

1965

## ALBUM TRACKS

February 1965 LP

### *The Ventures Knock Me Out!*

Dolton BST 8033 Stereo/ BLP 2033 Mono



On 28 November 1964, *SLAUGHTER ON TENTH AVENUE*, treated to one of The Ventures' most imaginative and daring arrangements (it featured Steve Douglas on sax mimicking an organ sound), peaked at #35 in the singles charts. So this album, itself a big seller (climbing to #31, on chart for 24 weeks), could boast a hit from the group themselves, here playing either as a foursome (with overdubs liberally applied) or with the support of (a genuine) organ/ keyboards (Leon Russell). It covered other very recent hits too, largely successfully, from The Beatles (1964), The Searchers (two: 1964 and 1965), Roy Orbison (1964), The Everly Brothers (1964), The Zombies (1964) and Manfred Mann (1964/65). Two of the acts were home-grown, the remainder were British, the proportion a measure of the extent to which American popular music was sent reeling for a while by an army of talent from their one-time coloniser. It was feeble indeed of the sleeve-writer to try to play down the dominance by commenting that "jolly old England" was availing herself of US-sourced songs, which after all were there growing on trees for native artists to exploit if they had had the wit and dexterity to do so, which they plainly did not for the most part. The remaining four were group originals notable for their stylistic diversity rather than their exceptional quality.

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

**The hit single is one of the classic Ventures cuts. Of the rest, three cover versions stand out by their excellence: *WHEN YOU WALK IN THE ROOM*, *SHE'S NOT THERE* and *OH, PRETTY WOMAN*.**

### **1 [65/1] I FEEL FINE**

(John Lennon/ Paul McCartney)

Just as the previous album had kicked off with a recent chart-topper from the UK, so the present set, with the group's first acknowledgement of the phenomenal world-beating Beatles, gives prominence to a single that made #1 on both sides of the

Atlantic towards the end of December 1964. It is a workmanlike version of a song that has attracted relatively few covers, though Floyd Cramer took it up this same year. It takes on board the burst of feedback at the start (actually 'sampling' it!<sup>1</sup>) and, naturally enough, the interplay of two lead lines, though the effect is different, since in The Beatles' case it is the metallic riff that comes in for shared attention: taped as a backing track before the vocal was applied, George Harrison starts and is very soon joined by John Lennon, often playing in unison thereafter. The Mosrite traces out the melody effectively as its timbre well reflects Lennon's acerbic vocal delivery.

## **2 [65/2] LOVE POTION No.9**

(Jerry Leiber/ Mike Stoller)

See entry on [62/31] POISON IVY, LP *Mashed Potatoes And Gravy*. The Searchers' breezy version of this outrageously funny song, a US #23 back in 1959 for The Clovers, was issued on a UK #2 LP/#1 EP in 1963. But who would have thought that upon its release in America it would have given them their biggest hit there by a fair margin (#3 in the singles chart early in 1965)? This then is the second currently fashionable tune of the set (Herb Alpert too recorded a divertingly swaggering version in 1965, in rumbustious big band mode!). In a group performance full of vim and vigour, the showy twists and turns of the fuzz-imbued lead guitar, with Nokie in characteristically inventive form, do this quirky number proud.

## **3 [65/3] TOMORROW'S LOVE**

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

A classy beat ballad with an exquisitely resonant full-bodied lead guitar tone. Don Wilson's left-channel sharp and forceful electric rhythm wafts along an attractive melody, itself ornamented by sweet-sounding keyboard fills and arpeggios ringing out on the right. Things are rarely straightforward with Nokie though: latterly he throws in some quick-fire embellishments to lend extra colour and a bit of pep, in fact it all gets rather heated in a civilised kind of way in the closing moments. The track has gained notoreity in Ventures circles for falling victim to careless mispressing. [64/9] LOVE GODDESS OF VENUS initially appeared instead<sup>2</sup>.

## **4 [65/4] OH, PRETTY WOMAN**

(Roy Orbison/ Bill Dees)

We have encountered The Beatles and The Searchers so far in reviewing this set. The British assault on the hitherto almost impregnable fortress of American popular music was so sudden and overwhelming that it is easy to forget that home-grown talent was holding its own over the 'occupation' period. Roy Orbison's 'Oh, Pretty Woman' was one of the high performers, making #1 on either side of the Atlantic in the last quarter of 1964. Decades further on its drive and sparkle, and of course that awesomely soaring voice, seem as potent as ever. It is an excellent choice for an instrumental, because the killer melody was already brilliantly underpinned by dynamic accompaniment from his band The Candy Men. While The Ventures do not imitate slavishly (the prominent piano is not represented, for example), they reflect the main lines right down to the way in which the dramatic walking guitar riff is picked up by a second guitar a couple of bars in. Nokie performs *con brio*, producing splendid flourishes (1:16) and beautifully chiming runs (1:30), and above all maintaining a powerful forward momentum. The ensemble rise to the occasion: pounding percussion, rock solid bass and Don Wilson's chugging accompaniment which would establish itself as one of the group's trademarks over the coming years.

### **5 [65/5] MARINER No.4**

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

An extract from the official description (1964): “Mariner 4 was the fourth in a series of spacecraft used for planetary exploration in a flyby mode and represented the first successful flyby of the planet Mars, returning the first pictures of the Martian surface. These represented the first images of another planet ever returned from deep space.” So it was certainly something to shout about from the rooftops. The feat prompted this lofty sounding opus from the group, calling once again upon the resources of, you’ve guessed it, ‘Telstar’ (cf. on [64/3] MOON CHILD, *In Space* album). For this listener one man-manufactured projectile galloping cowboy-style through the void is quite enough, and surely the organ merits a massed choir at least two hundred strong to do justice to all this grandiosity. However, it is fair to add that reviewers admire the tune, and it is certainly a bracing piece full of incident where organ and guitar play separately or join forces to the accompaniment of clattering percussion and heavy doses of vibrato.

### **6 [65/6] WHEN YOU WALK IN THE ROOM**

(Jackie DeShannon)

Another nod in the direction of The Searchers, who had hit US #35 (and UK #3) in October/November 1964. Highly regarded in America, the group endured as long as they maintained the ability to track down high-quality songs and mould them to their own distinctive style. The DeShannon number was an inspired choice: it was catchy, and suited their combination of tight harmonies and jangly guitar accompaniment, though it is hard to resist the feeling that it might have been given just a bit more clout. The Ventures turn it into a winning instrumental by providing just that at key points (0:33/ 1:07/ 1:55/ 2:03). It is also much much raunchier with its rasping fuzz tone (with some good old-fashioned distortion to get things off to a flying start), the forceful interaction of the two main lead lines and a positively savage attack on the fretboard at 1:30!

### **7 [65/7] GONE, GONE, GONE**

(Don & Phil Everly)

With the charts on either side of the Atlantic replete with new and exciting sounds, The Everly Brothers were not exactly flavour of the month when their ‘Gone, Gone, Gone’ single was released towards the end of 1964 (an album of that name would follow in 1965): it made #31 in the US, #36 in the UK, good going considering its quality. It is a rocker dipping into their country roots as much as into Chuck Berry, but it lacks clout and the woefully trite lyrics do not help (the version on the September 1983 Reunion Concert at the Royal Albert Hall, London, with a crack band behind them including Albert Lee on lead guitar, is an entirely different matter). The Ventures, Nokie jousting twangily with an organ, deal with it slickly, but it soon takes on an unrelenting air and there were many other American chart entries at the time which might have been covered to greater effect.

### **8 [65/8] SLAUGHTER ON TENTH AVENUE**

(Richard Rodgers)

Recorded August 1964 for single release (B-side: [64/37S] RAP CITY), it debuted in October and peaked at #35 in November, lasting the course for seven weeks. In the hands of The Ventures this composition, which started life as a piece of ballet music, was transformed into an amazingly exhilarating stomper, a group anthem one might

say, or one of them anyway. Featuring regularly as one of the key ingredients of their live act, it was captured early on record on the album *Live In Japan '65*, this [65/18L] surely one of the true wonders of the golden decade of instrumentals. Brilliant as the arrangement is, the product of long labour according to Don Wilson<sup>3</sup> — a breathtaking succession of explosive bursts of energy with the group firing on all cylinders — I would much rather have listened to an actual organ on this track: not that the simulation from Steve Douglas is poor, but the solo break does expose some tonal thinness/ fragility to these ears. DB comments: “I take your point about the Douglas sound, but it was fresh and new at the time — the calliope ‘fairground’ section was inspired — and I think any ‘fragility’ is far outweighed by those factors”.

### **9 [65/9] SHE’S NOT THERE**

(Rod Argent)

Decca producer Ken Jones challenged Rod Argent to write a hit and he came up with one of the classiest classics of the decade; The Zombies reached UK #12 in September 1964, then US #2 in December. Often praised for Colin Bluntstone’s “breathy” vocal, the overall tone is tense and stressful, with its repeated message outlining the futility of searching, the ice-cool articulation of the lyrics, and the taut keyboard solo. It is precisely this fraught atmosphere that is artfully captured in Nokie’s dramatic lead lines (note the sheer distress built into the double-tracked sequence 1:22–1:32 in particular). The original may score higher marks for the fluency of the electric piano solo and the potency of the bass accompaniment, but this is still a choice Ventures cut.

### **10 [65/10] LONELY GIRL**

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

This was a B-side of an earlier charting US single, see entry [64/26] DIAMOND HEAD. A second example (cf. track 3) of a beat ballad, this one highly charged, with heavily tremoloed lines accentuating the sense of isolation/ desolation — a state of mind or situation that seems not to be relieved by the time the number draws to a close, for strident bursts (calls for help?) persist throughout (0:25/ 0:50/ 1:15/ 1:41).

### **11 [65/11] BIRD ROCKERS**

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

This colourfully titled number was Pete Bowman’s theme tune in his shows on (offshore) Radio 270 around the 1966 period (and on Radio Scotland where he was active before that according to Dave Peckett<sup>4</sup>, though as a fairly frequent listener I have no personal recollection of this). It is a stomper, reliant on raw energy rather than melody, with organ and growling fuzz guitar sharing the limelight to the accompaniment of energetic electric rhythm guitar and pounding percussion, “a precursor to the fuzz and organ delights coming up on the *À Go-Go* set”<sup>5</sup>.

### **12 [65/12] SHA LA LA**

(Robert Taylor/ Robert Mosely)

Somebody somewhere I seem to recall complained of the frequency with which the ‘Sha La La’ refrain is used, and not in an adult fashion either! The number of times cover versions are slated out of hand without any attempt to consider what the group might have been trying to achieve does not bear thinking about. Here The Ventures have correctly captured the very essence of the song which lies precisely in these simple repetitions, and they have made them mirror the youthful high spirits projected

by Paul Jones (and indeed the rest of the group) in the direct model. Manfred Mann made great play of catchy songs built around fun/immature-sounding titles like 'Hubble Bubble' and 'Do Wah Diddy Diddy'. This particular example, a revival of an effervescent Shirelles number (US #69 in April 1964), made UK #3 in November 1964 and US #12 the following January. But the vocal elements apart, just consider the quality of the two principal guitar breaks at 0:38 and 1:25 (especially when played loud), as the group launch themselves into undisputed RI territory with the tightest of ensemble playing, Mel Taylor in particular lending the number tremendous punch.

April 1965 (Japan) Live LP  
***The Ventures In Japan***  
 Liberty LP 7270 Stereo



**1 [65/13L] Medley WALK, DON'T RUN : PERFDIA : LULLABY OF THE LEAVES ||| 2 [65/14L] DRIVING GUITARS ||| 3 [65/15L] BULLDOG ||| 4 [65/16L] PIPELINE ||| 5 [65/17L] APACHE ||| 6 [65/18L] SLAUGHTER ON TENTH AVENUE ||| 7 [65/19L] WALK, DON'T RUN '64 ||| 8 [65/20L] BUMBLE BEE TWIST ||| 9 [65/21L] WIPE OUT ||| 10 [65/22L] CARAVAN '65**

By 1965 Ventures product was flooding Japanese shops in the shape of singles, EPs and LPs. The sheer volume of sales generated by quickfire marketing and the group's enormous popularity would shape The Ventures' career from then on into the next millennium, so much so that, despite the fact that in 1999 they switched to a different

Japanese label, Toshiba-EMI still come up regularly with primary and compilation CDs of every description. (In fact, 2007 has seen the group recording again for EMI Japan, as Toshiba-EMI are now known.) In the mid-60s the opportunity was seized to put out Japanese versions of studio albums initially released in the US, often with redesigned front covers and sometimes with slightly modified track listings. These have reappeared periodically in CD format, latterly using up the available disc space by offering both mono and stereo cuts for each issue — a ploy of largely antiquarian interest as the sonic differences are only very rarely meaningful. Fresh compilations abounded too, sporting a variety of titles ranging from the pedestrian (*Best Of ...*) to the fanciful (*Journey To The Moon*), and some of these have been reissued by Toshiba-EMI in digital format in tandem with newly devised collections. The Japanese also went to town by deploying a multitude of titles for single release, and in 1993 four CDs were devoted to mainly 60s releases. Finally in this brief survey, 4-track EPs came thick and fast between 1964 and 1968 in particular; the tracks from these were assembled and fully documented in the Japanese CD box set referred to in the General Introduction, p.8.

This mountain of Ventures vinyl was evidently not enough for either the record company or their by now considerable following, with the consequence that before the 60s were out, with The Ventures now touring Japan regularly on a yearly basis, no fewer than five live Ventures sets would be made available, of which this is the earliest. If we add to these the solitary US 'live' album (recorded in the studio but in such a way as to simulate a live performance, see the comment in the next main entry), a straight fifty different numbers were on offer. This initial selection naturally enough contains nothing out of the way, but homes in on items already taken into the group's list of favourites, the original versions of every one of them being represented in Japan over the years 1964–1965 on one, two or even three of the vinyl formats specified above.

The Ventures' live performances have been evaluated by Gerry Woodage, liner notes to the three See For Miles '2 on 1' CDs live sets from the 60s, and also notably by Dave Peckett<sup>6</sup>, Dave Burke<sup>7</sup> and John Beddington<sup>8</sup>. The group set enviably high standards as they still do in the new millennium, both for the pinpoint accuracy of the playing, generally brisker than in the studio and at times remarkably brisk (most of the numbers were uptempo, with ballads relatively rare), and for the sheer dynamism of the ensemble performance, so cohesive yet projected by four members each of whom perform in an assertive, upfront fashion, with lead, rhythm, bass and percussion all to the fore in proactive synergy. As visual footage from the period demonstrates vividly, there is little or nothing in the way of showmanship or even stage presence. This is so laid back, often to the point of impassivity, that the contrast with the fireworks generated by the actual music-making seems barely credible.

So it is with this April 1965 release. The clarity of the recording is admirable (not always the case with Japanese product, when excellent pressings could be rendered totally worthless by atrocious engineering), and, in contrast to the US-released 'live' set considered under June 1965, no move is made to engineer in artificially high audience noise levels (in general a Japanese audience will be far less demonstrative than its counterpart in the west). If anything, there is a suspicion that from time to time some of the ambient noise has been softened or even eradicated.

To turn to the *In Japan* set in detail (for the treatment of the *On Stage* material in what follows, consult the June 1965 entry below). The **Medley** gets things off to a cracking start. The hit that started it all is adroitly combined with similarly structured subsequent releases to provide seamless transitions from one segment to another, exhilaratingly executed in this, the first preserved example of what would prove to be a popular onstage routine. This selfsame medley was in fact offered for the next two Ventures 'live'/live releases also, *On Stage* and *All About ...*, and the three performances differ in tempo and in execution. The tone of the lead guitar ranges from fruity to chunky to astringent; there is plenty of tremolo and cutting rhythm guitar (in *PERFIDIA* especially) in the first and the third, less twang and more recessed rhythm in the second, a notably bouyant bass in the third which offers the tightest overall performance, a rousing intro from Mel Taylor to *LULLABY* in all three.

**DRIVING GUITARS**, the opener of the January 1962 *Twist With The Ventures* set [62/1], is another to surface on these first three live/'live' albums. In terms of dynamics all of them are streets ahead of the original version, thrusting as that was, and the bass-lines are more potent. The second with its wiry lead guitar sound is the least appealing of the three, though the harmonic glissandos are as awesomely executed as ever and the bass-lines are top-notch; the third, fast and super-slick, has the best ensemble performance, with the incisiveness of the rhythm guitar coming across especially well.

**BULLDOG** from the September 1961 LP *Another Smash!!!* [61/16] is also represented on *All About ...* For Dave Peckett this is "a scorcher beyond belief"<sup>9</sup> (and dip into Dave Burke's all-gold treasure trove from 1996<sup>10</sup>: "Here, the Fireballs' original is completely eclipsed by the sheer power of The Ventures' performance. Particularly by some phenomenal Nokie Edwards' lead in an extended middle section and also — after things have been taken down a little — by a magic moment when Don Wilson suddenly slams in with that solid rhythm guitar and prompts the whole band to move up a gear and storm to a rousing climax. Phew!"). The sharp nip of a few years back has matured into a severe bite. Taken at a gallop, the former version highlights Nokie's dazzlingly agile fingerwork, with fills and thrills galore on display, and Don Wilson is in top form. At 1:22, catering for the Japanese audience, there is a lengthy and dexterous piece of improvisation in pseudo-Oriental style, from which the group bursts forth with a tremendous forward push at 2:07. The later performance, with a less flamboyant Nokie, has less muscle initially, but soon the Wilson/Bogle team provide spectacular back-up and at 2:21 the group erupts in a dazzling motoric surge to close the number up.

The Ventures' account of **PIPELINE**, one of the shining examples of surf instrumental, kicked off their *Surfing* set from May 1963 [63/15], and it was none too impressive, certainly nowhere near a match for The Chantays. The live outing on the present set was followed up by one on *All About* and another on *In Tokyo '68*. In the earliest of these the dullness of the studio version is left far behind and crashing chords herald a brisk, invigorating run-through with Mel Taylor contributing not a little to the raw energy of it all. The Wilson intro to the second outing is not quite as bracing, but the pace this time is more hectic still, the overall performance even more robust but also slicker if tonally dry. A pretty dismal, wholly forgettable version occupies the grooves of the *In Tokyo '68* set with Gerry McGee now on lead (see the introductory comments in the entry under December 1968). Poorly balanced with a horribly gurning organ sound, McGee plays the right notes in the right order and loudly, but where is the fire?



The *Play Telstar* album from January 1963 gave the world The Ventures' version of **APACHE** [63/5], which astonishingly has lasted the course over the group's long career as stage regulars. Even this early on, in their 60s live/'live' recordings, four versions were put out, not least because Japanese audiences, who evidently were only too eager to take as many examples of simulated whistling arrows as the group were prepared to shoot in their direction, lapped this one up. On the first of this string of four the lead lines are not quite spot on in places, but there is some degree of punch, and there are also, by way of welcome diversion, extra real live whistles now and again from members of the audience. For the US 'live' release *On Stage* we are treated to an exceptionally measured, indeed staid rendition, the sterility and tedium of which is exacerbated rather than ameliorated by the usual battery of sound effects. The *All About* collection saw a markedly faster run-through with some vigorous rhythm guitar, Indians or their foes on the run one presumes, but the whistles are more like clucks — no, let's not beat about the bush, they are clucks, irritating to a fault. So much for the Lordan idea of something "noble and dramatic". Lastly here, the Tokyo concert rested the organ for this opus, good news indeed. The bad news is that the sound is cloudy, blunting the force of the twangy McGee lead though not alas the squeaks that pass for whistles; the sequence at 1:27 is messy and would be more at home in the Batcave.

Our selection throws up three specimens of one of the most impressive numbers in the group's corpus, **SLAUGHTER ON TENTH AVENUE**, the original version of which had appeared on the February 1965 album *Knock Me Out!* ([65/8]; it was also a Japanese as well as US lead single). For all of these we are down to the three guitars + drums line-up, but the absence of Steve Douglas' contribution is hardly to be lamented — such is the pace and power of the performances. The *In Japan* version is notable for the twangy and at times shrill lead guitar, the 'live' *On Stage* rendition for the pronounced and exciting rhythm guitar contribution. The speediest, and the tightest of the three (with adventurous bass-lines), is featured on *All About*, though the lead guitar sound is on the wiry side and the rhythm guitar seems just too prominent, initially at any rate.

**WALK, DON'T RUN '64** (studio cut: [64.31]) is represented on *In Japan* and also on *All About*. The Steve Douglas accompaniment is more of a miss on this number, but onstage — "no longer the gentle surf rocker" in Gerry Woodage's words — the snappiness and dynamism of the former and the sheer exuberance and slightly undisciplined clout of the latter still make for exhilarating listening.

Clearly thrilling the hordes of Japanese fans, the closing number on the *Twist With The Ventures* album of January 1962, **BUMBLE BEE**, or **BUMBLE BEE TWIST** [62/12], figured on *In Japan*, on the 'live' *On Stage*, and on *All About*. The first of these leaves little or nothing to be desired if powerhouse RI is your bag. The dodgy apian flight paths of the old version are sorted by Nokie, who scours the fretboard to provide tonal effects ranging from deeply buzzing to shrill. His assured lead lines are carried along on the back of a pounding accompaniment, a splendid tour de force. The version fielded for *On Stage*, though supremely fluid in the best Ventures manner, does not achieve the same degree of punch. *All About* relies less on gimmicks and is the most incisive workout of the three, with notably clean-cut but thrusting rhythm guitar.

**WIPE OUT**, little short of a disaster as presented on the August 1963 album *Let's Go!* ([63/46]), is the most heavily subscribed number in our run of six live/'live' sets, absent only on *Live Again* from 1968. From the first of these, *In Japan*, it is evident that the group had by then made this stellar Surfari number their own, four minutes



of driving guitars (three effortlessly flowing solo breaks from Nokie's agile fingers) and a no holds barred display from Mel Taylor which becomes almost frenzied towards the close. Both the *On Stage* and *All About* spots also last around four minutes, and each incorporates three blistering solos, the later trio enjoying rhythm support from Don Wilson which is nothing short of awesome in its buoyancy and thrust. The *On Stage* does not possess quite the kick of the *In Japan* and the sound is a trifle recessed, lacking in immediacy; the flow is broken by the insertion of a brief LET'S GO! routine with the appropriate vocal interjections. The *All About* is tightly performed, with an attractively chunky lead guitar tone, but it has a weak central section that sounds like the LET'S GO! routine just referred to only with the vocalising edited out. The *On Stage Encore* from 1967, a three-minute item, has a similar lead guitar sound but only two solo breaks; the second of these though is positively wild, with Don Wilson again in top form on both (cf. John Beddington<sup>11</sup>: "... the mad axeman was at his maddest here"! ). Lastly here, not only is the *In Tokyo* '68 recording poorly focused, but much of the playing too seems unexceptional. It rumbles along but doesn't make the three minute mark. There are a couple of solo spots from Gerry McGee, the first dexterous enough, the second failing to match the first in fluency — though yet again Don Wilson's rhythm guitar makes a telling contribution.

The last number on the *In Japan* set is one which would figure repeatedly in The Ventures' constant stream of concert appearances over the years. **CARAVAN** had been studio-recorded by The Ventures twice (see under [60/9] and [63/13]) but was developed into a stage spectacular of varying length to demonstrate the skills of Mel Taylor, with the notable incorporation of an entertaining 'tattoo' routine, in which he 'plays' the bass guitar by tapping the strings with sticks while Bob Bogle negotiates the fretboard. (Some background to the technique is given by Dave Burke and Alan Taylor in their notes to the 2007 CD *In The Vaults Volume 4*; cf. also Halterman 95.) There are four examples of the number among the albums under consideration, on *In Japan* (over seven minutes long), the 'live' *On Stage* (over five and a half minutes), *All About* (around eight and a half minutes) and *In Tokyo* '68 (seven and a quarter minutes). The first two are robust performances, the sound of the *In Japan* in particular being very forward and vivid; the third is the crispest and most slickly presented of them all; the fourth is a dynamic enough workout but reproduction is murky as a result of poor sound engineering. All exhibit the same basic structure, the melody serving as a frame enclosing a lengthy and energetic drum display which is punctuated by a bass showcase as described above (the *All About* also works in latterly a brief spell of outlandish noises and hollering). Nokie's guitar pyrotechnics, in the mould of the 1963 studio recording, are naturally very much in evidence. It is Gerry McGee's turn on the *In Tokyo*, and he plays as if he has a point to prove, for he shows that his immediate predecessor did not have a monopoly in lightning/fancy licks.

June 1965 'Live' LP  
***The Ventures On Stage***  
 Dolton BST 8035 Stereo/ BLP 2035 Mono



**1 [65/23'L'] WIPE OUT ||| 2 [65/24'L'] JOURNEY TO THE STARS ||| 3 [65/25'L'] SLAUGHTER ON TENTH AVENUE ||| 4 [65/26'L'] CARAVAN ||| 5 [65/27'L'] PEDAL PUSHER ||| 6 [65/28'L'] APACHE '65 ||| 7 [65/29'L'] BUMBLE BEE ||| 8 [65/30'L'] DRIVING GUITARS ||| 9 Medley [65/31'L'] WALK, DON'T RUN : PERFIDIA : LULLABY OF THE LEAVES ||| 10 [65/32'L'] YELLOW JACKET**

This US release made its way into the album charts, peaking at #27 and staying on the scene for a full 30 weeks. It has been known for some time that the title is misleading, as the set was marketed to create the *illusion* of a stage performance (it matches seven of the ten titles on the April *In Japan* set). Studio-recorded in 'live' mould, it is imbued throughout with the group's quick-fire and effortless stage delivery. The sound is good if not quite as brightly lit as that of *In Japan*, but the release was botched in two respects (see on this and other aspects Halterman 121–122). Inept proclamations about venues, reinforced by record sleeve text front and back, were edited in, including the fatuous claim “Yes, they’re here, in their first appearance in England”! It was a sorry miscalculation too to feed in bogus audience noise. It is not too severely disruptive for the earlier tracks, but from PEDAL PUSHER on the insertion of cyclical applause and gleeful cheering and shrieking are taken to extreme lengths. At times the effect is comical: to have the duller passages in a dreary APACHE punctuated by hair-raising screams is just ludicrous. It seems remarkable that Don Wilson for instance could have listened with any degree of composure to the unholy racket that confronts DRIVING GUITARS head on and almost overwhelms it, or indeed to the England claim referred to earlier. It seems as certain as anything can be that the group were not consulted about the end product — a point since insisted upon by Wilson. However, his further claim, as reported in the *Vaults 4* annotation, that they “just did the session” as they were told to, without *any* notion of what was planned for it, sounds most implausible: why else would they have set about recording a programme closely resembling that of a genuine live album recently put together for the Japanese market, a programme that included a medley of three big hits and an extended CARAVAN, both of which were evidently tailor-made for on stage delivery? In any event, it would appear that decades passed by before any move was made to dispel the deception.

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Partial relief from the pandemonium lavished upon *On Stage* is at hand from the CD *In The Vaults Volume 4* released in November 2007, in which no fewer than seven of the numbers are presented in their audience-free form, with a hitherto unissued MEMPHIS thrown in for good measure: these are catalogued in entries [65/65'L'/U-65/72'L'/U] below.

In this book these 'live' performances have been classified as precisely that, attracting the suffix 'L'. Moreover, in keeping with the spirit of the release and indeed with the finished article, they are analysed *in tandem with* the genuine live sets and not treated as wholly distinct from them.

For the bulk of the programme see the comments in the previous main entry. The remaining three to be considered are tracks 2, 5 and 10, where the imported clamour will be disregarded for the purposes of assessment.

**JOURNEY TO THE STARS** from the album *The Fabulous Ventures* [64/20] is also featured on *All About*. A stellar composition indeed in name and in reality, the original version fell short of the ideal in terms of recording quality and sound balance, but these two renditions do the piece justice. If the earlier of the two comes across as a pounding, chiming, coruscating tour de force, the second, with no extraneous cries to distract, surely represents the pinnacle of RI, a fast and furious ensemble effort boasting a dazzling lead guitar giving off a flurry of hot licks and a cutting rhythm accompaniment.

Another group composition, **PEDAL PUSHER**, first appeared on the 1964 *Walk, Don't Run Vol.2* set [64/34]. The organ lent a distinctive edge to the diverting original, but the extra punch (with Mel Taylor booming away magnificently) and a wild solo break from Nokie which prompts the others to raise their game are more than enough to carry it as a four piece effort in this fresh 'live in studio' workout. (On the solo: "... leaves little to be desired for speed and composition" is Les Allman's verdict<sup>12</sup>.)

Lastly here, a third item from The Ventures' treasure trove of personal compositions. In the 60s, surprisingly perhaps, only two further versions were on offer of the knockout **YELLOW JACKET** which started life on the October 1961 album *The Colorful Ventures* [61/26]. Even the imported screaming hordes on *On Stage* fail to undermine the potency of Nokie's viciously spectacular fingerwork and his innovative behind the bridge orientalising special-effects passage. A sizzling, genuinely live alternative is to be found on *All About*, which boasts a virtuoso display by Nokie in hyperdrive, this time played straight without the exotic trappings, and an even more potent rhythm guitar — a motoric performance all round.

September 1965 LP  
***The Ventures À Go-Go***  
Dolton BST 8037 Stereo/ BLP 2037 Mono



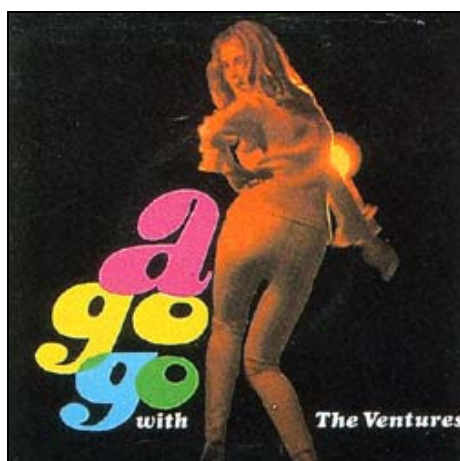


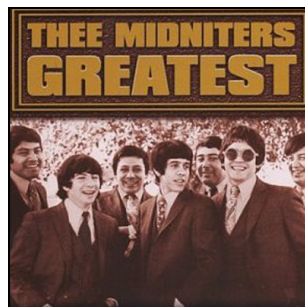
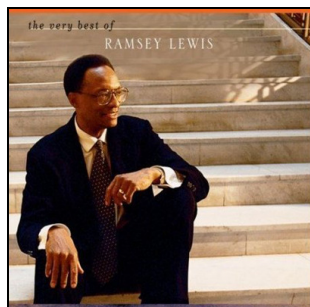


Another dance set, the front cover of which offers images of female dancers who sport short(ish) skirts but not the familiar go-go boots. Still, the music lives up to the go-go image of plenty of beat, stop-start rhythms and potent riffs, offering nothing to speak of in the way of relaxation. It was a hit with the record-buyers, who took it to #16 and enabled it to stay on chart for 35 weeks.

The organ had added a richness of texture and pace to the previous album. Here, Lincoln Mayorga is on keys (see pp.27–28 below, where the involvement of Frank DeVito is also noted) and, with Joe Saraceno taking over as the group's producer, he is given even more latitude, an organ part appearing in all but three of the twelve numbers (LA BAMBA with a prominent harmonica part instead; A GO-GO DANCER as a guitar-led variation on a number earlier in the set; I LIKE IT LIKE THAT). The playing is never pedestrian and nearly always dazzling, as on WOOLY BULLY or A GO-GO GUITAR for example.

Although three of the titles, all group-composed, pick up explicitly on the go-go motif, the emphasis once more is on instrumental renditions, well suited on the whole to the dance theme, inspired by recent chart hits: one from 1963 into 1964 (LOUIE LOUIE), but no fewer than five from 1965. Quite how THE SWINGIN' CREEPER fits into the overall picture of energetic and pleasurable dancing is hard to fathom, unless it had been recorded as a variant version for the previous studio album and set to one side.





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

**THE SWINGIN' CREEPER** is supremely resourceful and atmospheric, while the organ part in **WOOLY BULLY** is something to write home about. A **GO-GO GUITAR** shows what can be done to breathe fresh life into a Chuck Berry *Meisterwerk*.

#### 1 [65/33] (I CAN'T GET NO) SATISFACTION

(Mick Jagger/ Keith Richard)

Once again, a hit single on everyone's lips is there conspicuously as an opener: it was The Rolling Stones' debut #1 in the States, hitting the top on 19 July 1965 for the first of four weeks (it would head the UK charts in September). It was not a good choice. The prominent role assigned to the heavily repetitive strains of the organ is one reason why The Ventures' version sounds so plodding and relentless, like much of the music associated with the bland clockwork of the go-go style. On top of that, we are missing out on an element that really lifts the original: not just the famous opening riff but the hard, snarling echoey guitar lines persistently dogging Jagger's vocals — inspired stuff indeed. In The Ventures' case it would have been interesting to see the effect of interfacing lead guitars, with some improvising touches worked in here and there, in the place of organ plus fuzz (fuzz which has absolutely no bite here). To see how it might have been done, lend an ear to the opening number of Billy Strange's 1965 album *Plays The Hits!*, where his super-twangy Fender Jag is reinforced by a rasping fuzzed second guitar, cutting rhythm and driving percussion.

#### 2 [65/34] GO-GO SLOW

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

Pattering percussion and scudding rhythm guitar (even more robust in the middle eight) set at either extremity of the stereo picture invite the listener to take the title with a pinch of salt. A big, bold vibrato-soaked fuzz guitar takes the main weight of a stately-sounding melody embellished with an attractively crafted swirling organ accompaniment.

#### 3 [65/35] LOUIE LOUIE

(Richard Berry)

The Kingsmen, in the wake of an arrangement of Berry's opus by The Wailers who had enjoyed a local hit with it in 1961, took this song to US #2 towards the end of 1963. It stalled at #26 in the UK, the BBC refusing to play it, though it became popular with London's Mod dancers, who were fascinated by anything that might reek of subversiveness. Not only did the lyrics provoke a storm of controversy, the recording itself was a shambles, poorly arranged and poorly sung by Jack Ely, and

poorly performed by the group at large who got the timing wrong after the guitar break — but for all that, it is a powerhouse of a record and is widely admired. The Ventures' treatment is astute. They retain that nagging stomping beat, and the broad lines of what tune there is, but only the broad lines. In fact this is a showpiece for Nokie who cruises through it with enough in the way of teasing, improvising runs to keep even his most devoted fan happy. There is also a short but atmospheric organ solo (*very* classy sounding, tongue-in-cheek?) to provide a respite from all this wizardry (the intricate chord structures hereabouts are examined in *Ventures Resurgence* 73<sup>13</sup>).

#### **4 [65/36] NIGHT STICK**

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

An eye-catching title for one of the slickest pieces on the album: written as one word (generally), it is an Americanism for a policeman's truncheon. The organ plays such a major role in this set that an actual organ-led tune must have suggested itself naturally, and NIGHT STICK is just that. A guitar-led variation was also recorded, no doubt in the first instance as an alternative, but in the event it was taken into this very collection under a different title, A GO-GO DANCER (see also p.28 below). To these ears the organ version is much more stylish and pacy (Don Wilson really shines here), indeed much fresher sounding. The tune on the guitar workout is not the same tune but it is similar (Del Halterman's "two completely different melodies"<sup>14</sup> is overstated); traced out on strongly struck damped strings, it exudes a distinctly old-hat, deliberate air — the sort of thing The Fireballs used to do early on and were still doing ('Dumbo' in 1964 for instance).

#### **5 [65/37] LA BAMBA**

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

Strictly speaking this is a rearrangement of an arrangement by Ritchie Valens of a traditional Mexican wedding song, in one of the earliest incursions of Latin-styled music into the field of pop, with an ear-catching twangy guitar solo midway and excellent instrumental support overall (sessioneers included Rene Hall, Carole Kaye, Ernie Freeman and Earl Palmer). Valens had a US Top 30 placing with it back in 1959, and it rapidly became one of the staples of orchestral and other instrumental genres. The Ventures offer an elegant account of it, Nokie Edwards striking up the main theme twice in a neatly clipped and exuberant style which is set off by tasteful use of the tremolo arm and buoyed up by sprightly acoustic rhythm from Don Wilson. We are veering in this track towards the 'Ventures & Friends' set-up that was exploited extensively in the *Play Telstar* set, with *very* forward and busy-sounding maracas, claves and more especially harmonica (played by Tommy Morgan) all woven into the rich tapestry of sound.

#### **6 [65/38] THE 'IN' CROWD**

(Billy Page)

Another cult classic with Britain's Mods in the 60s, Dobie Gray took a vocal dance version to #23 in the US charts in early 1965 (to #25 in the UK). The Ramsey Lewis Trio went more than one better (entering the chart in August, it would make US #5 and earn them a Grammy for Top Jazz Instrumental; an associated album made #2), recording it live in a Washington D.C. nightclub and including audience shouts and hand-clapping. The latter but not the former are picked up here, so Lewis' sudden surge provoking an excited crowd reaction at 1:31 has no counterpart. The organ (cf.



the Ramsey Lewis piano) is very much the leader of the pack in our version: its atmospheric lead lines are vividly projected with an uncannily 'live' feel, and picked up with a succession of short twangy runs from Nokie, this time leaving the nimble-fingered and inventive improvising passages (0:48/ 1:31) in the more than capable hands of a colleague. A fine example of the group's stylistic flexibility.

### **7 [65/39] WOOLY BULLY**

(Domingo 'Sam' Samudio)

Texas garage rock band Sam The Sham & The Pharaohs took this to US #2 towards the middle of 1965 (it just missed the Top 10 in the UK). The sparse lyrics were unintelligible but were bawled out with conviction and somehow seemed to tie in with the overall absence of anything remotely approaching sophistication. It rose above the status of a mere novelty number, as it is often described: it was raw, exciting, unhinged, a true classic. The Ventures work it up into a scorcher of an instrumental, its restless, stop-start styling making it a natural choice for go-go treatment. Organ and drums get the music going with a series of powerful thumps. Next, chugging lower-register guitar lines backed up by thrusting strokes from Don Wilson lead into the main theme from Nokie Edwards. Initially the tone is cool and funky, but then, with the aid of a second guitar playing in harmony, this one with slight fuzz, the volume level is stepped up almost to a blare. Prior to the guitar's resumption of the main theme, there is a double-tracked organ solo with motifs so exhilaratingly interlaced that it surely deserved some sort of prize. What more could a go-go dancer ask for?

### **8 [65/40] A GO-GO GUITAR**

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

To view this number as a mere toying around with Chuck Berry's 'Memphis Tennessee' does not even begin to do it justice. The organ contribution to this set is most impressive, here as much as anywhere. Initially the bare, spare guitar lines, themselves tinged with a note of breathless urgency, are capped with ever more phrenetic squawky, squeaky organ fills: exquisite! Then comes the first of two organ solos, swirling, soaring in the resonant acoustic to a tight, rocking accompaniment from the others; a second solo varies the first and closes with a stabbing, stuttering flourish. A (fit) go-go dancer's dream, surely.

### **9 [65/41] A GO-GO DANCER**

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

A variation on track 4, see comment there.

### **10 [65/42] THE SWINGIN' CREEPER**

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

A different take on [64/35] THE CREEPER from the *Walk, Don't Run Vol.2* album of close on a year before. The approach of that was very much bold and in your face. This time there is a sophisticated jazz feel to it, the introduction sounding much more subdued and sinister, with Don Wilson's pattering accompaniment on muted strings heightening the air of menace. There is a low-key (and atmospheric) organ passage at 1:42, but there are no high profile organ breaks; instead Nokie, after setting out the main theme with organ support, cuts in with an agitated, stabbing solo that paints a harrowing picture in sound. After a further run-through of the main theme, a ring is formed by reverting to the sparer ambience of the introduction with some minor

elaborations, advancing thus creepily into the fade. One tailor-made for Gotham's downtown go-go joints.

### **11 [65/43] WHITTIER BLVD**

(Bennie Lopez/ Roy Marquez)

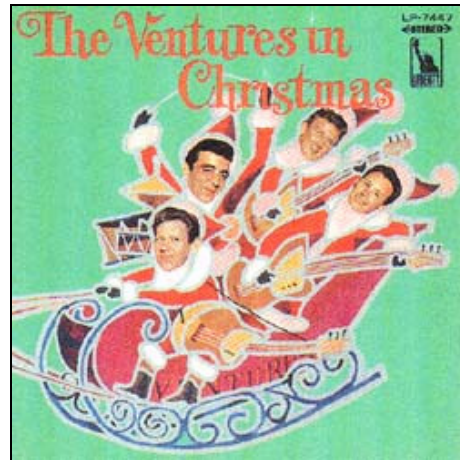
The Midneters do not figure prominently in the reference books if they occur at all, but this East Los Angeles Latino rock band had something of a cult following in the 60s. 'Whittier Boulevard' was an instrumental outing, a local Top 10 hit which only dented the national charts very slightly in 1965, distinguished by minimalist musical content from driving organ and guitars and a prominent horn section, hyena-like laughs and general hubbub. The Ventures offer a much sanitised version in the wake of a spoken or rather yelled introduction, with a build-up of sorts and some organ ornamentation. But the number needs all the external distractions it can get, and more than are served up here, to relieve the tedium engendered by throwing a couple of chords around. Instrumental savant Adrian Amos<sup>15</sup> took a more charitable view, seeing it as "the perfect cruising record".

### **12 [65/44] I LIKE IT LIKE THAT**

(Chris Kenner/ Allen Toussaint)

The song was a 1961 #2 for Chris Kenner, a fine representative of New Orleans R&B and an associate of Fats Domino, whose earthy delivery he mirrored, and the multi-talented Allen Toussaint, who played piano on the record. The spur for its inclusion here though will have been the revival by The Dave Clark 5, an enormously popular group in the States (this number climbed to #7 in 1965), squeaky-clean in presentation while often cultivating (as they did in this particular case) a forced-sounding vocal gruffness. In The Ventures' go-go version Nokie Edwards' contribution is nothing short of riveting, and the rest of the group provide a neat frame for some of the funkiest soloing so far encountered in their extensive repertoire, with twin lead lines in places and with much emphasis on note-bending and short snappy phrasing. It's reminiscent in a general way of the musicianship of that supreme stylist Allen Toussaint himself. The bass-lines towards the close suddenly well up exuberantly, a delightful touch. A great closing number to an album with more than its fair share of high points.

November 1965 LP  
*The Ventures' Christmas Album*  
 Dolton BST 8038 Stereo/ BLP 2038 Mono



Every Christmas, one album dominates the scene.  
 This is the one for Christmas 1965.



BST-8038/BLP-2038

DISPLAYS AND CO-OP ADVERTISING AVAILABLE.

And, this single from the album will dominate the top 40 charts.

**SLEIGH RIDE**  
 coming November 8th — watch for it! #312

Already dominating the LP sales scene:



VENTURES A GO-GO BST-8007/BLP-2037



ON STAGE! BST-8005/BLP-2035



PLAY GUITAR WITH THE VENTURES  
 BLP-16501



An immensely entertaining and brilliantly inventive set, which takes a collection of innocent-sounding secular Christmas pieces and breathes new life into them by incorporating elements of the melodies, riffs and rhythms of quite distinct tunes drawn from The Ventures' own beat repertoire.

One of the twelve tracks can be said to be self-imitation (Ventures in their future Batman mode for SCROOGE), another (WHAT'D I SAY) had been recorded by them but did not see release in the 60s. The remainder recall various tunes covered over the past half decade or so. Not unnaturally, the opener is based on the 1960 hit that started it all [60/6]; there are two from 1963 ([63/38] MEMPHIS, [63/7] TEQUILA), two from 1964 ([64/19] ONLY THE YOUNG, and [64/30] BLUE STAR + [64/36] STRANGER ON THE SHORE); but the rest, sourced from 1965 albums, will have been relatively fresh in their minds: [65/9] SHE'S NOT THERE, [65/39] WOOLY BULLY, [65/1] I FEEL FINE (see the comment on track 7), [65/6] WHEN YOU WALK IN THE ROOM, [65/38] THE 'IN' CROWD.

All tracks arranged by Bob Bogle, Don Wilson, Nokie Edwards, Mel Taylor. Evelyn Freeman is on keys; further personnel are listed at p.28 below.

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

**SILVER BELLS and BLUE CHRISTMAS work well; the splendid SCROOGE is not infused with the Christmas spirit at all, any more than was the man himself!**

#### **1 [65/45] SLEIGH RIDE**

(Leroy Anderson/ Mitchell Parish)

A sparkling opener, Leroy Anderson's tune (Parish added lyrics later) had surely never had it so good in RI terms at least. The [60/6] WALK, DON'T RUN intro leads into an animated runthrough with underlying WDR and affiliates chord-structure, a super-twangy main melody, the lead guitar over in one channel as of yore, not centrally, played alternately on open and damped strings with plenty of tremolo action, and a short drum interlude. The *In The Vaults Vol.3* annotators add to the core lineup Evelyn Freeman (keys), Red Rhodes (guitar), Julius Wechter (percussion), Frank DeVito (id.).

#### **2 [65/46] SNOWFLAKES**

(~ Greensleeves', Trad.)

Strikingly, riffs from The Zombies' [65/9] SHE'S NOT THERE introduce and reappear fleetingly inside this reworking of a well-worn traditional tune 'Greensleeves' (sometimes referred to as 'What Child Is This', but those are lyrics added much further down the line), played forcefully on heavily vibratoed stings with the sound of tinkling bells as background (can't you just feel those glistening flakes falling from the sky?) as well as a recessed organ. Normally filed under soporific, but it's a different matter here with the pronounced beat and the crashing fade. For a version of GREENSLEEVES undisguised see entry [61/46U].

#### **3 [65/47] SANTA CLAUS IS COMIN' TO TOWN**

(Haven Gillespie/ J. Fred Coots)

Since it was first aired in 1934, mature adults have queued up to record what Coots originally referred to apologetically as a "kid's song". In fact, it is a great fun song,

here brought into intimate contact with, of all things, Sam The Sham's [65/39] WOOLY BULLY, the rollicking rhythm of which pervades this workout. In the second half Nokie in improvising mood begins to bend notes like mad: delightful! Nice crisp rhythm guitar and powerful percussion too.

#### **4 [65/48] JINGLE BELLS**

(James Lord Pierpont

with subsequent reworking by Anon.)

Introduced and underpinned by the mesmeric riffs from [62/59U] WHAT'D I SAY set squarely in the fast lane. Stretches of twin lead guitars playing in unison provide added oomph and an extra dose of seasonal cheer.

#### **5 [65/49] JINGLE BELL ROCK**

(Joe Beal/ Jim Boothe)

This was an all but inevitable inclusion for rocked-up Christmas novelties appealing to the group's home market: it was a US chart occupant for Bobby Helms, in rockabilly style, over four successive years (1957–1960) and subsequently (1961) for Bobby Rydell and Chubby Checker in distinctly non-rocky mode. The Ventures certainly inject some punch, bringing in the stellar [63/38] MEMPHIS at beginning, middle and end and jogging along in fine style.

#### **6 [65/50] SILVER BELLS**

(Jay Livingston/ Ray Evans)

A 50s song first recorded commercially by Bing Crosby, it was already well subscribed to by 1965. Its captivating melody is deftly handled here, the arrangement borrowing elements from [64/19] ONLY THE YOUNG. The lead guitar rings out resonantly to the accompaniment of melodious fills from a second lead as well as delicately tinkling bells (of course).

#### **7 [65/51 & 65?/51a]**

#### **RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER**

(Johnny Marks)

The grafting of The Beatles' [65/1] I FEEL FINE on to this ever so jolly rendition of a song that has become a firm Christmas favourite, attracting versions from artistes as diverse as The Chipmunks and Dean Martin, seems on the face of it wildly contrived, but not so it seems. In a 1980 interview<sup>16</sup> Mel Taylor states: "We were in a college tour in July and we used to try to add a couple of takes from the latest new LP, so we were doing 'I Feel Fine'. Nokie started the intro on his own and went right into 'Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer'!!!" Dave Burke commented<sup>17</sup> that the EMI remastering of this album for CD in 1990 threw up "a complete second harmony lead ... that was somehow omitted from the original mix!" This second harmony lead appeared<sup>18</sup> on a "Mexican Xmas EP", Musart EL 65031. My thanks to John Beddington, who reports that the EP is not dated, hence my inability to provide a reliably numbered entry. Note finally that because of The Beatles importation the lead lines take on a rather acerbic tone, not at all in Christmas glow and cheer territory.

#### **8 [65/52] FROSTY THE SNOWMAN**

(Steve Nelson/ Jack Rollins)

After recording 'Rudolph' in 1949 (and going on to sell 7,000,000 copies of it eventually), Gene Autry turned his attention the year after that to 'Frosty' and

scooped up another million seller. Our FROSTY THE SNOWMAN is treated to a dose of The Champs' [63/7] TEQUILA, and handled in a comparably uncomplicated manner, though the employment of what sounds like a 12-string guitar cleverly accentuates the jolly tone; there is a cool snatch of 'Rudolph' thrown in for good measure.

### **9 [65/53] SCROOGE**

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

Decked out with melodramatic snatches recalling the musical soundtrack to silent movie scenes involving dastardly villains, the tune itself is a typical Ventures jog on the dark side which would be quite at home in Gotham City (just listen to those whirring noises at 0:11). Deeply unpopular as the number is with Ventures fans, it is certainly different, and rather more profound and atmospheric than the company it keeps hereabouts. You'd have to be a miserable as the old codger himself not to see the funny side of this one.

### **10 [65/54] BLUE CHRISTMAS**

(Billy Hayes/ Jay Johnson)

One of the staple songs of Christmas by 1965, with notable versions by Elvis Presley and The Beach Boys already in the can, our Ventures rendition (bolstered by a second lead guitar) is laced with bursts of [65/6] WHEN YOU WALK IN THE ROOM — a rather disruptive importation in this case, as the melody is an attractive one and comes across supremely effectively when left to its own devices. Nokie's break at 1:14, which moves in the direction of a (tasteful) country knees-up, is especially fine and even finer with the volume cranked up, with some great note-bending at 1:56.

### **11 [65/55] WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS**

(Trad.)

An RI enthusiast might well have shuddered at the sight of this track in his local record store, but an injection of [65/38] THE 'IN' CROWD distances it entirely from the gentility of the original secular Christmas carol. It proves to be an excellent Ventures swinger, fitted out with hand claps, a ringing melody (particularly striking at 0:51/1:24) firmed up by a doubled lead, and the tightest of ensemble performances.

### **12 [65/56] WHITE CHRISTMAS**

(Irving Berlin)

When Irving Berlin exclaimed to his secretary: "Hell, I just wrote the best song that anybody's ever written!", his boast was not an idle one, for this has proved to be one of the most loved, most recorded and most commercially successful pieces ever written, for Christmas or for any other season. The Ventures do not vulgarise it, but play it pretty straight, with a pronounced but not excessive lilt, and they import elements that recall their tasteful renditions of [64/30] BLUE STAR and [64/36] STRANGER ON THE SHORE. Even so, the whole is more than a little wooden-sounding. Nokie for one does not seem entirely at ease tinkling away placidly for close on three minutes.

1965

## FURTHER TRACKS

July 1965 EP (Japan), Liberty LP-4070

**[65/57EP] KICKSTAND**

**EP Version**

&

December 1966 B-Single, Dolton 327

**[66/82S] KICKSTAND**

**Single Version**

For the EP, [65/41] A GO-GO DANCER from the September 1965 *À Go-Go* album (and not the related [65/36] NIGHT STICK<sup>19</sup>) is topped and tailed with bike noises, arresting at the outset, pretty muted at the close. As the flipside of the US single [67/23] THEME FROM ‘THE WILD ANGELS’ (which would appear on the February 1967 *Guitar Freakout* album), the ‘biker’ version is topped and tailed rather feebly by brief surf effects, this particular mix providing a beefier sound overall.

The ‘race track’ version is conveniently available on the CD *In The Vaults Volume 3*; both are offered on the Magic Records CD *The Ventures À-Go-Go*.

September 1965 A-Single, Dolton 308

**[65/58S] TEN SECONDS TO HEAVEN aka THE STRANGER**

(The Ventures after Robert Wright/

George Forrest after Alexander Borodin)

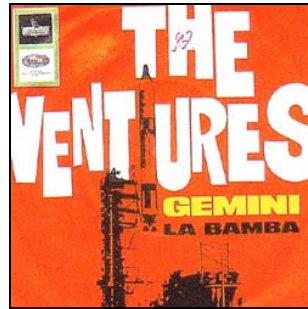


Issued with [65/11] BIRD ROCKERS on the B-side, the track is conveniently available on the 1997 CD *In The Vaults*. This piece, bearing one or other of two idiosyncratic titles in Ventures releases worldwide, was most familiar in the 1960s as Forrest and Wright’s song adapted from a theme in Alexander Borodin’s ‘Polovtsian Dances’, ‘Stranger In Paradise’ from the 1953 musical *Kismet*<sup>20</sup>. It is strikingly but characteristically transformed by them from a rather staid ballad into the current reverb-drenched surf idiom. As Dave Burke puts it: “Maracas lead the way for Don Wilson’s ‘Pipeline’-like rhythm complete with end of chorus [glissando] slides, while Nokie picks out the lead on the high strings interwoven with embellishments from what sounds like an electric piano giving a slightly eerie, spacey sound overall”<sup>21</sup>. ‘Surfers’ Heaven’ might have been a more apt alternative title. — DB sheds light on the ‘Perry’ sometimes mentioned in the credits. “Joe Saraceno had a friend Frank



Perry, a songwriter and musician who Joe wrote a couple of tunes with, so it's most likely that he did the arrangement for 'The Stranger'."

October 1965 A-Single, Dolton 311  
**[65/59S] GEMINI**  
(Jack Fenner/ Steve Blanchard)



American manned spaceflight programs (Project Gemini was the second, running from 1963 to 1966) attracted all sorts of musical tributes, of which this is a particularly weedy specimen: guitar and organ bolstered by jolly female backing vocals collude in a bout of forced triumphalism charting the course of a very wonky-sounding projectile, illustrating by contrast just how tuneful and clever 'Telstar' was. Dire, whether in its standard form or in the slightly differently configured version on the 1997 *In The Vaults* CD, on which see Dave Towers in *Pipeline* 36<sup>22</sup>.

1965 B-Single (Japan), Liberty LR 1199  
**[65/60S] CANDY APPLE RACER**  
(Don Wilson/ Bob Bogle/ Mel Taylor)

Conveniently available on the 1997 CD *In The Vaults*. Recorded in 1962 and laid aside, it surfaced in 1965 on a Japanese single (see under 1962, p.27 and Halterman 74). Chugging along inoffensively in String-A-Longs mode with an overlay of balmy Hawaiian textures, the number originally bore the title of 'Listen To The Mocking Bird', and was furnished with lyrics by Josie Wilson.<sup>23</sup> By the mid-sixties hot rod racers in the candy apple red paint scheme devised by 'Big John' Mazmanian in 1962 were exceedingly popular, but the specimen evoked here seems more suited to a leisurely drive along the shoreline to watch the birds and other marine life go by.

**1965**

**POST-60s RELEASES**

**[65/61U] HARLEM NOCTURNE**  
**Updated Version**  
(Earl Hagen)

Commercially rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/26  
See under July 1961, LP *The Ventures*, entry [61/6].

### [65?/62U] LITES OUT

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

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/22

Mel Taylor is in incandescent form on this frenetic belter, aptly enough pounding the living day-lites out of his kit at terrific speed. The organ plays a prominent part locked in competition with the drums, while at 0:33 and again at 1:21 Nokie slashes his way into the action in a passage of barely controlled frenzy.

Recording dates are problematic for this number and the two that follow on here. Del Halterman (336) observes that the precise dates from July 1965 advanced in the annotation for *Vaults* 2 cannot be correct since The Ventures were on tour in Japan at the time; Dave Burke talks there of his subsequent realisation that the documentation actually refers to dates of *tape compilations* made by EMI.

Clive Poole<sup>24</sup>, detecting similarities in [64/32] NIGHT WALK and [64/35] THE CREEPER from 1964, contends that LITES OUT may have “become” the former. Some may find this more plausible than I do, but it may well be the case regardless that this and the ensuing two numbers should be dated to 1964. In the absence of positive evidence they all are logged tentatively under 1965.

### [65?/63U] SAIGON

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

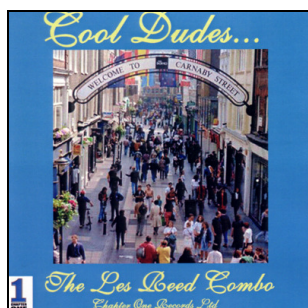
Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/25

See previous entry for date of recording together with DB’s tentative query under 1964, p.23. Pretty basic in structure, this one derives its very considerable impact from the sheer clangour of its mock-Asian styling, bolstered by thundering drums. The *In The Vaults* annotators are at a loss to explain its lengthy interment, and suggest that the group may have been concerned about the “growing backlash against the Vietnam War”. But this would hardly have constituted an insurmountable hurdle: titles could be changed at the drop of a hat. Dave Peckett<sup>25</sup> regards it as “probably a little too busy”, which I cannot see at all. Rather the sequence from 0:39 with Nokie picking out the tune on damped strings doesn’t sound quite secure to my ears. Maybe it was set aside for revision and nobody got round to it.

### [65?/64U] SPANISH ARMADA

(Johnny Stevens/ Douglas Jones)

Rel. 1996: CD *In The Vaults* 2/24



See penultimate entry for the thorny question of recording date. Trev Faull in his book *A Collectors Guide To 60's Brit-Pop Instrumentals*, p.220, on one of the most accomplished conductors/orchestrators in 60s Britain, who called upon the services of many of the finest sessioneers, such as guitarists Big Jim Sullivan, Vic Flick and Joe

Moretti: “Les Reed had been the pianist in the original John Barry Seven. In the early 60s he cut several singles for Piccadilly and Fontana. A TV theme from *People In London* was cut as ‘Spanish Armada’ [viz. in 1964, on Fontana], and was to be the musical highlight of his career using wailing guitar and dramatic piano. The theme was used for years by cinemas as an introduction to their [Pearl and Dean] advertisements ...” Quite how this opus, which The Ventures recorded in fairly close imitation of the original, came their way in the first place — for it made no impression on the UK charts which Americans were eyeing with great interest by then — is not clear.

It is certainly potent stuff, epic/heroic/dramatic in flavour, the robust lead guitar work effectively complemented by a driving, droning organ accompaniment. It is much more muscular and hard-hitting than the Reed original, which does have a degree of punch (the accompaniment to the opening bars for example fairly zips along, whereas The Ventures take a more measured approach), but also an element of insubstantiality, that airy lightness so typical of UK theme tunes of the 60s.

**[65/65‘L’/U –65/72‘L’/U]**

Undubbed versions of certain of the simulated live tracks on the June 1965 LP *The Ventures On Stage*, including a hitherto unissued MEMPHIS, a characteristically assured ensemble performance with a beautifully crafted Edwards solo: **[65/65‘L’/U] CARAVAN ||| [65/66‘L’/U] BUMBLE BEE ||| [65/67‘L’/U] DRIVING GUITARS ||| [65/68‘L’/U] JOURNEY TO THE STARS ||| [65/69‘L’/U] Medley WALK, DON’T RUN: PERFIDIA: LULLABY OF THE LEAVES ||| [65/70‘L’/U] MEMPHIS ||| [65/71‘L’/U] PEDAL PUSHER ||| [65/72‘L’/U] YELLOW JACKET**

1965

# DAVE'S VIEW FROM THE VAULTS

UNITED RECORDING CORP. 6050 Sunset Blvd. - Hollywood, Calif.							
Date: <u>Dec 28, 1964</u>		Client: <u>DELTON</u>		File No. _____		Reel No. _____	
Program: <u>VENTURES</u>		Engr: <u>2-7-13-E</u>		Tape Speed: <u>15</u> I.P.S.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ONE TR. <input type="checkbox"/> AME <input type="checkbox"/> "A" Set <input type="checkbox"/> TWO TR. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B NAB <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> "B" Set <input type="checkbox"/> THREE TR.	
Studio: <u>2-7-13-E</u>		MONO EQ		F/3112			
TAKE NO.	CODE	TIME	MASTER NO.	TITLE	REMARKS	EDITED BY	DATE
			<u>6LP 2033</u>	<u>12 TONES</u>			
				<u>1st 700 cps, 1st 5, 700 cps 1st</u>			
			<u>Side 1</u>				
1	M	2:08		I FEEL FINE	<u>1st -6/+4</u>		
2	"	2:08		LOVE POTION #9	<u>-6/+4</u>		
3	"	2:30		TOMORROW'S LOVE (NEW)	<u>-6/+4</u>		
4	"	2:48		BREATHY WOMEN	<u>-6/+3</u>		
5	"	2:10		MARINER #4	<u>-6/+4</u>		
6	"	2:20		WHEN YOU WALK IN THE PARK	<u>-6/+4</u>		
				TBC. 14:55 177 LPI			
			<u>Side 2</u>				
1	M	2:08		COONE, COONE, COONE	<u>1st -6/+3</u>		
2	"	2:17		CHARLOTTE ON 10th AVE	<u>-6/+4</u>		
3	"	2:35		SHE'S NOT THERE	<u>-6/+3</u>		
4	"	1:55		LONELY GIRL	<u>-6/+4</u>		
5	"	2:37		BIRD RECIPE	<u>-6/+4</u>		
6	"	2:25		SNA! LOLA	<u>-6/+4</u>		
				TBC. 14:13 174 LPI			
			<u>Q. inside box</u>				
			<u>AFTER</u>	<u>HEAVY LEADER</u>			
A		2:14		OLD VERSION "TOMORROW'S LOVE"	<u>LISTED 40 IS LISTED +2</u>		
					<u>LISTED</u>		
TAPE DISPOSITION - Details on Work Order <input type="checkbox"/> Out <input type="checkbox"/> Pickup <input type="checkbox"/> Ship <input type="checkbox"/> Erased <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TR - Track <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A - First Overdub <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B - 2nd Overdub <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C - 3rd Overdub, etc. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INT - Inter-cut							

1

In November 1964 the band commenced work on *The Ventures Knock Me Out!* LP, recording 'Love Potion No. 9', and then, in December, 'She's Not There'. Don, Bob, Nokie, Mel and Steve Douglas are featured on both tracks, while Leon Russell makes his final album appearance with The Ventures playing on 'She's Not There' — and most likely on the rest of the album as well. With five covers of hits by English bands it's the closest The Ventures ever came to acknowledging the British invasion, even if three of the five songs actually originated in America. Interestingly, the excellent band original named after the US spaceship which captured close-up photographs of Mars, 'Mariner No. 4', was titled 'Novachord' in its early incarnation. The Ventures always knew how to turn topicality to their advantage.

## 2

As was made evident with the 2007 release of the *In The Vaults Volume 4* CD, The Ventures' 'live' *On Stage* LP was actually a studio recording with the audience dubbed on afterwards. The album was recorded very quickly with 'Wipe Out', 'Driving Guitars', 'Apache', 'Caravan', 'Pedal Pusher' and 'Journey To The Stars' all being cut on two consecutive days, specifically the 30th and 31st of March 1965. Whilst the over-dubbing on side one of the LP (the supposedly Japanese side) was executed with some restraint so as not to spoil the music, the tracks on side two were completely ruined by adding screams and general hysteria as might have befitted The Beatles at the height of their popularity. It was little short of vandalism by Dick Glasser, the album's producer, who had skilfully captured a thrilling sound and then set about ruining it. Two further tracks recorded for the album were never used. The first rate 'Memphis', which is even better than the original studio recording on the *Let's Go!* set, has been included on *In The Vaults Volume 4*. The other title, 'The Swingin' Creeper', remains locked away still gathering dust. It's another top performance but the track was originally put aside to await an organ over-dub and, presumably, when Glasser realised that the solitary appearance of an organ might seem just a little fishy, the take was never completed.

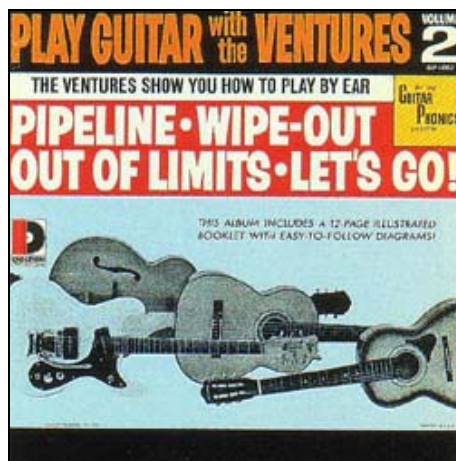
## 3

The *Ventures A Go-Go* album marked the arrival of highly successful producer Joe Saraceno in The Ventures camp. Saraceno had already enjoyed great sales with his other instrumental projects by The Routers and The Marketts, both studio creations which functioned by utilising a revolving door policy that allowed the best of Hollywood's sessioneers to pass through the portals. These included the likes of Tommy Tedesco, Hal Blaine, Carole Kaye, Sharky Hall, Rene Hall, Plas Johnson, Bill Pitman, Cliff Hils, Sid Sharp, Jackie Kelso, Ray Pohlman, Leon Russell, Steve Douglas, Pat Vegas and David Gates, all of whom had been a Markett or Router at one time or another and some of whom had even been an occasional Venture as well! Joe had started out as an auditor working in up-state New York where he had been born and raised but, like many youngsters before and since, he chased his dreams to Hollywood. Once there Joe soon fell in with the showbiz crowd which included actors and musicians. One of these was a bit-part actor, Bobby Please, and together they made Joe's first recording, the 1957 novelty item 'Your Driver's Licence, Please'. Through this Joe made the acquaintance of musician, writer and producer Ernie Freeman who was an important mover in the new world of rock 'n' roll. It was Freeman who provided the musicians (including Plas Johnson and Sharky Hall) and produced Joe's own 1958 chart hit 'The Freeze', which he cut with piano player Tony Savonne as Tony & Joe. Now the music industry door was well and truly open for Joe and he soon became an A&R man for Candix Records and even briefly worked with The Beach Boys in their early days when they were known as The Pendletones. Joe was completely at home in Hollywood and he set about making his own productions which he at first put out on small independent labels and then, to gain wider distribution, leased them on to Liberty and Warner Brothers where they enjoyed major success. In 1965 Liberty manager Bob Skaff phoned Joe asking if he would like to look after one of their biggest acts — The Ventures. Naturally Joe jumped at the opportunity, and also later produced The T-Bones and Sandy Nelson for the label.

## 4

In July 1965 Joe joined the band in the studio for the first of many times, and the full team was Don, Bob, Nokie and Mel along with Lincoln Mayorga and Frank DeVito. Mayorga was a gifted pianist from a classical background who had first found success

as the musical arranger for The Four Preps. Later, with Ed Cobb, he was one of the masterminds behind The Piltdown Men, and he is also well remembered for his delicious piano work on Ketty Lester's 'Love Letters'. Drummer and percussionist Frank deVito, like Joe Saraceno, had been born in Utica, New York but had then moved to Hollywood in 1955 after touring with jazz group The Pete Jolly Trio. He had a long background in jazz, having recorded with Frank Sinatra as well as performing with the likes of Benny Goodman, Woody Herman and Ella Fitzgerald. In the sixties he moved into working rock sessions for Elvis Presley, Sam Cooke, Ricky Nelson, and The Beach Boys. The Ventures recorded 'Satisfaction' and 'La Bamba' amongst others for the *A Go-Go* album, with harmonica specialist Tommy Morgan joining them for 'La Bamba'. One tune on the album that has enjoyed multiple versions is 'Night Stick'. It was even repeated in a different version on the same LP under the title of 'A Go-Go Dancer', then later released with dubbed on motor cycle noises as 'Kickstand'. It's probably not a surprise to learn that there is yet another version in the vaults under the title of 'Shake It Easy'. The Ventures obviously thought that we could not get too much of a good thing — and they were right!



## 5

It's normally the way that LPs intended for the festive season are recorded during the summer and *The Ventures' Christmas Album* was no different in that respect. 'Jingle Bells', 'Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer', 'Frosty The Snowman' and the magical 'Sleigh Ride' were all recorded on 30th September 1965 at United Recorders. With Nokie, Mel, Bob and Don were Red Rhodes, Frank deVito, Evelyn Freeman and Julius Wechter. Because of the extra chimes, bells and assorted festive trimmings associated with Christmas recordings, there were two percussionists employed on the session: deVito and Wechter. Curiously, on the same day and in the same building, another group of 'Ventures' were recording. This was Rene Hall, Hal Blaine, Tommy Tedesco, Bill Pitman and Dennis Budimir who were laying down 'Wipe Out', 'Pipeline', 'Let's Go' and 'Out Of Limits' for the *Play Guitar With The Ventures Volume 2* album. I suppose it was a bit like having the 'A team' and the 'B Team' playing on the same pitch on the same day, and it must have all been quite surreal — not just Christmas in September but also having musical doppelgangers right next door. It is assumed that The Ventures did not play on any of the guitar instructional LPs titled *Play With The Ventures*. To play unaccompanied, and sometimes at half metre, extremely proficient music readers would have been required, which The Ventures were not. Similarly a highly skilled musician would have been needed to produce such sessions, which Joe Saraceno was not. They were actually produced by



Dave Pell, a jazz saxophonist and senior A&R man at Liberty. He also produced the early, pre-'No Matter What Shape', T-Bones LPs which featured the same musicians — Steve Douglas, Plas Johnson, Tommy Tedesco, Bud Coleman, Ray Pohlman and Hal Blaine — that Joe Saraceno routinely employed. Hollywood was something of an incestuous recording environment.

(1) Label name		No. of minutes		TITLES OF TUNES		Master no.		No. of minutes		TITLES OF TUNES	
		1:50		JINGLE BELLS		1:57		FROSTY THE SNOWMAN			
		1:47		RUDOLPH THE RED NOSED REINDEER		2:20		SLEIGH RIDE			

(2) Employee's name (As on Social Security card)	(3) Home address (Give street, city and state)	(4) Local Union no.	(5) Social Security number	(6) Scale wages	(7) Pension contribution
TAYLOR, MEL (Leader)	North Hollywood, Calif.	47			
BOGLE, ROBERT L.	Hollywood 38, Calif.	47			
BRACKETT, EDDIE JR.	Los Angeles 46, Calif.	47			
DE VITO, FRANK A.	Studio City, Calif.	47			
EDWARDS, MOLE F.	North Hollywood, Calif.	47			
RHODES, O	Sylmar, Calif.	47			
ROBERTS, EVELYN FREEMAN	Los Angeles 16, Calif.	47			
WECHTER, JULIUS	North Hollywood, Calif.	47			
WILSON, DONALD L.	1215 W. Highland Hollywood 38, Calif.	47			

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Date pay't rec'd \_\_\_\_\_ Amt. paid \_\_\_\_\_ Date posted \_\_\_\_\_ By \_\_\_\_\_  
Form B-4 Rev. 4-59



## REFERENCES IN TEXT

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

- 1     See H115.
- 2     H115.
- 3     VR 61 [2000] 5.
- 4     NGD 22 [1986] 7.
- 5     Alan Taylor, *P* 51 [2001] 60.
- 6     NGD 55 [1999] 41–42.
- 7     *P* 11 [1991] 40&44 [1999] 43.
- 8     *P* 28 [1995] 30 & VR 55 [1999] 14.
- 9     NGD 55 [1999] 42.
- 10    NGD 48 [1996] 10.
- 11    VR 54 [1998] 8
- 12    VR 73 [2003] 19.
- 13    VR 73 [2003] 18.
- 14    H124.
- 15    *P* 9 [1991] 16.
- 16    NGD 15 [1980] 10.
- 17    *P* 9 [1991] 41.
- 18    John Beddington, VR 30 [1992] 20.
- 19    See Paul van der Veen, VR 83 [2006] 17.
- 20    Cf. Ray Steer in *P* 62 [2004] 16.
- 21    NGD 48 [1996] 10.
- 22    *P* 36 [1997] 65.
- 23    Gerry Woodage, VR 49 [1997] 10.
- 24    *P* 46 [1999] 5.
- 25    NGD 56 [1999] 30.