enduring appeal of this raucous specimen of contrived jollity with its flurry of hand claps and honking sax: the “touches of excitement” detected by the sleeve-writer on Ace’s *Tequila* collection are certainly hard to seek. While it attracted a host of cover versions, it resisted the group’s persistent attempts to wow record-buyers with tunes and arrangements derived from it. The Ventures, who do not engage the services of a saxophonist, go for a well-oiled smoothness enlivened by prominent cymbals and occasional flourishes from the lead guitar, though the overall approach sounds a mite deliberate for Nokie.

#### **8 [63/8] GREEN ONIONS**

(Al Jackson Jr/ Lewis Steinberg/ Booker T Jones/ Steve Cropper)

Booker T & The MGs’ ‘Green Onions’ was in the charts by September 1962 and made it to #3; the parent album also sold well, hitting #33 in December. The Ventures clearly picked up early on this stylish, tightly played instrumental with its mesmeric rhythm, its funky, quirky organ lines and its inspired bursts of guitar, a number well characterised by Colin MacKenzie<sup>6</sup>, who speaks of “its insidious marching beat, the unforgettable gutsy guitar interjections of maestro Cropper and drummer Al Jackson’s grunted vocal encouragement”. In the pages of the UK’s *Radio Times* of 14–20 April 2007 Phill Jupitus opined that ‘Green Onions’ was “probably one of the greatest pieces of instrumental pop music ever written”, but there is no “probably” about it in my view, for it is up there with the best that stellar groups like The Ventures and The Shadows had to offer. The Ventures too opt for the organ + guitar pairing, but there is more of the latter. Though that is thrusting and atmospheric, it is just no match for

Cropper's startlingly cutting style of play. What there is in the way of organ plays it safe, with little or nothing of the tricky, improvising touches of the original. Not a feeble imitation by any means, but not special either. I fail to see how anyone could have even begun to entertain the notion that it "crushes even the superb original"<sup>7</sup>.

### **9 [63/9] PERCOLATOR**

(Lou Bideu aka ~ born as Lew Bedell/ Ernie Freeman)

A novelty number of affecting simplicity (conveniently available on the 2003 Varese Sarabande v.a. CD *25 Rockin' Instrumentals*), 'Percolator Twist', derived from a Maxwell House coffee jingle, was recorded by The Checkmates: Ernie Freeman on xylophone, Rene Hall on guitar, Red Callender on bass and Earl Palmer on drums. With Lou (sometimes spelled Lew) Bideu posing as self-christened frontman 'Billy Joe Hunter' for publicity photos, Billy Joe & The Checkmates had a #10 hit early in 1962 then promptly passed into oblivion. The Ventures' guitar-led rendition is crisper but it proves only marginally less trivial, dealing as we are with something that looks set to develop into an endless loop.

### **10 [63/10] RED RIVER ROCK**

(Tom King/ Ira Mack/ Fred Mendlesohn)

An undisputed classic of the genre, this reworking of the old standard 'Red River Valley' (though copyrighted as a new song) made #5 (and #3 in the UK) in 1959 for Johnny & The Hurricanes. Dominated by Paul Tesluk's Hammond organ, Johnny Paris' sax honking away with raucous fills and with a gutsy guitar solo from Dave Yorko, it motored along to its appointed end with the force of a sledgehammer. The organ sound in this remake for mass consumption sounds uncomfortably cultivated, with not the slightest hint of rawness, while the two guitar breaks from Bob Bogle are anaemic and even faltering in places. The *overall* sound is spruced up considerably in Kevin Reeves' remix on the 1992 CD referred to above<sup>8</sup>, though it is hard to see any justification for switching the stereo channels around.

### **11 [63/11] LET THERE BE DRUMS**

(Sandy Nelson/ Richard Podolor)

A follow-up million-seller to 'Teen Beat' from 1959, this 1961 #7 for Sandy Nelson (#3 in the UK), notable for its rugged simplicity and drive, is now one of the staples of 60s instrumental compilations. The Ventures provide the most pallid of imitations: "Sandy Nelson's percussive wall of sound ... is reduced to a mere drum solo" was the trenchant verdict of Dave Burke<sup>9</sup>, while fellow drummer Dave Peckett somewhere applied the label "insipid". One might add that the lead guitar on the original is integrated into the barrage of percussion, whereas on our version it seems somehow detached from the real action.

### **12 [63/12] LAST NIGHT**

(Charles Axton/ Gil Caple/ Chips Moman/ Floyd Newman/ Jerry Lee Smith)

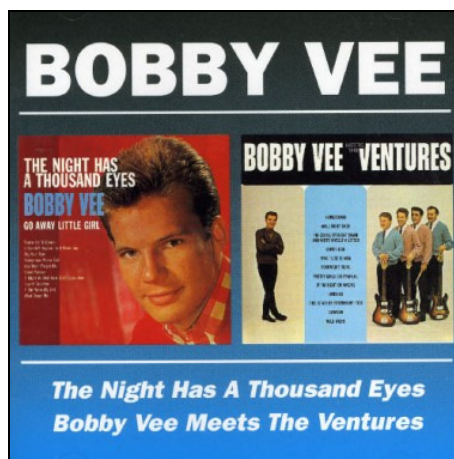
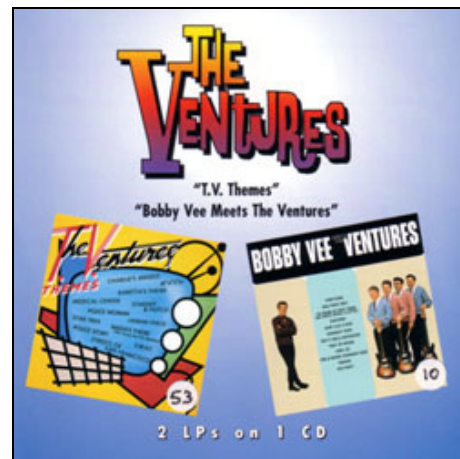
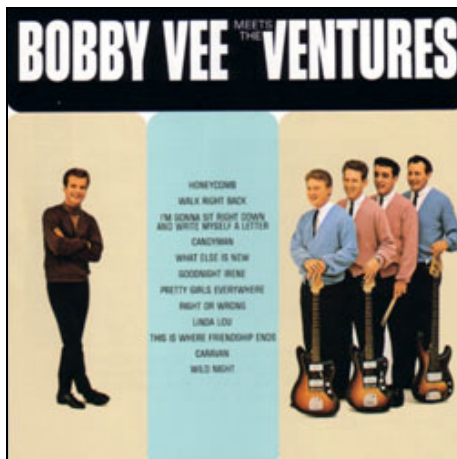
A single from The Mar-Keys that caught on in a big way, climbing to #3 into the second half of 1961, so bringing to national prominence an exciting example of the Stax sound with its punchy horn section and powerful combination of organ, guitar, bass and drums. It was remarked in the sleeve notes to the album from the same year that "This is an album of instrumental music that is just great for dancing", and indeed Steve Cropper felt sure that the tune owed its success to its being the first instrumental released with a twist beat. The Ventures expand their normal line-up to the point of

unrecognisably and have a fair crack at the number. It comes over as more measured and refined, rather sterile in comparison with the strident soul-breathing original with its soaring sax break and the snatches of speech designed to project a feeling of ‘being there’.

April 1963 LP

### ***Bobby Vee Meets The Ventures***

Liberty BST 7289 Stereo/ LRP 3289 Mono



The Ventures contributed just two numbers in their own right on an album that peaked at #91 (not bad by Bobby Vee's standards, though his *Meets The Crickets* from the year before had made #42). Background to the release in Halterman 93–94.

### **1 [63/13] CARAVAN**

#### **New Version**

(Duke Ellington/ Juan Tizol/ Irving Mills)

See on 1960 LP *The Ventures*, entry [60/9]. This new version with Nokie upfront paves the way for a number of exhilarating powerhouse live outings. It majors on drive rather than atmosphere, has far more adventurous lead lines and is graced with a scything rhythm guitar accompaniment. The downside, as Dave Burke has pointed out, is the drum sound — “as if Mel was in another studio a couple of blocks away”<sup>10</sup>.



## 2 [63/14] WILD NIGHT

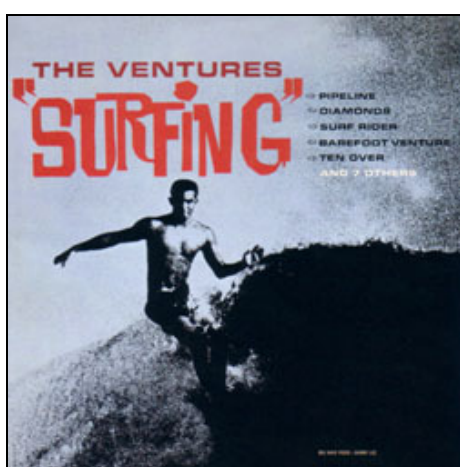
(Don Wilson/ Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor)

This number, and indeed CARAVAN, sits ill in this programme of Bobby Vee vocals, the accompaniment to which, with the odd exception, does not show The Ventures at their most incisive and assured. On the other hand, the boisterous WILD NIGHT strikes one at once as slotting into the surf genre, and that is precisely where it soon ended up, on the *Surfing* album, under the new title [63/21] PARTY IN LAGUNA. However, in the process it picked up some overdubs which coarsened it needlessly: see the entry.

May 1963 LP

### *Surfing*

Dolton BST 8022 Stereo/ BLP 2022 Mono



The *Telstar* album had presented a skewed picture of The Ventures in terms both of identity and sound. The core group of four was filled out with a range of sessioneers bringing an array of different instruments into play. On top of that, the marketing ploy of focusing on material of proven mass appeal reaching back over several years meant that original compositions were strictly excluded.

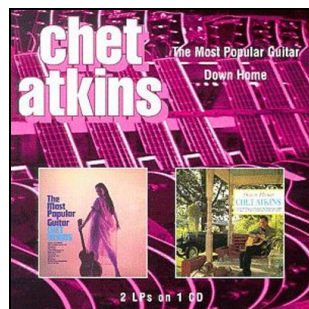
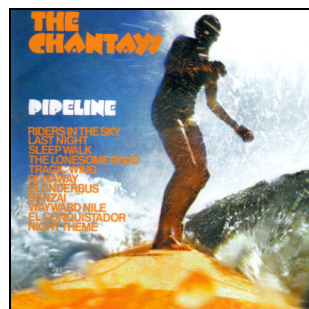
After an interval of barely four months events took a different turn. A new long-player was in the shops, catering for a more topical interest (Dick Dale's debut album *Surfers' Choice* made #59 in February) which The Beach Boys in particular exploited by crashing into the Top 10 with their album *Surfin' USA*. On this latest Ventures set the 3+1 line-up swept the board, enhanced by a fair amount of studio trickery, notably the overdubbing of extra guitar parts. Group members penned no fewer than nine of the twelve numbers, though two of them were not in fact new. This was a reasonable enough strategy as interest in surf instrumentals was concentrated in the younger age brackets who set some store by novelty and would be little inclined to welcome with open arms a bundle of reworked tunes. As a result, for racy titles the group could help themselves to some of the colourful jargon that rapidly surfaced when the sport itself became a craze (a key of sorts was provided in the LP annotation: cf. Halterman 88).

The Ventures deck out a couple of the numbers (tracks 6, 12) with marine sound-effects and take the unusual step of lifting a piece unaltered from a previous album under the new title SURF RIDER bestowed upon it by The Lively Ones. However, as DB points out (p.32 below), they by no means embrace surf idioms whole-heartedly,

and their approach is unlikely to appeal to those who find the reverb-drenched, undisciplined, anything-goes approach irresistible. (The one attempt at letting their hair down by importing an element of freneticism with the very contrived-sounding overdubs on PARTY IN LAGUNA comes across as stilted in the extreme.) Don Wilson (though he proceeded immediately to cut back on what he said) has commented<sup>11</sup> that the group were dissatisfied with the album at the time on the ground that the mix was “thin”. It is hard to see how this can be taken literally. Perhaps the feeling was that surf-associated elements of reverb and so on could have been employed more thoroughly. If so, the end result might have been less appealing to a wider public, for the album climbed as high as #30 and held on in the charts for seven months.

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

**SURF RIDER** has had its say under its earlier title **SPUDNIK**. **BAREFOOT VENTURE** provides a splendid example of the whole ensemble in scorching form. **TEN OVER** too is exhilarating stuff, and the lighter **THE HEAVIES** imports an element of unalloyed fun.



### 1 [63/15] PIPELINE

(Bob Spickard/ Brian Carman)

The Ventures were pretty quick off the mark with this one, making use of an up and coming number as their opener. The Chantays' single entered the charts early April, and would make #4. Brian Carman revealed<sup>12</sup> that the attention-grabbing spluttering at the start “was created by kicking our Fender outboard reverb to get it to simulate the sound of a crashing wave” and that the instrument supplementing the 3+1 line-up was a Wurlitzer electric piano. The Wurlitzer to be sure lends a sonority lacking in the rather understated lead guitar lines, while the bustling accompaniment, with its insistent but not overwhelming bass-line, suggests the vigorous forward movement and exhilaration of the surfing experience, and is adroitly arrested at the close: not an easy act to follow. The Ventures do not have keyboard support and consequently the

overall sound is much leaner, almost stark, and they have failed to match the model's effortless flow (the plodding bass is no asset).

For more on The Chantays' finest achievement consult the discerning appraisal offered by Alan Taylor & Dave Burke in the liner notes to the 2007 Ace CD *The Birth Of Surf*. — AT adds this comment: "The Ventures' intro sounds (very poorly) edited to me. The point in question arises at about 0:09. It sounds like a stumble in the bass line, but that is such a simple two-note pattern that I can't believe the band would have left it there. My guess is that the intro from one take has been spliced on to another after the event" — in which case we must assume that one shortcoming generated another that was left uncorrected. More likely, as DB puts it, "It's just a mistake they couldn't be bothered to correct!". Compare the notorious missing note at 0:37 of [61/17] LULLABY OF THE LEAVES, with Del Halterman's comment (55).

## **2 [63/16] DIAMONDS**

(Jerry Lordan)

The Jet Harris and Tony Meehan version of this sprightly Jerry Lordan composition created a tricky and arguably impossible act to follow: Shadows resonances aside, the playing was faultless, and there was a sensibly proportioned rather than (as so often with late 50s/early 60s intros) immoderate Duane Eddy-styling in the form of female vocals and dirty-sounding sax. For The Ventures in surfing mode DIAMONDS might seem ideal material, yet they do not do a lot with it, turning in a lacklustre, listless performance (Dave Peckett<sup>13</sup> labels the drumming "pedestrian", outshone by Tony Meehan).

Two versions appeared in America early in 1963, from Buddy Harman, and from Billy Mure & The 7 Karats. Both — the former in particular — were rather more animated and altogether more impressive than that of The Ventures. Much has been made of the fact that The Ventures did not have the original UK version before them, but given its idiosyncratic styling it is doubtful whether that would have made a material difference. It is a moot point whether the number is suited at all to the 3+1 line-up (even with 'surfing' embellishments), as the composer himself sensed when he offered it not to The Shadows (whose own, much later version is nothing special), but to Jet Harris & Tony Meehan. We will never know how the American market would have reacted at the time to the UK hit, but one wonders if they would have reacted at all: it might all have sounded a bit old hat (Duane-Eddyish) over there.

## **3 [63/17] WINDY AND WARM**

(John D Loudermilk)

Yet another one picked up by The Ventures from Chet Atkins, whose 1961 recording is regarded as one of the most notable examples of his supremely smooth fingerpicking. The Ventures, as expected, divest it of frills and give it more muscle, with gritty solo breaks at 1:11 and 1:42, so that it is not nearly as balmy. It is still slinky enough however to prompt the thought that the association with surfing is a tenuous one, related to title rather than style. Still, an attractive enough number as well as a flexible one. The Spotnicks too released a version in 1963, giving it a pronounced military air.

## **4 [63/18] TEN OVER**

(Don Wilson/ Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor)

The group finally gets stuck into something with real clout. Heralded by a pounding bass drum, TEN OVER is built on a simple yet powerfully stabbing stop-start riff,

thudding bass, robust percussion and some propulsive dual tracking (left channel), reinforced by crashing chords from Don Wilson (right channel). The centrepiece is Nokie's cavalry charge-like solo break at 0:57, with a renewed and even more dazzling burst at 1:13.

## **5 [62/36] SURF RIDER**

(Nokie Edwards)

A retitled [62/36] SPUDNIK plucked from the *Mashed Potatoes* album. It clearly proved irresistible, as it had been popularised in 1963 by The Lively Ones, a group that made a hobby out of retitling tunes (it was they who rechristened this number; their April album into the bargain sported the title *Surf Rider*!<sup>14</sup>) and was taken up by other surf-bands (cf. Clive Poole in *Pipeline* 46<sup>15</sup>).

In fact, now that the present set has found its feet, the number slots perfectly into place. The main theme, the noble sounding melody of which is enriched by the resonant, shimmering lead, takes the form of a steady advance over the water, an advance twice (0:45/1:45) interrupted by brisker passages, with punchy rhythm guitar very much part of the action, as the surfer rides the rolling surf. The Lively Ones' version is well worth a listen. What it lacks in poise it makes up for in grunt: a snorting sax shares the action and is allotted an aggressive-sounding solo spot. (Another notable example — one of many — of the group's habit of taking a number by the scruff of the neck and injecting a hefty dose of flamboyance is their 'Mr Moto'. See further in *Pipeline* 36<sup>16</sup>.)

## **6 [63/19] CHANGING TIDES**

(Don Wilson/ Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor)

One of many guitar-led compositions of the pre-'Albatross' days that set out to conjure up images of the marine environment, its expansiveness and the constant sounds and movement. The introduction springs a surprise, because the sheer volume level of the crashing surf suggests that something of a decidedly boisterous nature will supervene. But CHANGING TIDES proves to be no belter, though it is not exactly tranquil either. The lead lines ring out brightly against a restless, ever-marching but also ever-shifting background, a striking evocation of the ebb and flow and radiant beauty of the natural world.

## **7 [63/20] THE NINTH WAVE Album Version**

(Don Wilson/ Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor)

Ultra-deep-toned lead guitar, busy busy accompaniment, explosive bursts of energy, clattering percussion — this sounds very much like an attempt to engender a souped-up cousin of the (Ventures' account of) the Harris/Meehan number essayed earlier, though in point of fact the inspiration for the piece came from a passage in The Tornados' follow-up to 'Telstar' in the States, 'Ridin' The Wind'. (Storm effects were added to the Stateside version, contributing further to the fearsomely heaving hotpotch of sound.) It does have punch, but nothing approximating to a characterful tune. And everything sounds very derivative and laboured. Still, after some revamping (see entry [63/52S]), it turned out to be what the people wanted, because it was a Top 100 single in the US, and made #8 in Australia; details of further attainments are provided by Dave Peckett in his liner notes to the 1995 GNP/Crescendo CD *Surfing*.



## **8 [63/21] PARTY IN LAGUNA**

(Don Wilson/ Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor)

Mercifully, a solitary nod in the direction of the less cultured face of surf music. This might have been titled 'Extra Wild Party In Laguna'. It is a rowdier version (overdubbed hollering in ghoulish mode, cf. earlier [62/8] MOVIN & GROOVIN' on *Twist With The Ventures*) of the belter [63/14] WILD NIGHT on the April *Bobby Vee Meets The Ventures* set.

## **9 [63/22] BAREFOOT VENTURE**

(Don Wilson/ Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor)

On the title see p.31 below. A quintessential Ventures stomp. The opening, with a thumping fuzzed-up lead guitar assailing the ears, may give rise to the uncomfortable feeling that we are dealing with an early prototype of Joe Loss' 'March Of The Mods'. But not for long. Move 47 seconds into the track and Nokie's place in the lead guitar hot seat is seen to pay staggeringly handsome dividends, as the whole ensemble tightens up perceptibly and accelerates into a near 40-second hell-for-leather break which makes the rest of this album, and most of the group's earlier output, indeed any comparable group's output, sound positively tame! This is guitar-led beat music at its most exciting, and it is no wonder that surf groups worldwide took it up. More's the pity that instrumental record-buyers had to wait till 1965 to discover that the group could pull off performances as electrifying as this in live performance as well, and that too without the slightest stumble.

## **10 [63/23] THE HEAVIES**

(Don Wilson/ Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor)

Here is another belter, this one helped on its way by a manipulation of the catchy hook of 'Poison Ivy' from the team of Leiber and Stoller. Once again Nokie piles on the tasty licks as he weaves his way through a call and response routine while Don hammers away at his guitar as if it were a washboard. But the overall tone here is lighter, a scudding romp decked out with some showy, jokey sound effects (0:43 on) — just the job for the Road Runner cartoons!

## **11 [63/24] CRUNCHER**

(Don Wilson/ Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor)

Dave Burke, who knows all about drums and how to play them, finds this obvious wink in the direction of Sandy Nelson miniatures "disappointing" by comparison. Dave Peckett, another accomplished stickman, is more appreciative<sup>17</sup> ("superb": liner notes referred to on track 7), and my own (unschooled) reaction after rummaging through various Nelson albums is certainly not as negative. The guitar interventions are powerful and mesh well with the exceptionally robust percussion, and the whole builds to a resounding climax amid a deafening crash of cymbals — a great improvement certainly on the earlier attempt at the maestro's [63/11] LET THERE BE DRUMS.

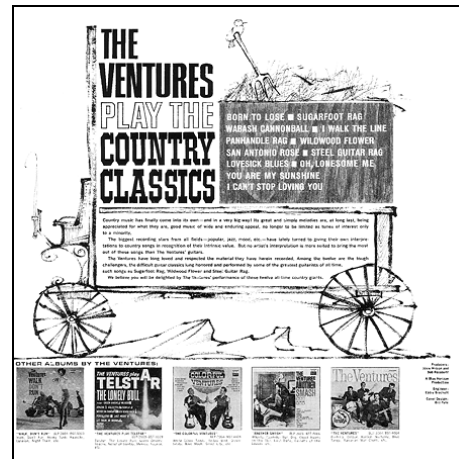
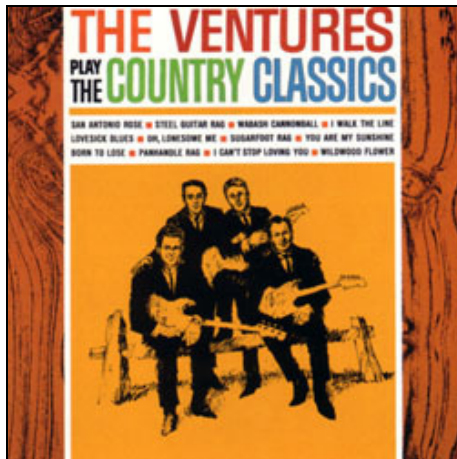
## **12 [63/25] THE LONELY SEA**

(Don Wilson)

More marine sound pictures. This is a dark, brooding composition, taken at a measured pace and employing a sonorous deep-toned guitar to evoke images of the deep sea's expanse and to hint at its perils. The drum patterns are almost funereal, a

chorus intones a sombre accompaniment and latterly cymbals crash menacingly. A good 'un, though rather a joyless — indeed forbidding — piece with which to close a surfing set.

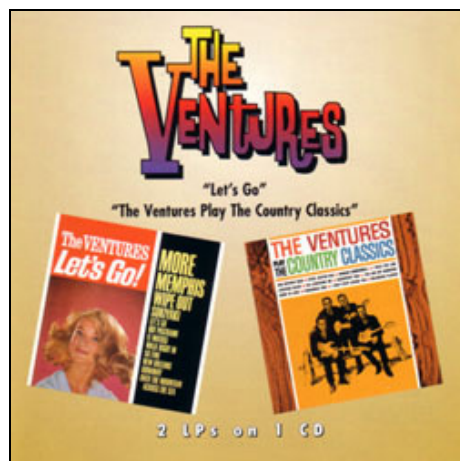
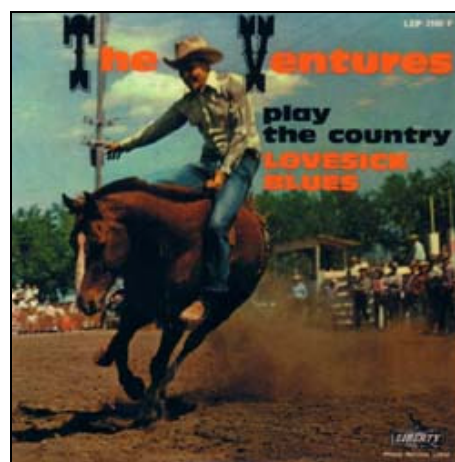
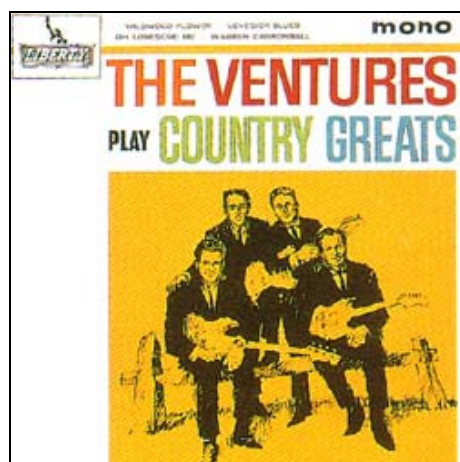
June 1963 LP  
***The Ventures Play The Country Classics***  
 Dolton BST 8023 Stereo/ BLP 2023 Mono



Mel Taylor had sung and played guitar in country group Mel Taylor & The Twilight Ramblers and had been a drummer in bluegrass bands prior to joining The Ventures<sup>18</sup>. More importantly, as noted earlier (on [62/4] GRINGO), Nokie Edwards had worked with country artists associated with the Bakersfield Sound, and in particular, as had Mel Taylor also, with Buck Owens<sup>19</sup>, who himself once described it as “a mix of Bob Wills & The Texas Playboys and Little Richard. I liked music with a big beat, and I liked the driving sounds of drums and guitars.” This is precisely the brand of music-making, suitably tailored to The Ventures’ distinctive style, that Nokie, now firmly established as lead guitarist, came to be spearheading for this predominantly hard-driving *Country Classics* set.

That Nokie, who singled out this album as one of his favourites in a 1981 interview<sup>20</sup>, relished the music upon which he stamps his authority so forcefully is evident throughout. That is not to say that he carried the rest of the group as

passengers. Every one of them rises consistently to the challenge of providing superb accompaniment to this master guitarist's dazzlingly virtuoso displays.



Despite that, the album tends to be discussed cursorily or even treated with undisguised condescension by reviewers, chiefly I think because its musical identity has proved problematic. Not long after the initial release it was repackaged with a new title, *I Walk The Line*. This change must have been market-driven, arising from a fear that an album explicitly proclaiming with its *Country Classics* title (note too the back cover artwork pictured above!) the fact that a mainstream pop instrumental group was venturing into one of America's time-honoured, traditional genres might not go over too well with the target audience. In fact, though it stayed on chart for over three months, it only made #101, the group's lowest showing since 1961. (Del Halterman<sup>21</sup>, while noting the valuable detail that the popular Jack Halloran Singers were employed on this album, seems to me to paint an exaggerated picture of its popularity at the time.) In 1963 the US still had separate marketing operations for its sharply categorised musical styles, 'hit parade', 'country and western' and 'rhythm and blues', and the public for its part, though prepared to invest in a relatively small niche of mainstream pop in the shape of artistes like Patsy Cline and Jim Reeves, was not yet ready for the thoroughgoing genre-blending that in two or three years time would be accepted as wholly normal and indeed transform the face of popular music.

The Ventures' instrumental country set is in fact for the most part a crossover, a true hybrid: country rock, a coming together of electric pop and country classicism. It was

one of the precursors of a sub-genre that came to full maturity (but was not invented, as is commonly asserted) in the second half of the 1960s with Gram Parsons' *Safe At Home* (recorded 1967, release deferred till 1968), The Byrds' resplendent *Sweetheart Of The Rodeo* (1968) and The Flying Burrito Brothers' *The Gilded Palace Of Sin* (1969). What these performers did do is extend and enrich the fusion by pulling in a wide canvas of instrumentation to complement the basic electric guitar/drums set-up: steel guitar (most especially), banjo, piano, fiddle and the rest. This is not to say that the more limited resources deployed on *Country Classics* render The Ventures' brand of country rock less valid or less effectual. Much of the album is hard hitting, hard rocking country with potent ensemble playing, able to match in instrumental guise, as no other comparable outfit could to my knowledge in the intervening period, such masterpieces as the exhilarating powerhouse finale of The Byrds' 'Nothing Was Delivered', when, in Johnny Rogan's words, "the drums collide with the steel guitar in a startling crescendo".

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

**STEEL GUITAR RAG and YOU ARE MY SUNSHINE are equally potent in their different ways; and for sheer verve and dexterity PANHANDLE RAG is hard to beat.**

#### **1 [63/26] PANHANDLE RAG**

(Leon McAuliffe)

In the course of a long and productive career steel guitarist Leon McAuliffe (cf. comment on track 8) was one of the anchor-men in Bob Wills & The Texas Playboys and contributed to the bewildering diversity of styles attempted by them (boogies, blues, rags, stomps and so on); he had worked as well with The Light Crust Doughboys, a group with which Nokie Edwards has played in recent years. One of his best known pieces, 'Panhandle Rag', was recorded with his own Western Swing Band and made #6 in the R&B charts of 1949. Though there is no sax solo, as this latest album once again calls in no outside help in the way of supplementary instruments, McAuliffe's arrangement is adhered to quite closely. That said, The Ventures succeed in giving it a thoroughly modernising makeover, with a constant flurry of embellishments from Nokie Edwards (who indulges in one of his characteristically tricky solo breaks at 0:43) and with Don Wilson expertly hammering out his trademark punchy rhythm accompaniment.

#### **2 [63/27] WABASH CANNONBALL**

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

Trains and lots of them helped shape the American dream and this tune, which surfaced from obscure origins in the late nineteenth century and acquired its obscure but colourful title near the beginning of the next, was one of many such pieces to find a ready home in country and country-related music. The Carter Family released a version in 1932 in their trademark direct and unadorned style. But more elaborate versions followed (from Roy Acuff & His Smokey Mountain Boys, to take a notable example), and, typically, onomatopoeia played an important part in such creations. Trains are born with or soon acquire names, and with names identities and even personalities, the sounds they make being an obvious focus for musical expression. 1960s RI guitar groups amongst others provide a feast of examples, good, bad and indifferent. Our version is a model of its kind: the instruments themselves provide most of the effects, rhythm guitar and percussion combining beautifully to pace out



the tune, traced out by a lead guitar that alternates between a fruity resonance and a sharp twang, as the loco picks up speed and rattles along, until coming to a halt gracefully with a final sound of the whistle and (human-generated) emission of steam.

### **3 [63/28] SAN ANTONIO ROSE**

(Bob Wills)

Back to the world of Western Swing, this time with Bob Wills' famous opus. Wills recorded it in 1938 with his Texas Playboys as a fiddle-led instrumental then redid it in 1940 as 'New San Antonio Rose' (the 'New' however was soon dropped) with vocalist Tommy Duncan but with reeds and brass in big band swing style, so bringing him into the mainstream of American popular music. Floyd Cramer made #8 with a version released in 1961, a mild toe-tapper given the lavish Nashville treatment, the swirling strings sounding rather incongruous. With a brief flourish at start and finish reminiscent of loud-echoing Rautalanka, The Ventures turn it into more of a fast jog, the lead lines propelled by forceful accompaniment from Don Wilson and Mel Taylor on opposite sides of the stereo soundstage.

### **4 [63/29] I WALK THE LINE**

(Johnny Cash)

The incomparable Johnny Cash's first incursion into the national charts was pretty creditable: 'I Walk The Line' climbed to #17 towards the end of 1956, as well as topping the C&W charts for six weeks. The Ventures provide a respectful and artfully crafted instrumental portrayal of the song, from Cash's famously deep-booming, sepulchral voice mirrored in the lower registers of the lead guitar to a close reproduction of Luther Perkins' 'Boom-Chicka-Boom' routine and Marshall Grant's rock steady bass-lines. The playing is set off by a humming chorus in constant attendance invested with a rich timbre reminiscent of Cash's own vocal delivery, a nice touch.

### **5 [63/30] WILDWOOD FLOWER**

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

This is another nineteenth century song the origins of which are shrouded in uncertainty, and another popularised by The Carter Family who laid down their version of it in 1928. (In 2003 it would be June Carter Cash's final recording.) The Ventures' version sounds like a modernising adaptation, treated to the tightest and most assured of '3+1' makeovers, of Merle Haggard/Hank Thompson's swinging rendition of 1955 which reached #5 in the C&W charts. Nokie Edwards can bend notes as well as the next man and usually a lot better, but he is not beyond using the tremolo arm as well — and he does so to tremendous effect here, throwing in for good measure a battery of tasty licks and lightning-fast embellishments, with a notably striking flourish towards the close, at 1:34.

### **6 [63/31] I CAN'T STOP LOVING YOU**

(Don Gibson)

A much covered song: before the Ventures recorded it there had been versions from artists of the stature of Roy Orbison, Rick Nelson and Hank Locklin. Don Gibson's own Chet Atkins-produced B-side release from 1958 (see on track 10) typifies the slick and polished production values of the Nashville country sound, his resonant vocals set off by a busy but never disruptive accompaniment, notably from tinkling piano and the gorgeous tones of a steel guitar. Ray Charles took the song to US & UK

#1 in 1962; plucked from a country album of his (cf. on track 12), it was in fact more of a big production tear-jerker, with lush strings and gentle gospel-tinged chorus much in evidence. The heart-tugging, dreamy tone of that is reflected in The Ventures' version, the general approach recalling a number of early Bob Bogle slowies with an Hawaiian ambience. There are no strings but there are sweet-sounding backing vocals, swelling towards the close.

### **7 [63/32] LOVESICK BLUES**

(Irving Mills/ Cliff Friend)

A show tune published in 1922, the song, familiar in the UK especially from Frank Ifield's five-week #1 succeeding The Tornados' 'Telstar' in November/ December 1962, was taken into Hank Williams' stellar repertoire and hit the top of the Country Charts in 1948/49. Floyd Cramer released a #87 single in 1963: it boogies along quite nicely but it is not one of his better efforts. The Ventures disregard the implications of the title altogether and rock it up: they give it a hard edge and take it at a strut breaking into a bit of a canter for the centrepiece at 1:13, the spotlight firmly on Nokie caressing and bending the notes in fine style.

### **8 [63/33] STEEL GUITAR RAG**

(Leon McAuliffe)

It comes as no surprise with the nimble-fingered Nokie Edwards now very much in the frame to find a second piece from this composer. Practitioners of Western Swing took rags into their repertoires as if there was no tomorrow: they offered pace and excitement, and, in McAuliffe's case, gave exponents of the steel guitar the occasion to show their dexterity. As the title suggests, 'Steel Guitar Rag' constitutes something of a showpiece: in fact it was McAuliffe's signature tune, enjoying immense popularity during World War II. Its raw, basic feel reflects its ultimate model, country blues guitarist Sylvester Weaver's 1923 'Guitar Rag', actually played on a guitjo/banjitar, and this last aspect is captured magnificently in Nokie's swaggering flurry of bent notes at 0:55. But dazzling lead aside, the ensemble playing on this track is outstanding: it is one of the group's tightest performances, with Don Wilson's pulsating contribution being especially striking. Best played very loud on a system with plenty of power in reserve.

### **9 [63/34] YOU ARE MY SUNSHINE**

(Jimmie Davis/ Charles Mitchell)

If the previous track was scintillating, this rendition of an old standard which first surfaced in 1940 (its true authorship is a subject of some dispute) positively brims with The Ventures' magic touch. Any fan of the group seeing this LP in the racks for the first time, or indeed anyone listening to the mischievously subdued intro of this number, might fear the worst for the prospects of this Bing Crosby/ Gene Autry chestnut, recently and very unconvincingly revived by Ray Charles (#7 in 1962). In reality, to refer to this workout as 'country' at all is implausible to say the least. This is about as hard as The Ventures, beat group extraordinaire, ever rocked, with stylish lead, sledgehammer rhythm, thudding bass, hammering percussion. The section from near the end of the first minute, reinforced by a fresh assault at 1:25 (looking forward to the sound of The Ventures onstage in its brute power), is pure improvisation: its sole link with the tune is the fact that it is embedded in it! Another one that cries out for high volume levels.

### **10 [63/35] OH, LONESOME ME**

(Don Gibson)

A Chet Atkins-produced #7 (#1 in the Country Charts for eight weeks) for Don Gibson in 1958 (for the B-side see on track 6 above), this is a cheerily delivered song considering its message; the extremely pro-active backing vocalists, The Jordanaires, don't sound too cut up either. Maybe the mood is built into the song — in 1960 Johnny Cash too made an unconvincing attempt to sound miserable, and Atkins' own rendition from the same year is quite jaunty. The Ventures for their part sound distinctly upbeat, jogging along breezily with chirpy call and response sequences involving two very snazzy lead parts.

### **11 [63/36] SUGARFOOT RAG**

(Hank Garland)

Hank Garland's signature tune was recorded in Nashville in 1949 and enjoyed some measure of success. But he derived greater kudos from playing guitar, and receiving billing on, Red Foley's super-slick hit vocal version laid down for a B-side later that year (the fiddle had a fair share of the action in both). Chet Atkins had commented that Garland was keen on fast and flashy licks, an aspect of his playing that pervades the present piece, and naturally Nokie launches into it with relish. Some studio trickery enables extra layers of sound to share the action, to tremendous effect. Another tight performance, SUGARFOOT RAG is in a more thoroughgoing countrified style than most others in this set. The composer would surely have been impressed with this workout.

### **12 [63/37] BORN TO LOSE**

(Frankie Brown)

Frankie Brown was the pen name of Ted Daffan, pioneering steel guitarist and bandleader. He was another exponent of Western Swing who, fronting his Texans, had a million-selling hit with a sprightly 'Born To Lose' in 1943. Given the tempo adopted in The Ventures' version, we must recall once more Ray Charles, on whom they may well have been keeping an eye in putting this set together. He recorded the number in 1962; it appeared on the #1 album *Modern Sounds In Country And Western Music* together with 'I Can't Stop Loving You' (cf. on track 6) and also as the B-side of that top-seller. Charles transformed a song of touching simplicity into something very contrived with a Mantovani-like string accompaniment. The Ventures take this one at a comparably sedate pace, but the atmosphere is cosy and heart-warming — more like Johnny Cash's version on Sun released April 1962, where hard-nosed compilers of recent times have presented the undubbed version, removing the homely-sounding female backing singers, whose counterparts come increasingly to the fore in this our final track.

August 1963 LP

***Let's Go!***

Dolton BST 8024 Stereo/ BLP 2024 Mono

A reversion to covers of hit material, the majority of them recent, indeed very recent, a move which earned the group a #30, with around eight months on chart altogether. Don Wilson's repeated claim that they kept a close eye on the charts and recorded many numbers even before they became big sellers seems wholly vindicated here: see the chronological details assembled in the entries below, relating to eight numbers in

all. None of the residue goes back more than a few years: SO FINE (1959); NEW ORLEANS (1960); RUNAWAY (1961); LET'S GO (1962). There is some stylistic variation in the covers chosen; only two are dance-related.

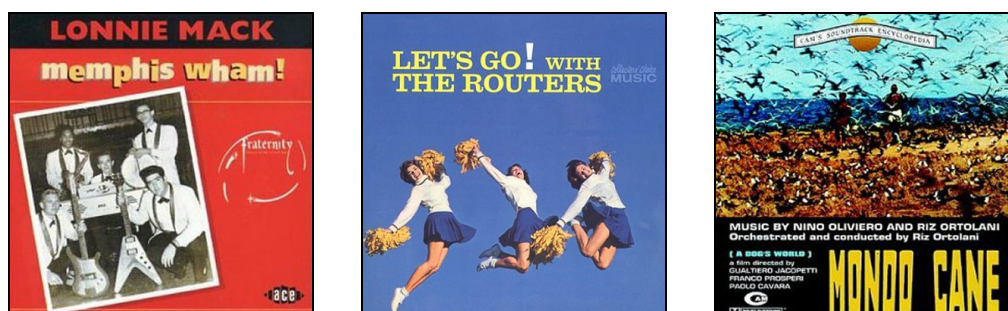


This new set raises once again the question of the extent of the core group's contribution. In 1999 Dave Burke<sup>22</sup> specified two tracks, MORE and WIPE OUT, where their involvement was “notional”, and now (p.33 below) adds EL WATUSI and HOT PASTRAMI, naming nine sessioneers over the four numbers. It is not up to the music reviewer to pass judgement on the propriety of marketing product which does not fully square with its description. What can be said is that while EL WATUSI is commendable and MORE reasonable if not exceptional, HOT PASTRAMI is unappetising and WIPE OUT downright diabolical. Presumably then if The Ventures did sit down and listen to the album in its totality before it was released they raised no objections, or it was not open to them to do so.

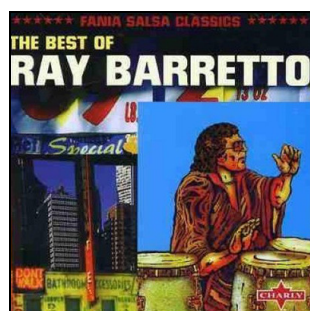
The album certainly has its good points, but the vocal reinforcements from The Moon Stones do it no favours — “... a name we just made up. We used to use Darlene Love and her group The Blossoms” comments Don Wilson<sup>23</sup>. Emphatically not on their best form in Ventures' sessions, one might add. Certain of the tracks might well have been more appropriately credited to ‘The Venturettes with instrumental accompaniment’, one of the circumstances contributing to this album's patchiness.

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

**NEW ORLEANS almost matches the brilliance of the earlier GANDY DANCER. Of the rest, MEMPHIS and RUNAWAY are a cut above.**







### 1 [63/38] MEMPHIS

(Chuck Berry)

Lonnie Mack's #5 hit entered the charts in June. The Ventures then must have been pretty quick off the mark with this one, indeed it must have been cut to a tight deadline. This may be why Nokie is rather uncharacteristically imitative, right down to the solo break at 1:22, and one suspects that he might have worked in further variations of his own had time allowed. This said, it is still a cracking performance, those snaking fingers of his making it all seem so very effortless, with Lonnie Mack's rough edges smoothed off and treated to a high surface polish. The rockabilly-styling of the model suited Nokie down to the ground (Mack started out as a country artist, so he was another early example of a country-rocker on occasion), just as the group as a whole did justice to its rhythmic drive.

### 2 [63/39] LET'S GO

(Lanny Duncan/ Robert Duncan)

This piece barely rises above the level of an inconsequential frolic, but then the debut album of a number of top Hollywood session players under the guidance of Joe Saraceno is full of cartoon capers too. The Routers called upon guitars, piano, a hearty sax solo providing a dash of excitement, splashy cymbals and an unfailing supply of handclaps to catch the imagination not only of cheerleaders and their ilk but of the public at large as well. Their late 1962 single enabled them to scoop up a #19 in the national charts; avidly taken up by soccer crowds, it also got to #32 in the UK. In The Ventures' hands LET'S GO sounds significantly less mannered, such is the quality of the performance (ebullience *plus* poise, the percussion scaled down to reasonable levels), with Nokie breaking through the manufactured jollity at 1:18 to entertain with some deft fingerwork.

An appraisal of The Routers' activities is offered by Dave Peckett<sup>24</sup>, and also by Clive Poole<sup>25</sup>, who surveys their output through to 1965. It seems to be generally agreed that the various sessioneers acquitted themselves well — it was the material that let them down, much of it (most of it, I would say) well below the level of mediocrity. Given the calibre of the competition in our decade in the spheres of both musical ability and compositional flair, I find it hard to view them as more than a mere curiosity, of strictly passing interest.

### 3 [63/40] MORE

(Nino Oliviero/ Riz Ortolani/ Norman Newell)

Trombonist Kai Winding's rendition of this theme from the 1962 Italian film *Mondo Cane* was released in May and charted the month our album appeared, climbing to #8. (The *Soul Surfin'* album with this number on board, swiftly retitled *More* by the

marketing men, also released in May, offered versions of [63/15] PIPELINE and SUKIYAKI, the latter on this present album.) Worked into the arrangement, managed by Claus Ogerman, was the unusual sound of the ondioline, played by Jean Jacques Perrey. This was an electronic keyboard device associated with space age pop, rather like a clavioline but with a wider range. For The Ventures (or rather 'Ventures', see Introduction) a piercing organ is the main instrument, with punchy interventions from lead guitar(s) and (as with Winding) a vigorously strumming acoustic rhythm guitar which sounds as if it was pinched from The Tornados, and very possibly was. A nice tune for sure, but the imitation adds nothing to the original and indeed seems rather brash in comparison. And whose bright idea was it to squeeze into the first half minute around fifteen intrusive gulping noises by way of embellishment?

#### **4 [63/41] EL WATUSI**

(Ray Barretto)

Another number that charted in May 1963, this one from conguero and bandleader Ray Barretto peaking at #17. Barretto remarked later of this million-selling record made with his own charanga band playing against a pretty well unremitting background/ foreground of convivial chattering and chuntering in Spanish on the Watusi and other matters: "After 'El Watusi' I was ... neither a good Latin nor a good pop artist". A bleak self-appraisal indeed, but the sessioners here (see above) make a pretty good job of it. There is no animated talk, so the end result is an instrumental proper. They get a strong Latin rhythm going and pile on lively percussion, while the resonant lead guitar, reinforced with a second in call and response, is used to produce a variety of tonal colours.

#### **5 [63/42] WALK RIGHT IN**

(Gus Cannon/ Hosie Woods)

Folk trio The Rooftop Singers (two male, one female) did not enjoy a long run but they did pick up a #1 (#10 UK) at the beginning of 1963 with a refurbished version of what was originally a ragtime-styled number from 1929, a lightweight piece performed with élan and beefed up by a pair of 12-string acoustic guitars cleverly playing in unison. They were good singers too. While the 12-string idea was taken on board, it was evidently decided against going for an instrumental cover here, so, longish solo apart, The Moon Stones were engaged to regale us with some shouty vocals which contribute more than a little to the feeling that we are dealing with a quick fix. In general, on the most charitable appraisal, The Ventures in the 60s were not well served by their female backing vocalists. The recordings of Johnny Rivers from 1964 on would show to what a pitch of perfection the art could be taken.

#### **6 [63/43] SUKIYAKI**

(Rokusuke Ei/ Hachidai Nakamura)

Another US chart-topper, this mid-tempo piece sung in Japanese by Kyu Sakamoto entered the charts in May 1963. The Ventures came up with one of the earliest of a host of covers, The Moon Stones again surfacing to exercise their vocal chords doggedly in faithful attendance on the melody line — as if it was not captivating enough in its own right. Kenny Ball & His Jazzmen's version had charted in the UK in January. What a pity The Ventures had not heard this fabulously swinging workout (picked up by that splendid UK guitar outfit The Eagles in August), reserved The Moon Stones for a rainy day, and rocked things up themselves as they would do so frequently and successfully with relatively sedate material on future albums.

## **7 [63/44] NEW ORLEANS**

(Frank Guida/ Joe Royster)

Here, at last, on a uneven album, The Ventures come up with a true stunner. Back to 1960 for this #6 hit from U.S. Bonds (#16 UK 1961). The sound quality of his early (mono only) recordings is dire, but the professedly alcohol-induced powerhouse performance — raucous vocals from singer and backing vocalists, hoarse sax, over-miked drums thundering away for dear life — are still startling and set him apart from the well behaved American crowd. The Ventures turn their backs on the coarser elements and produce a dynamic but crisp and uncluttered, super-slick two and a half minutes of instrumental bliss. The dual lead technique comes into play tellingly with a protracted series of call and response patterns, patterns already present in the leisurely intro ushering in the explosive take-off at 0:19. At this juncture an exceptionally energetic and astonishingly dexterous rhythm guitar, thudding bass and pounding snare and bass drum combine to carry along the duelling leads, and do so with each renewed surge (0:57/ 1:36/ 2:14 into the fade). A truly superb ensemble performance.

## **8 [63/45] SO FINE**

(Johnny Otis)

Four-man New Jersey R&B vocal group The Fiestas had a #11 hit with this cheery/cheesy potboiler in 1959. Seemingly set on driving their devoted fans to lose the will to live, The Ventures now vacate their communal driving seat and hand over to the unbelievably feeble and ill-articulated vocalising of The Moon Stones, capped by a truly fearsome attempt to sound soulful. An incongruous fuzz guitar solo is inserted half-way.

## **9 [63/46] WIPE OUT**

(Bob Berryhill/ Pat Connolly/ Jim Fuller/ Ron Wilson)

Things could hardly get worse after the previous track, but they don't get a lot better with this specimen of bought-in help (see Introduction to this album). The Surfari's original was a US #2 by August 1963 (with the home-grown beat groups now all the rage, it made #5 in the UK, a creditable ranking indeed). It is an undisputed classic, absolutely top-drawer: the striking intro, a stirring lead line with an exciting solo break (catch the thundering bass-lines riding along with that), the repeated assaults of pounding drums, the wonderfully crashing cymbals and the pure drive of it all. This is a pallid imitation, nothing short of inept in places. The standard of drumming in particular (Hal Blaine) has drawn adverse criticism from John Gray<sup>26</sup> ("a low") and Dave Peckett<sup>27</sup> ("exceptionally awful"); DB in contrast considers it "very good" and the piece as a whole "not so bad for a non-Ventures track". There is more: the original's hammerblow chords punctuating the drumming are turned into curiously feeble and indecisive jabs, especially towards the close (2:29), where they sound more than faintly ludicrous. Finally, the solo break (1:53) doesn't have the clout and flow of the original — Nokie would do it justice in future live outings. Rename 'Wash Out'?

## **10 [63/47] HOT PASTRAMI**

(Doug Phillips)

Drawing heavily on Nat Kendrick's 'Mashed Potatoes' and not even a little bit more appetising, this piece by The Dartells, a Californian group (guitars, sax, vocalist, 50s sound), first saw release, as a B-side, in 1962 but did not chart until spring 1963 when the Pastrami dance caught on; it peaked at #11. Joey Dee & The Starlites would follow on halfway through the year with their live #36 'Hot Pastrami With Mashed

Potatoes (Part I)' which featured a punchy organ. For the penultimate track of this set, enter The Moon Stones or rather one of their number. Ms Moonstone hollers her way through the song in a matter of fact fashion to a boisterous accompaniment, including an organ. DB responded to my early draft ("This does not sound much like The Ventures to me: can that guitar solo really be the work of Nokie Edwards?") with the comment: "Well spotted: this is not The Ventures either". See above.

### **11 [63/48] RUNAWAY**

(Del Shannon/ Max Crook)

The first Ventures brush with this fabulous hit from the late, great Del Shannon actually took the form of a full-blooded instrumental — thoroughly enjoyable with its nice fruity guitar sound, though The (UK) Hunters' marvellously echo-laden blast from February 1962 comes top of my own list here. It is worth detaching oneself from the main action (it is a big big melody with a fulsome guitar sound to match) to concentrate closely on the other elements in this splendid ensemble performance: the driving and sinuous bass, the unobtrusive but incisive rhythm guitar, and not least the powerhouse contribution of Mel Taylor. This is pure Ventures — no excuse for a Musitron is allowed to spoil the show. As a vocal delivered by Don Wilson it became a stage favourite; it formed part of their set-list when they were with Bobby Vee on a package tour of Japan in 1962, together with another Shannon cracker, 'Hats Off To Larry'<sup>28</sup>.

### **12 [63/49] OVER THE MOUNTAIN, ACROSS THE SEA**

(Rex Garvin)

A #8 for R&B duo Johnnie & Joe with The Rex Garvin Orchestra back in 1957. Popular balladeer Bobby Vinton, whose career had taken off in 1962, revived the song in 1963 and took it to #21. Much of Vinton's output seemed bland at the time (he made little impact in the UK) and seems even blander half a century down the line. His version quite simply lacks the warmth, sweetness and sincerity of the original. It is the Johnnie & Joe that The Ventures reflect, whether wittingly or not. There is no orchestration, but the dual guitar leads work in unison on high and low registers to produce a richly interwoven tapestry of sound, and the whole production exudes a balmy mellowness. It is a incurably romantic piece, and that is exactly how it comes over.

## **1963**

### **FURTHER TRACKS**

January 1963 Single, Dolton 68

**[63/50S] EL CUMBANCHERO**

(Rafael Hernández Marín)

**[63/51S] SKIP TO M' LIMBO**

(Trad., arr. Don Wilson)

This rumba from the pen of prolific Puerto Rican composer Hernández became a staple orchestral favourite soon after its creation in 1943; it brings to four the Ventures-adopted pieces on Chet Atkins' 1957 set *Hi-Fi In Focus*. Not a widely talked about Ventures number since it was not put out on a primary album, it is nonetheless a fine example of their recently blossoming powerhouse beat group

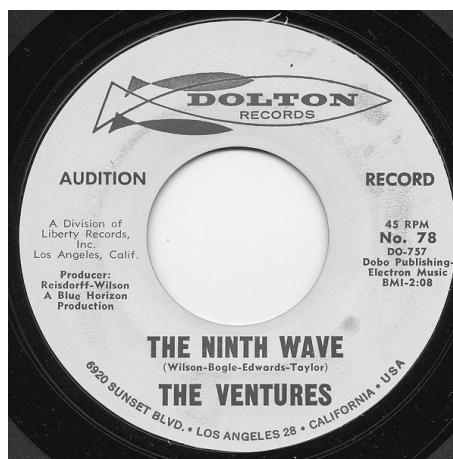


styling with Nokie's forceful and dexterous guitar work now playing a decisive role. "Twin and triple leads; sympathetic counterpoints for the middle eight; neat guitar fills and frills popping up all over the place" remarked Dave Burke in his round-up of our heroes' 'All Gold' early classics<sup>29</sup>. One would have liked a stereo version to show off all this studio manipulation to better effect. *Disc* put its point across with divertingly vivid imagery: "Their guitars rumble through the melody dramatically and with a galloping insistence which should make this a side to sell well enough to fill a ten gallon stetson with royalties".

The supporting piece is an adaptation of the American popular 'dance-stealing' song 'Skip To My Lou'. Hardly top-drawer Ventures, but jaunty and cheering enough for a passing B-side with a warm, resonant lead guitar tone (conventional acoustic together with 12-string).

Both tracks are available digitally on See for Miles *The EP Collection Volume 2* and Magic Records *Play Telstar*.

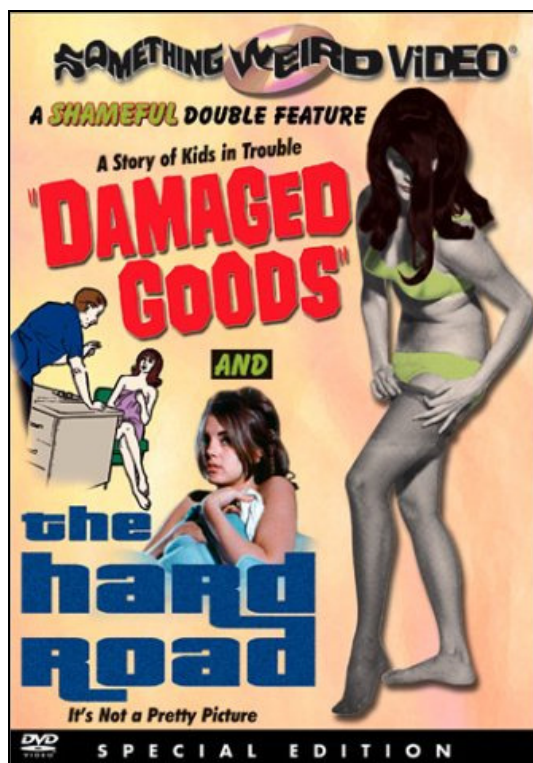
June 1963 Single, Dolton 78  
**[63/52S] THE NINTH WAVE**  
**Single Version**  
 (Don Wilson/ Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor)  
**[63/53S] DAMAGED GOODS**  
 (Carol Bedford)



The seventh number on the April *Surfing* set (see comment on entry [63/20]) was rejigged for single release: the tempo was upped to make things sound crisp rather than dragging, and very pronounced vocal group overdubs were imported. It is definitely more attention-grabbing as a result, for the album version strikes one as too ponderous and unrelieved by half.

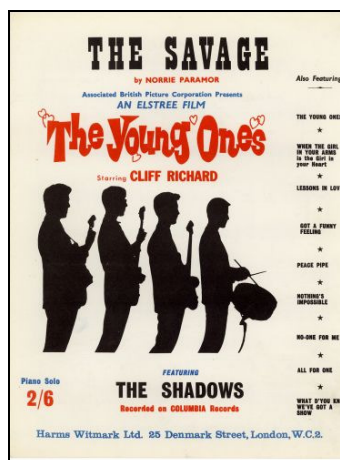
DAMAGED GOODS is quite simply in a different class. It would have made the better topside. The Ventures provided it as the theme tune for a film of this name originally released in 1961, a cautionary tale about teenage VD (VD was its original title: see p.31 below, and Halterman 91–92 for further background), now available on DVD. It found a home subsequently, for a while, as the closing number of the UK TV show *Ready, Steady, Go!* (cf. Dave Burke in *New Gandy Dancer* 48<sup>30</sup>). One of those catchy stop-start compositions at which The Ventures excelled, it blends a dramatic spy-flick textured main theme dominated by striking downward runs with a buzzing bridge offering snatches of what sounds very much like 'Granada' — this ingredient

rescued from outright plagiarism by being cut short towards twang-drenched line-ends just in the nick of time. Still, if Vivaldi and Mozart, to name but two, could play tricks like this with other people's work, there is no reason why Ms Bedford should not have done so, the arresting end more than justifying the means!



The tracks are conveniently available on: (A-side) the 2005 CD *In The Vaults Volume 3*; (B-side) the 1997 CD *In The Vaults*.

November 1963 Single, Dolton 85  
**[63/54S] THE CHASE**  
 (Bob Bogle/ Don Wilson/ Nokie Edwards)  
**[63/55S] THE SAVAGE**  
 (Norrie Paramor)



For the topside see on January 1964 LP *Ventures In Space*, entry [64/10] SOLAR RACE.

THE SAVAGE, a single that The Shadows disliked at the time, a superb example of artfully controlled ferocity (much more so than the ‘Witch Doctor’ alternative), has proved its worth over the years, up there among their revered classics and constantly revamped by tribute bands. The Ventures’ B-side is more than a match for THE CHASE in the art of noise, on the principle evidently of the more noise the better, offering as it does a concerted onslaught of guitars, organ, cymbals and percussion generally, with no improvising break (such a distinctive part of The Shadows’ original). As they said of The Sex Pistols, never mind the melody, it’s the energy ... Still, to these ears it is just too unrelieved, a caricature. In *New Gandy Dancer* 48 Dave Burke<sup>31</sup> offers a contrasting appraisal, positively aflame with admiration: : “... it is a great track. Pounding tom toms precede the racing lead, and then there’s the piping organist in the background, busy rhythm, a bubbling bass and some outstanding work from Mel Taylor as the drums really dominate this powerful version of the old Norrie Paramor tune...”.

Prior to the onslaught spearheaded by The Beatles, The Ventures, in common with the vast majority of their compatriots, had little awareness of the UK pop scene, and it does not appear that any of the early Ventures/Shadows convergences came about as a result of group member(s) picking up anything directly (for a curious exception which however was not followed through see under 1966, p.29). Don Wilson at any rate recalled that it was Liberty that put THE SAVAGE their way, possibly as a demo that surfaced in trade circles; they recorded it in October 1963. This particular Shadows single did not see US release, though *The Young Ones* album which included it (together with PEACE PIPE, see entry [63/59U]), was issued there on DOT Records under the title *Wonderful To Be Young*.

These tracks are conveniently available on: (A-side) the CD *In The Vaults Volume 3*; (B-side) the CDs *The EP Collection Volume 2* (See for Miles) and *The Ventures In Space* (Magic Records).

1963 B-Single (Italy), Liberty LIB 10101Q  
[63/56S] TARANTELLA  
(Trad., arr. Don Wilson/ Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards)



“‘Black Tarantella’ [see entry [69/44U] is a title that first appeared in the Ventures master log back in 1961 where it is listed among the tracks intended for the band’s *Colorful Ventures* album” (annotation to track 14 of the 2007 CD *In The Vaults*

*Volume 4*). Two years further on it was issued in Italy under the title TARANTELLA as a flipside for [63/38] MEMPHIS, the two tracks reappearing along with [63/50S] EL CUMBANCHERO and [63/51S] SKIP TO M' LIMBO on a Spanish EP later that year (Liberty LEP 2120 L). It is a sprightly, tightly performed version of a traditional tarantella (in its Sicilian form), by this time thoroughly familiar as a light orchestral piece: a notable example was 'Sicilian Tarantella' from the versatile and immensely popular Victor Young & His Orchestra in 1949. Its quality is such that one wishes they could have recorded many more pieces in this vein (cf. [63/50S] EL CUMBANCHERO released early 1963). Guitar-led, but mimicking the mandolin customarily employed, it has a measured air of authenticity absent in Joe Brown's celebrated but idiosyncratic ever-accelerating belter of 1965, described and annotated by Rob Bradford<sup>32</sup>. The track is conveniently available on the See for Miles CD *The EP Collection Volume 2*.

## 1963

### POST-60s RELEASES

#### [63/57U] HAWAIIAN SURFING

(Don Wilson/ Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/16

Recorded in March 1963 for the *Surfing* album which appeared a couple of months later. This piece is notable for its sudden changes in tempo and even more so for the military-style drumming, which may seek to conjure up a picture of the surfer's confrontation with the elements or perhaps even recall the fact that in Hawaiian culture skill in surfing was an indicator of manly prowess, practised to that end by chieftains and other figures of authority. The album referred to had enough in the way of evocations of the open air (tracks 3, 6, 12), so maybe this was why the number was set aside never to be picked up again.

#### [63/58U] HIGH TIDE

(Don Wilson/ Bob Bogle/ Nokie Edwards/ Mel Taylor)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/23

The recording date of 7 August 1963 (1963 was the release year for a quite different 'High Tide' from surf band The Lively Ones) provided by Burke/Taylor has been contested with a body of opinion pressing for 1964, but it has been confirmed from an acetate in Gerry Woodage's possession<sup>33</sup>. For all its technical flair, this is a piece of froth, a surfer that would be at home as incidental music for a cartoon, scooting along cheekily like the Road Runner or his like. The view<sup>34</sup> that "this could have been a huge hit if it had been released as a single" seems gravely implausible to me.

#### [63/59U] PEACE PIPE

(Norrie Paramor)

Rel. 1977: B-Single (Japan) United Artists CM 69

One of The Shadows' most admired serenely-paced pieces first released as a B-side in November 1961, a fine example of the masterly interplay between Hank Marvin and Bruce Welch, notable in addition for the wonderfully ringing, full-bodied tone from the famous Fender. In The Ventures' hands the overall effect, as so often with such

material, is busier, more forceful, more insistent (compare their [64/30] BLUE STAR for example). The lead lines have more of a kick to them, not to mention the odd ping. While there are resonances of the 60s in the basic guitar + drums sound, the overall production, with strings and chorale, absent in The Shadows version (The Norrie Paramor Strings had yet to make themselves felt on group recordings), has a 70s feel to it: indeed Don Wilson has stated that he remixed the 60s track to accompany 'Walk, Don't Run '77' for release as the Japanese single-side indicated above. It is catalogued here on the assumption that the original was recorded in conjunction with [63/55S] THE SAVAGE (see the entry). I have included it for its intrinsic interest, though strictly speaking it does not belong to a 60s survey proper, since the original version which served for the 1977 remix has not been put on commercial release and is surely never going to be. The track is conveniently available on the 1997 CD *In The Vaults*.

[A version by The Marksmen, Ventures-like in approach, has been made generally available as a bonus track on Magic Records 2005 CD *The Fabulous Ventures*.]

### **[63/60U] STAGGER LEE**

(Trad., arr. Lloyd Price/ Harold Logan)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/18

Given a recording date of 1963 by the *Vaults* annotators; Clive Poole suggests a link with the *Country Classics* sessions and Dave Burke is inclined to agree<sup>35</sup>. A cover of Lloyd Price's boisterous R&B US chart-topper (UK #7) from 1959, a real shouter with gritty vocal group backing and a big band sound including a wailing sax, the ensemble performance, heading firmly in the direction of country, is notably fine, with powerful percussion, welling bass-lines and tellingly upfront rhythm accompaniment, while Nokie wrings a positively yowling tone from the stings in the (bluesy) closing stages. A Ventures treasure tucked away but mercifully extracted from the top drawer decades after its creation.

## **1963**

### **DAVE'S VIEW FROM THE VAULTS**

#### **1**

The Ventures always had a keen grasp of commercial realities, and by the end of 1961 they must have been concerned about signs of reducing sales as the highest placing for *The Colorful Ventures* LP was a fairly lowly 94. Their dance albums of 1962 had initially reversed the situation with the first *Twist* LP surging up to number 24, but by the end of that year there were again signs of slackening sales as the *Going To The Ventures Dance Party!* LP stalled in the low nineties. The Ventures' response in 1963 was to embrace the notion of 'title strength'. They simply covered twelve big instrumental hits by other artists and marketed them on the *Telstar* album almost as if they were their own. It is easily forgotten that there is a huge raft of people out there who are not especially committed to popular music or specific bands but who simply like to whistle a good tune, and The Ventures gifted them twelve. As a consequence the LP soared to number eight in the Top 100, even though it is probably the least popular of the early albums amongst Ventures fans. Amusingly Bob Reisdorff attempted to engage Herb Alpert as the trumpet player for The Ventures' version of 'The Lonely Bull', not realising that he was actually asking him to cover his own hit!





## 2

The work for the *Telstar* LP had already commenced during October and November 1962, with 'Tequila', 'Calcutta' and 'Never On Sunday' being recorded by Don, Bob, Nokie and Mel at Western Studios on the 25th of October. A few days later on the 30th, Don, Bob and Mel were joined by David Gates and Leon Russell to cut 'Telstar', 'Last Night', 'Red River Rock' and 'Percolator', also at Western Studios. Later still on the 2nd of November Don, Bob and Mel were joined by Hank Levine and David Gates at United Recorders to lay down 'Never On Sunday', 'Last Night' and 'The Lonely Bull'. For the latter title trumpeters Frank Higgins and Al Porcino were also present. The one title on the album that we are without information for is 'Mexico', so it is tempting to think that the version cut by the band with Howie Johnson on 6th October 1961 was pressed into service. However, this does not sound as though it features Howie, so the tantalising possibility must be that his earlier, unreleased version lies slumbering in the vaults somewhere. I shall do what I can to wake it.

## 3

Still in November, this time on the 21st, Don, Bob, Nokie and Mel recorded the tracks for their early 1963 single 'El Cumbanchero' and 'Skip To M'Limbo' at RCA studios along with 'Windy And Warm' and an unnamed original — the latter most likely destined for their forthcoming *Surfing* LP. On the 7th of December they were at Western Studios and recorded another original as well as 'Walk Right In', a title they returned to a few days later on the 11th back at the same studio. There was also a further original recorded plus the unusually named 'Death Of A Matador'. This is actually quite a big production of a tune better known to us in its stripped down form as 'The Lonely Sea' from the *Surfing* album. On the unreleased 'Death Of A Matador' the lead is principally taken by mariachi-like trumpets played by Al Porcino and Frank Higgins, and also in the studio for this one were Bob, Don and Mel with David Gates, Bud Coleman and bassist Clifford Hills. Close to Christmas 1962, on the 12th, Don, Bob and Mel, together with harmonica specialist Tommy Morgan, were at United Studios to put down an unissued Don Wilson vocal track and 'The Limbo', which is almost certainly a producer's shorthand reference to 'Skip To M'Limbo' as there are no tracks in the vaults under that abbreviated title.

## 4

In February 1963 work commenced in earnest on the band's *Surfing* LP. On the 5th Don, Bob, Nokie and Mel joined Tommy Morgan again at United Recorders to cut 'Diamonds' and 'Louisiana', the latter being a pleasant, unreleased harmonica feature. On consecutive days (21st and 22nd) Don, Bob, Nokie and Mel continued with work on 'Pipeline', 'Surf Rider', 'Diamonds' and 'Windy & Warm' at Conway Recorders and then with 'The Heavies', 'Ten Over' and 'Barefoot Venture' at Western Studios. Further attention was given to 'Jaguar'/'Damaged Goods' at the latter session, almost certainly to remove the big cat roar from the unissued 'Jaguar' so that it could be recycled as theme music for a Hollywood movie. The film in question had originally been released in 1961 when it was called *VD* — yes, as in venereal disease! There must have been some adverse reaction to such a controversial title because in 1963 the film was re-branded as *Damaged Goods* and included The Ventures track as the title music. The storyline was about the perils of promiscuous teenage sex and not about a parcel being damaged in transit as I had mistakenly thought for many years! The tape box for *Surfing* is quite revealing inasmuch as there are many crossings out as titles are updated and the track listing changed. At the last moment 'Beach Party' was altered to 'Party In Laguna', 'The Heavies' was to have been 'Beach Hero', while

'Hawaiian Surfing' was at one time to have been included on the LP. The surfing films of director Bruce Brown seem to have made an impression on The Ventures, for the early name for 'Barefoot Venture' was 'Slippery When Wet', the same title as Brown's 1958 film. It can hardly be a coincidence either that Brown's 1960 film was titled *Barefoot Adventure*.

CUSTOM RECORDERS		
3-7-63	HOLLYWOOD, CALIF.	C.S.D.
EB		WORK ORDER
LIB		TAPE SPEED 15
BLUE HORIZON — VENTURES — MASTERS		
TIME	TITLE	REMARKS
	SURFERS ALBUM.	FINAL TAKES
	FINAL 3 TR MASTERS.	<del>DO NOT USE</del>
		<del>DO NOT USE</del>
2:17	PIPELINE (Speed up?) - 15 NAB	7B REMAKE
2:20	DIAMONDS (Hold Rev. Quit Down) - 15 FME	24B
Do Not Use	BEACH PARTY (Check 2A & 4A for mist) - 15 NAB	5A Do Not Use
2:09	"BAREFOOT VENTURE" - 15 NAB	5A
2:24	BEACH HERO "THE HEAVIES" - 15 NAB	6A
2:05	Do Not Use ORIG #3 (SABOR?) See Ten Over - 15 NAB	3 Do Not Use
2:30	CHANGING TIDES HAWAIIAN SURFING NAB	2A
2:05	TEN OVER (ORIG. ORIG #3) NAB	6A
2:16	CRONCHER NAB	6A
2:02	THE HEAVIES "THE NINTH WAVE" NAB	2A
2:10	THE LONELY SEA Do Not Use See Below, NAB	1B Do Not Use
2:20	WINDY & WARM NAB	7A
2:26	SURF RIDER (SPORADIC) NAB	10
2:38	CHANGING TIDES (From Orig #5) NAB	4A
	BEACH PARTY "PARTY IN LAGUNA" NAB	4A
2:14	TILLY LANKLY SEA NAB	2A

## 5

The most surprising thing about the *Surfing* LP was the low level of actual surf content, with 'Pipeline' being the only genuine hit of the genre to be covered. The album was chiefly a return to the idea of topicality as surf vocal and instrumental tunes were then ruling the airwaves, particularly in California where The Ventures were now well established. But there was no sign of Dick Dale style lead guitar or the tiki-tiki rhythm that characterised the idiom and would later become associated with Don Wilson. Instead the emphasis was very much on group originals, which made it a real bonanza for fans. Apart from 'Pipeline' the only other covers were versions of 'Diamonds', a UK hit by former Shadows Jet Harris & Tony Meehan, and Chet Atkins' 'Windy & Warm' from the pen of country writer John D. Loudermilk, neither of which had the remotest connection with surfing. They illustrated yet again how The Ventures could turn almost anything to suit their immediate needs, and the LP also made it clear that a theme could be established just with the use of judiciously selected titles and a little window-dressing. The Ventures were the masters of illusion.

## 6

In contrast to the preceding *Telstar* LP, The Ventures recorded the *Surfing* album primarily as a four piece. The same is true of the subsequent *Country Classics* LP which was cut by Don, Nokie, Bob and Mel during March 1963. This must be the only time that The Ventures virtually ignored commercial considerations by aiming an LP at what was then regarded as the niche country and western market and, perhaps as a consequence, the album was one of the few which did not enter the Top 100. Also squeezed into their frantic schedule at this time was the band's *Bobby Vee Meets The Ventures* LP. There is aural evidence of an extra guitarist at work on some of the tracks, although the only session detail I currently have is for 'Linda Lu' on which it is the expected line-up of Don, Bob, Nokie and Mel. Quite why the album was a relative commercial failure — it only made number 91 when Vee's earlier collaboration with The Crickets had reached number 42 — is a bit of a mystery. Musically the LP is of good quality, and the most likely explanation is that each respective fan base was repelled rather than attracted by the opposite faction. The mainly young and female Vee fans would probably have seen The Ventures as rather old and certainly very noisy, while the opposite camp would have regarded Vee as a hopeless wimp. The fact that Vee was privileged to have some of the era's best songwriters and musicians working for him was unfortunately lost on many Ventures fans.

## 7

In May the band commenced recording for the Pandora's box that is the *Let's Go!* LP. I say that because there are four tracks on which The Ventures have no involvement at all. These are 'El Watusi' and 'Hot Pastrami' which were recorded on 7th of June by guitarists Billy Strange and Bob Morris with Leon Russell on keys, Ray Pohlman on bass, Hal Blaine on drums and Frankie Capps on percussion; and 'Wipe Out' and 'More' which featured guitarists Billy Strange, Tommy Tedesco and Bud Coleman, bassist David Gates, keyboard player Leon Russell and drummer Hal Blaine with percussionist Frankie Capps. All members of the Hollywood elite to a man. In Michael Kelly's *Liberty* book Bob Reisdorff is quoted as saying: "It was not a common practice, but when we did need one more cut for a Ventures album, but they were on tour, we used session musicians. No-one ever spotted the difference". It's a pretty shameful tactic, but I have to confess that I still enjoy the album — a rose by any name still smells as sweet... and, of course, The Ventures were on most of the album's tracks. I can confirm that 'So Fine' featured Don, Bob, Nokie and Mel with piano player Chuck Sedacca, but I can detect no evidence of a pianist, so this is probably one of those cases where he was actually there to play on another track recorded at the same session. My conclusion is that Sedacca is on 'Memphis' where a background piano can just about be identified. It is also quite possible that Sedacca was the lead voice of The Moon Stones on 'So Fine' as he was primarily considered a session singer. The Moon Stones, along with The Ventures, were credited on the album sleeve for vocal backing and were undoubtedly a session aggregate — they also released a 45 on Dolton which coupled Bogle and Wilson's composition 'My True Love' with Dick Glasser's 'Love Call'. I can confirm that it is Don, Bob, Mel and Nokie on 'Over The Mountain, Across The Sea' and, judging by ear alone, they are clearly present on brilliant tracks such as 'New Orleans' and 'Runaway' — so don't fret about it, just enjoy the album!

## REFERENCES IN TEXT

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

- 1     *P* 44 [1999] 12.
- 2     *P* 40 [1998] 58.
- 3     *P* 34 [1997] 11.
- 4     VR 54 [1998] 16.
- 5     H82.
- 6     *P* 11 [1991] 51.
- 7     John Beddington, VR 31 [1993] 5.
- 8     Cf. H83.
- 9     *P* 40 [1998] 58.
- 10    *P* 16 [1992/93] 38.
- 11    *P* 34 [1997] 12.
- 12    *P* 27 [1995] 22.
- 13    NGD 36 [1993] 7.
- 14    Cf. H79.
- 15    *P* 46 [1999] 4.
- 16    *P* 36 [1997] 5–9.
- 17    NGD 56 [1999] 30.
- 18    See H71–72.
- 19    Cf. H20.
- 20    VR 90 [2007] 13.
- 21    H94–95.
- 22    *P* 44 [1999] 12.
- 23    *P* 34 [1997] 12.
- 24    NGD 2 [1995 reprint] 8.
- 25    *P* 61 [2003] 44–45.
- 26    VR 67 [2002] 8.
- 27    NGD 72 [2004] 41.
- 28    Gerry Woodage, VR 55 [1999] 2, cf. H 75–76.
- 29    NGD 45 [1995] 43.
- 30    NGD 48 [1996] 9.
- 31    NGD 48 [1996] 9.
- 32    *P* 31 [1996] 24.
- 33    *P* 46 [1999] 5.
- 34    John Gray, VR 56 [1999] 21.
- 35    *P* 46 [1999] 5.