

1966

ALBUM TRACKS

February 1966 LP

Where The Action Is

Dolton BST 8040 Stereo/ BLP 2040 Mono



The title stems from Dick Clark's ABC TV weekday show which was screened in the States from June 1965, so-called because the cameras went out looking for pop stars rather than shepherd them into a studio, and the stars obliged by miming to their records. The Ventures themselves put in an appearance to promote SECRET AGENT MAN in March 1966. The *Action* album made #33 and was 22 weeks on chart.

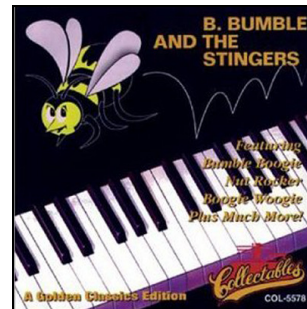
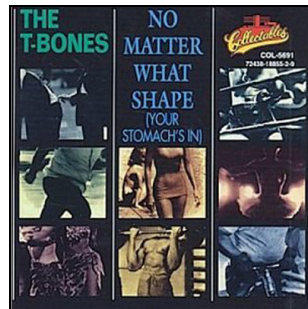
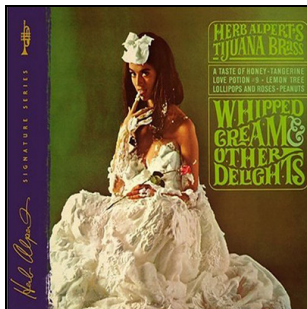


The opening track is a version of the song that introduced the first six months' programmes, and the group provided three further numbers with 'action' in their titles; 3's A CROWD in similar mould was thrown in for good measure. Apart from an adaptation of a 1962 hit from B Bumble & The Stingers (suggested by Evelyn Freeman? Her brother Ernie was closely associated with the outfit), the spotlight falls once again on recent chart successes, this time (contrast the previous album) all American: from 1965 The McCoys (two numbers) and Herb Alpert, from 1966 The Knickerbockers, The T-Bones and Gary Lewis & The Playboys.

The organ (played by Evelyn Freeman) once more has an important role to play, though not quite as deep-seatedly as on the *A Go-Go* set; more on personnel at p.29 below.

<<<<CHOICE CUTS>>>>

HANG ON SLOOPY ascends to dizzy heights, while two of the self-penned action titles are hard to fault: **STOP ACTION** and **LITTLE BIT OF ACTION**.



1 [66/1] ACTION

(Tommy Boyce/ Steve Venet)

This boisterous number was written to introduce Dick Clark's show discussed above. It fell to Freddy Cannon to commit it to record after a version by Paul Revere & The Raiders had been rejected and Del Shannon had declined to take it on. It had various vocal interjections and strident brass, and boasted a host of familiar sessioneers (Glen Campbell, James Burton, Leon Russell, David Gates, Hal Blaine), charting for him in August 1965 and climbing to #13. The whoops and yells are fairly restrained in The Ventures' version, which accommodates lots of handclaps and majors on punch. There is little in the way of improvising touches from Nokie Edwards, but Don Wilson's rhythm ranges from vigorous to very vigorous, and there is some extra ornamentation in the form of exuberant background swishing sounds from organist Evelyn Freeman in the final quarter.

2 [66/2] LIES

(Buddy Randell/ Beau Charles)

Another recent hit is scooped up here. New Jersey group The Knickerbockers got to #20 early in 1966 with a song that went out of its way to ape The Beatles and John Lennon in particular (they had bought-in musical assistance: Gerry McGee recalls playing rhythm guitar¹). Some groups proved able to bask in reflected glory (notably Badfinger in the 70s), but not this one. The whole thing sounded strained and the lead vocalist made the feeblest of stabs at Lennon's rasping delivery. Still, the catchiness of the actual song made up to some degree for the cheapness of the imitation. The Ventures' version brings out the best in it in a fine ensemble performance with a notably buoyant bass-line, a thudding backbeat, razor sharp rhythm and a characteristically agile solo from Nokie to provide a bit of welcome diversification amidst all the repetition.

3 [66/3] FEVER

(Eddie Cooley/ John Davenport)

This frequently aired piece (the second of the two composers was actually Otis Blackwell, John Davenport was a screen) picks up on The McCoys' late-1965 #7; UK record buyers were less impressed and it stalled at #44. Firmly in beat group territory and tricked out with lively backing vocals, it was a modernising version of a song most familiar from the steamy Peggy Lee recording of 1958. It bore an uncanny stylistic/ structural resemblance to **HANG ON SLOOPY**, though it was hardly in the

same league. Nokie's artistry transforms it into something much more richly textured and involving: he clearly delights in wresting all kinds of convoluted patterns from the Mosrite, aided from time to time by short sharp organ fills. There is an appropriately anguished solo, and the piece builds to a positively feverish close when a second lead guitar is brought in to play in unison.

4 [66/4] STOP ACTION

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

This powerhouse of a number takes the form of an exhilarating series of stops and starts. It is one thing to have two guitar breaks and two organ solos of this glorious quality crammed into two and a quarter minutes, quite another to have on top of that an accompaniment made in instro heaven: crashing percussion with subtle input from bongos, turbo-charged bass and incredibly frantic rhythm. Engaging as the opener was, the group-penned STOP ACTION throws it completely into the shade. This time the people whooping in the background strike one as being integral to the action, not just decorative.

5 [66/5] 3's A CROWD

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

A mid-tempo stomper with two jaunty organ breaks, in fact when you take account of the fills adorning the twangy guitar lines, the organ enjoys most of the action. Though tightly performed, it is one of the less adventurous tracks in the set, a throwback stylistically to the 50s, but without the honking saxophone.

6 [66/6] A TASTE OF HONEY

(Bobby Scott/ Ric Marlow)

This song, first performed in 1960, attracted a number of instrumental versions early on, including a melodious one from Acker Bilk & The Leon Young String Chorale (a UK #16 in 1963), which made Paul McCartney all the more determined to get it out on a Beatles record. John Lennon was openly contemptuous of it and clearly regarded it as wimpish (which is how it came over), the very description applied by Dave Peckett² to this Ventures workout. It is hard to see how this is warranted. They rock it up, as indeed Herb Alpert had done in 1965 (it was a US #7) — like a red rag to a bull, as they say, for this is exactly in line with The Ventures' own habit of stepping up the tempo of mellow compositions and giving them a hard edge. The Alpert arrangement is followed closely: a deceptively quiet intro then the explosive main theme. Nokie's lead lines are sharp and incisive, the rhythm guitar hammers away vigorously, the percussion is uncompromisingly pounding (cf. Hal Blaine's powerful bass drum part on the original), the bass bobbing, the organ contribution all the more effective for being sparing.

7 [66/7] NO MATTER WHAT SHAPE

(Granville Sacha Burland)

The story behind this derivative of an Alka-Seltzer jingle and The Ventures' initial refusal to record it has been recounted by Dave Burke³. The T-Bones had a US #3 with the Joe Saraceno-produced tune early in 1966. It is a polite piece with sweet-sounding, not to say jolly, female vocal backing, tea-partyish and hardly in the territory generally trodden by Alka-Seltzer consumers! From the very first note it is plain that, when they did come to commit a version to record, The Ventures resolved to spruce it up and give it a degree of oomph lacking in the hit single, so there are

lashings of lively percussion and brief but stylish organ interventions to break up the rather basic and relentless main melody.

8 [66/8] ACTION PLUS

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

The organ this time is not upfront but is present as a continuous backdrop to this slab of high octane, hell-for-leather guitar thrashing for driving in the fast lane, so unadorned and unsophisticated as to be strongly suggestive of a studio jam, or at least of something put together with the minimum of ceremony after a listen to The Gamblers' 'Teen Machine' on which ACTION PLUS is based⁴. It can be sliced neatly into two parts, for at 1:10 there is a short pause to reprise the intro before careering in repeat mode to the close, where a ring is formed by reverting to the reprise pattern.

9 [66/9] HANG ON SLOOPY

(Bert Russell *aka* Bert Burns/ Wes Farrell)

There has already been a nod in the direction of The McCoys (see track 3), and here The Ventures get to grips with a #1 hit (UK #5) back in October 1965 from a group who derived their name from their own [60/11] THE McCOY. HANG ON SLOOPY has become one of the regulars in 60s compilations, and rightly so. It is a terrifically catchy song delivered with aplomb. It has an interesting blend of styles: a gutsily delivered lyric set off by backing vocals alternately robust (white beat group) and mellow (black soul group), a guitar solo (by Rick Zehringer later known as Rick Derringer, grafted on to an existing backing track) which sounds as if it was worked out on the spot but which caught the excitement of the moment, and a raucous closing section which made it look as if they were heading for an out and out screamer in 'Twist And Shout' mould (an element truncated in the edited single). The Ventures' version is very different in approach, but it too is something special. It is clear that the notion of a pregnant pause was not one that readily suggested itself to Nokie Edwards, and here he packs the lines with enough embellishments to fill a guitar tutor, without undermining in the slightest the integrity of a killer tune. Indeed he enhances its emotive power, not only with the recurrent quick-fire runs, but also with beautifully executed string-bending (spectacularly at 2:07/2:08!) and a dazzling solo as a centrepiece. One of the true wonders of the instrumental canon I reckon.

10 [66/10] NUTTY

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

This is B Bumble & The Stingers' madcap hit 'Nut Rocker' from 1962, conventionally accorded the credit "arr. Kim Fowley". Credits went instead to the four group members, and the title was changed to NUTTY — clearly to enable royalties to be channelled in The Ventures' direction. However, there is nothing *radically* different about this arrangement (though some think otherwise): without the BB precedent, this piece would never have seen the light of day in anything remotely resembling this form. Given the complexion of the model, it is very surprising that The Ventures' arrangement did not write in a prominent part for the organ, so assiduously deployed of late in group recordings. As it is, though, this is a true Guitarfest, and it works wonderfully, taken through its paces *con brio* by a group in red-hot form. Was there a tighter and more dynamic guitar outfit in the 60s anywhere on the planet?

11 [66/11] LITTLE BIT OF ACTION

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

Another red-hot track of the calibre of STOP ACTION earlier, notable for some frantic chord sequences: it is worth detaching oneself from the group performance just to listen to the remarkable way in which Don Wilson makes his presence felt throughout this uncompromisingly hectic piece (his guitar is very clear in the mix). Twangy lead guitar (with shades of Duane Eddy in places) and organ (with that attention-grabbing squawk similar to the effect in [65/40] A GO-GO GUITAR on the preceding album) alternate with a succession of powerful surges, call and response patterns between guitar and drums twice (0:40, 1:29) acting as effective bridges for the main theme. Scrutiny of the recording documentation has revealed that the number draws on a Shadows vocal penned by Hank Marvin (see p.29 below) — the borrowing is well camouflaged to be sure.

12 [66/12] SHE'S JUST MY STYLE

(Al Capps/ Snuff Garrett/ Gary Lewis/ Leon Russell)

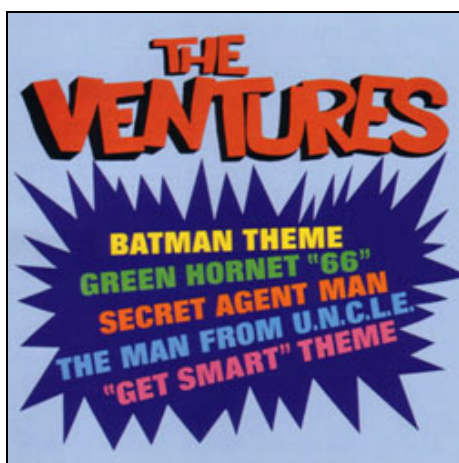
Gary Lewis & The Playboys meant practically nothing to UK record buyers, but they were a big draw in the States and kept their head above water in the face of severe competition from the Brits. This number climbed to #3 early in 1966 as one in a line of Top Tenners, sounding rather like The Beach Boys in unrestrainedly effusive mode with the same disconcerting tendency to sound desperately/studiedly immature and juvenile (rather like Lewis Senior one might say!). Still, the tune is what matters here and it is undeniably a catchy piece with a bouncy beat and is treated accordingly by The Ventures, suiting their powerhouse style down to the ground. There is an ultra-twangy solo break with Nokie breathing the joys of life and some nice piano pumping away for a change, though need it have been *quite* so unobtrusive (contrast the Lewis version)?

March 1966 LP

*The Ventures (Batman Theme)**

Dolton BST 8042 Stereo/ BLP 2042 Mono

* The album title is just *The Ventures*, but it is commonly referred to for clarity's sake as *Batman Theme* or simply *Batman*.



By the mid-sixties, series about superheroes and superspies were pervasive on the American small screen. The Ventures here turned their attention to them in a thoroughgoing way for the first but by no means the last time, putting together the set

in a week (or nine days according to a different report). They were rewarded for their efforts with a #42 placing and a stake in the album charts for 21 weeks.

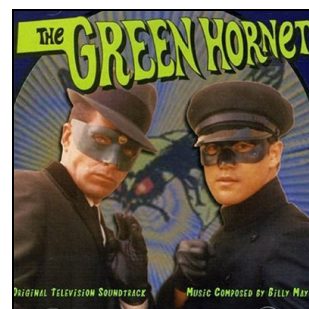
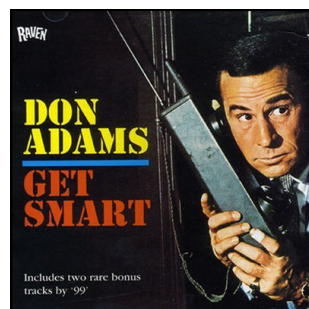


Batman received his latest reincarnation in 1966, in a jokey, outrageously camp presentation which caught the popular imagination, for a year or two at least. This set kicks off with a cracking rendition of its excellent theme tune, but, as is illustrated in the entries below, on the back of the opener come half a dozen group-penned titles related to this dark figure, his environment, his associates and his accoutrements, to a greater or lesser degree. It is the Batman numbers in this set that really shine, overall as imaginative and absorbing as the material on the *In Space* album. The remaining five are all spy-flavoured, the first (from the group) an oblique reference to the James Bond films, the rest (composed outside the group) theme tunes from TV series. Evelyn Freeman is on keys; for other personnel see p.29 below.

In 1996 One Way Records put out the set in mono "due to the loss of the original stereo masters". Commending their enterprise, DB remarks: "The stereo tape is damaged in places (something you can hear when you listen closely to the See For Miles CD)". It goes without saying that stereo reproduction allows the dynamism and sheer inventiveness of this set to be appreciated to the full, and EMI Japan came to the rescue in 2006 by making use of a more than adequate master (mono then stereo cuts, TOCP-67952).

<<<<CHOICE CUTS>>>>

BATMAN THEME itself is beautifully crafted, while **VAMPCAMP** and **THE CAPE** are superb examples of atmospheric writing.



1 [66/13] BATMAN THEME (Neal Hefti)



Attracting wildly diverse renditions in due course from such RI stars as Duane Eddy, Davie Allan and Link Wray, two versions of this theme tune for the 1966 US TV series broke into the national Top 40. The Marketts made #17, Neal Hefti a short while later #35. With the prominence they accord to brass/ flute, both versions are closer to the big band sound than to small-scale RI. The former, with its vocalists yelling immoderately to no good purpose, is boisterous and partying in approach. It sounds trivial, utterly lacking in poise and any sense of tension. Hefti's account of it is in an entirely different class: with powerful orchestration reinforced magnificently by the mesmeric chanting of the protagonist's name, it swings as adroitly as Batman himself.



The Ventures with scantier resources are a match for Hefti — no mean feat. The number takes off aptly enough like a bat out of hell, with tremendous slam and drive generated by the pattering percussion and the hammering of low-register guitar strings. Before twenty seconds have passed the backing vocalists intone ‘Batman’ repeatedly with a note of intense urgency. Then, before the first minute is up, the sombre main theme from the deep-toned Mosrite is presented, giving way in due course to a twangy guitar break set off by a high pitched whistling sound which we now know to be have been produced by a theremin. (Its spooky, other-wordly sound was commonly featured in science fiction and related films of the fifties and sixties; it was much used by Harry Lubin for example, cf. entry [64/4]). The hypnotic chant resumes to take us into the fade.

Further comparisons can be made with Neal Hefti and The Marketts. Neal Hefti, His Orchestra & Chorus offered twenty servings of pure delight spanning two albums, *Batman Theme & 11 Hefti Bat Songs* (RCA LP 3573, charting at #41) and *Hefti In Gotham City* (RCA LP 3621). Don't be put off by the Orchestra/Chorus label: this stuff not only has class, it really rocks! What a pity The Ventures did not turn their hand as well to Hefti's ‘Batman Chase’, a zippier version of the main theme with a

virtuoso organ display which would surely have excited the admiration of Ms Freeman!

The Marketts (cf. under OUT OF LIMITS, entry [64/1]) were a Hollywood session band that included such luminaries as Tommy Tedesco (guitar), Hal Blaine (drums) and Carol Kaye (bass). Their set of a dozen numbers, marketed as *The Batman Theme* (Warner Bros WS 1642) and penned in the main by Dick Glasser, can be summed up in a word: junk. Here is why. They exploit the fundamental Hefti Batman riff mercilessly at every turn, derivative spy-flick stylings filling up much of the residual space. The backing vocals are overdone (a horribly noisy rabble for the duration of the theme tune) and ludicrously inept anyway (just marvel at the infantile ‘Robin The Boy Wonder’). The special effects are feeble (the grandiose ‘Bat Cave’ with its occasional whirring noises is about as bat-flavoured as things get). The tunes and motifs are wildly inappropriate (why does ‘Bat Cape’ sound like a holiday advert for sunny Mexico?) or featureless aside from the unrelentingly loud and vulgar vocal interjections and bits of Chuck Berry sandwiched uncomfortably into ‘Batman (The Dance)’. The rich array of characters paraded before us — Robin, The Joker, The Penguin, The Riddler, The Cat Woman — for all the individuality they exhibit, may as well have been billed as Mickey Mouse every one of them. Fit only for the Batbin. Dave Burke⁵ takes an altogether different view of the set.

2 [66/14] ZOCKO!

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

It was part of the unashamedly tongue-in-cheek approach to the fictional hero in the TV series that exclamations like Wham! Biff! Pow! Zocko! whizzed as starbursts across the screen in fight scenes. This number has often been compared to ‘Drums A Go-Go’. It doesn’t seem at all comparable to me, but in any case it is pointless to set ZOCKO! beside normal, rational musical expression when it clearly cultivates incongruous juxtapositions: a wild and restless Latin rhythm with a droning fuzz lead line laced with freakish, other-wordly noises scudding from one channel to another (an organ seems to have been hijacked here for some of them at least). It is a sort of *Come Dancing* in overdrive hosted in the Batcave with its colony of noisily echo-locating winged creatures!

3 [66/15] JOKER’S WILD

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

A theme tune for a spy film? It sounds rather like that — dark and forbidding, dotted with bursts of maniacal laughter from Don Wilson, and the chorus of oohs and similar from the female backing singers reinforce that impression. Yes, of course, this is the evil villain The Joker, out to harm everything and anybody, especially the hero, so the tune fits the type quite well. And The Joker sported a set of cards too, hence the title.

4 [66/16] THE CAPE

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

Batman’s costume makes Darth Vader look pitifully underdressed. The title alludes to what no self-respecting Caped Crusader with a soft spot for chiroptera could be without, the black cape with its scalloped hem. Often pictured as imposingly long and flowing, as a bonus it could be made to fan out when he wished to put a point strongly. The number proves to be as oddball as its title’s point of reference. “In essence ‘The Cape’ is just a slowed down version of the ‘Tequila’ rhythm, two bass

notes and an answering phrase, plus the sound of billiard balls being ground together!” exclaimed Dave Burke⁶, who sees this an example of how The Ventures could “ingeniously conjure up extraordinary atmospheres with just the most limited of ingredients”. He notes elsewhere on the authority of Joe Saraceno that the sound of colliding pool balls was taken from a sounds effect record, and adds this observation: “Sound effects expert Paul Beaver was on these sessions ... I think it far more likely that he was responsible for a lot of the unusual sounds on this LP. As I recall Joe [in interview] was a tad uncertain about some of the specifics”.

It is certainly a striking number. An unsettling, dissonant air is generated by the interplay of the growling, low register lead lines and the organ: the tone of the latter is eerily piping, the line-ends melt away in quivering discord. As for the clattering pool balls, they must be meant to ape the flutter of bats in agitated flight.

5 [66/17] 00-711

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

The title recalls the James Bond Agent 007 tag, though that may not be all there is to it. DB notes: “I’ve always thought the title was a joke on the well-known 7–Eleven convenience stores which were commonplace in the US”. This was the B-side of a charting US single, see entry [66/77S], SECRET AGENT MAN. The style broadly resembles that of the third track, but it lacks the Batman connotations and is lighter in tone, with a treble-soaked guitar ringing out at intervals and carried on into the background to serve as a foil for a deeply resonant melody which has something of a Cossack flavouring.

6 [66/18] THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

(Jerry Goldsmith)

The prolific and versatile Jerry Goldsmith was the earliest in a line of composers who provided scores for the popular NBC TV espionage series screened from 1964 through to 1968. The programme was very arty, and in line with that his own version of the main theme was a flamboyant affair in 5/4 time, with a restless stop-start rhythm and strident brass. The Ventures deal with it much more straightforwardly. After a punchy start (no attempt is made to mimic the lengthy, contrived intro), the focus is on the melody. Nokie Edwards introduces an array of textures — twangy, deep-toned, richly vibratoed — soon complemented by organ then chanting chorus, with a xylophone/vibraphone adding some vibrancy to the overall production, which is very stylish in the manner of many of the group’s ‘theme’ pieces. For more on this composition see Barry Spence in *Pipeline* 73⁷, who however offers an analysis that differs in some respects from that offered above.

7 [66/19] SECRET AGENT MAN

Album Version

(Phil (PF) Sloan/ Steve Barri)

Danger Man starring Patrick McGoochan was a UK-made TV series but its second and third seasons from 1964 to 1966 found their way on to the American small screen under the title of *Secret Agent*. ‘Secret Agent Man’ by Johnny Rivers, another of those immensely popular Stateside singers who meant absolutely nothing in the UK, was the number used for the American opening titles. In January 1966 The Ventures put out an instrumental cut recorded the previous December and made #54 in March (see entry [66/77S]), the month the *Batman* set was released. Soon after that, the Rivers’

version hit the shops. It soared to #3 in April 1966, effectively stopping The Ventures in their tracks (further details in Dave Burke, *Pipeline* 558).

The Rivers' vocal is often commended for its striking "duelling guitars" (there is a stylish solo break too). The Ventures, who do not diverge overmuch from the original's arrangement, deploy two leads in a twangy workout enlivened in this album version by exceptionally hearty backing vocals, with a switch to the Mosrite's resonant low registers to fashion the centrepiece (1:02). The single version in contrast dispensed with the female vocal element, and in consequence projected a much crisper, better focused sound overall. The *In The Vaults Vol.3* annotators add to the core lineup Jimmy Bryant (guitar) and Frank DeVito (percussion).

8 [66/20] HOT LINE

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

This is on the face of it a driving organ opus diversified by a scorching solo from Nokie building to a thrusting crescendo. But there is more to it than that: the right channel is largely devoted to the activities of Don Wilson, whose chittering rhythm and tik-tik effects conjure up a sonic environment akin to that of the Batcave. Then there is the ringing coupled with snatches of morse-code. The 1966 TV series had Batman's cave equipped with all manner of aids for making life in the Batlane more bearable, a Bat-Drinking-Water-Dispenser for instance, and also a Batphone, his so-called *hot line* connecting the mayor of Gotham City's office to his desk. Housed under a cake-dome, it was red with a blinking light and a beep, with (of course) a Morse-Bat-Code facility.

9 [66/21] VAMPCAMP

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

At least as atmospheric in its evocation of unrelenting malevolence as [65/42] THE SWINGING CREEPER, the title may harbour an illusion to the 'camp' element — precisely the term loudly trumpeted at the time — that was the single most distinguishing feature of Batman's latest incarnation in the relatively short-lived TV series that occasioned this release. 'Vamp-' is catered for in the multiplicity of simulated bat cries which intensify towards the close, allied to the gruesome representation in sound of what I take to be bloodsucking at 0:48 and elsewhere. The theremin (see on track 1) is obviously being worked very hard, with a xylophone/vibraphone deployed once again in the later stages, this time underlining the tune's measured, inexorable advance. Visit the bloodless Marketts if you dare after imbibing this number.

10 [66/22] UP, UP AND AWAY

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

A year ahead of the identically titled Jimmy Webb song which was a hit for The 5th Dimension half way through 1967, the reference is to one of the DC Comics tags, voiced most often by Superman but on occasion by Batman, who was definitely more of a swinger and not averse to the odd burst of aerial flight with the help of a customised Batrope. Although the piece boasts some tight ensemble playing and diverting individual touches — conventional rhythm interspersed with punchy tapping on muted single strings, a piping organ accompaniment — it is prefaced by infantile cries heralding a jolly romp laced with exaggeratedly clattering percussion and tinged with the stirring strains associated with the Western, about as camp as the TV series that inspired much of this album.

11 [66/23] GET SMART THEME

(Irving Szathmary)

This is the main theme for the riotously funny US TV series about an incompetent spy played by Don Adams ("Sorry about that, Chief"), which ran from 1965 to 1969. Szathmary's presentation was perfectly suited to the trail of mayhem invariably generated by the West's most persistent and proficient bungler: a cacophonous mélange of brass with an irritatingly frantic bombinating accompaniment, the sound of screeching tyres and other unmusical effects thrown in for good measure. The Ventures transform it into a regular beat instrumental, a real stomper in fact, still firmly within the bounds of the spy genre, a dramatic sounding piece with sonorous fuzz guitar and, in the second half, delightfully earnest chanting in the style of the Red Army (Women's) Choir.

12 [66/24] GREEN HORNET '66

(Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov,

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

We have been in the presence of R-K's celebrated mimetic work of art before, but in twist mode (see entry [62/12] BUMBLE BEE TWIST, LP *Twist With The Ventures*). Nokie Edwards makes a sterling job of representing the sustained drone generated by these creatures' wings, his lead lines fronting a brisk, atmospheric rendition in 'spy-flick' style, with female vocalists brought in halfway through, whether to provide backround harmonies or to sing in unison with the melody. Don Wilson's rhythm is especially invigorating in this stylish closing track.

The number was recorded by the group in the hope that it might be adopted for a projected TV series about The Green Hornet (the green variety of the insect world is reputed to put its potent sting to good use against aggressors), a none-of-this-camp-nonsense crime-fighting hero instantly recognisable from his fetching combination of black mask and trilby. The series proved to be short-lived: first aired in September 1966, it did not survive beyond 1967. In fact, Billy May stepped in to compose the rumbustious wind-dominated main theme for the programme which in its turn was covered by The Ventures at Joe Saraceno's instigation in a single released a month before the TV series started, [66/81S] GREEN HORNET THEME — an excitingly motoric, pounding guitar-led imitation with the entire group firing on all cylinders, in the best Ventures' tradition of making other people's theme music their own. This is one number where the girl chorus really enters into the swing of things.

March 1966 (Japan) Live 2LP

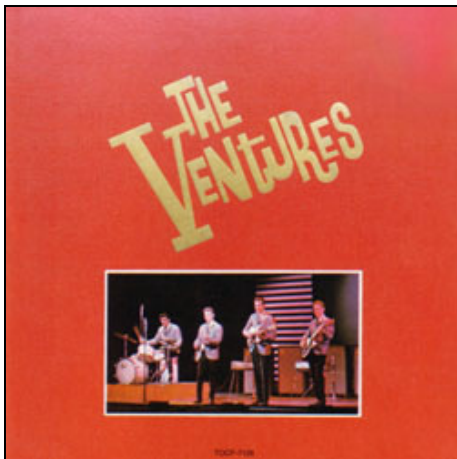
All About The Ventures Live

Liberty LP7462/7463 Stereo

1 [66/25L] THE CRUEL SEA ||| 2 [66/26L] PENETRATION ||| 3 [66/27L] BULLDOG* ||| 4 [66/28L] I FEEL FINE ||| 5 [66/29L] THE HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN ||| 6 [66/30L] OUT OF LIMITS ||| 7 [66/31L] SLAUGHTER ON TENTH AVENUE* ||| 8 [66/32L] BESAME MUCHO TWIST ||| 9 [66/33L] LOVE POTION NO.9 ||| 10 [66/34L] JOURNEY TO THE STARS** ||| 11 [66/35L] WHEN YOU WALK IN THE ROOM ||| 12 [66/36L] WALK DON'T RUN '64* ||| 13 [66/37L] RAP CITY ||| 14 [66/38L] WIPE OUT* ||| 15 Medley [66/39L] WALK, DON'T RUN : PERFDIA : LULLABY OF THE LEAVES* ||| 16 [66/40L] THE LONELY BULL ||| 17 [66/41L] TELSTAR ||| 18 [66/42L] MARINER NO.4 ||| 19 [66/43L] DRIVING GUITARS* ||| 20 [66/44L] APACHE*

||| 21 [66/45L] YELLOW JACKET** ||| 22 [66/46L] PIPELINE* ||| 23 [66/47L] SURF RIDER ||| 24 [66/48L] BUMBLE BEE TWIST* ||| 25 [66/49L] DIAMOND HEAD ||| 26 [66/50L] CARAVAN*

Consult the comments on the *In Japan* (*) and *On Stage* (**) sets from 1965 for the twelve numbers asterisked above.



Also released in Japan to complement this bumper double LP (made of translucent red vinyl housed in a sturdy hinged box with a handsome photo-packed booklet, pictured first above; record front cover shot pictured second) was an edited down version (fifteen tracks in all) titled *The Ventures In Japan Vol.2* (pictured third), conveniently made available on the See For Miles CD coupled with *The Ventures In Japan* from April 1965 (pictured fourth), but disregarded in the present survey, where the running order of the original vinyl double is followed. On a remixed 1995 EMI CD (pictured fifth) *Live In Japan '65* (which regrettably favours the drums at the expense of lead guitar), the order, purporting to represent the order of performance, is slightly different. (The LPs actually present an amalgam of two concerts in Tokyo's Kosei Nenkin Hall from July 1965, not March, see Halterman 127; note however that **BESAME MUCHO** and **JOURNEY TO THE STARS** are taken on board, not excluded as he reports.) Also included on the CD, between [66/42L] **MARINER NO.4** and [66/45L] **YELLOW JACKET**, is a rendition of [66/85L/U] **THE PINK PANTHER THEME**, only released in 1992 in a Ventures Live Box, see the relevant entry.

With this ample programme we are given the opportunity to sample a number of live renditions not just of tunes that were fast becoming standard Ventures concert fare but also some of the more recent chart material covered by the group on their recent studio albums. The single most striking aspect of the set is the astonishingly breakneck speed with which most of the numbers are taken in comparison not just with the corresponding studio cuts — some of which can seem almost tame when you go back to them after listening to this set — but even with the habitual trademark non-nonsense briskness on stage, so much so that one or two numbers veer dangerously close to running out of control. The effect can be exhilarating, but equally it is evident that Bob Bogle's bass playing is sometimes under strain — in the words of one listener it seems "rather unorthodox". Perhaps (though AT considers this "most unlikely") the group had been forewarned on this occasion that a double album with lots of tracks was on the cards and were told to deal expeditiously with the agreed programme, since Japanese record companies were always reluctant to pack too much into vinyl microgrooves — who knows? It seems that the set has attracted unanimous praise among reviewers, but, given the hectic pace of it all, a more sober assessment might conclude that, exciting as it is, there were superior Ventures live sets on offer in the 60s — as we shall see presently.

The opener is a racing version of **THE CRUEL SEA**, a number that had been featured on the August 1964 LP *The Fabulous Ventures* [64/16]; it had also been released as an A-Single in Japan. It is undeniably exciting stuff and Don Wilson puts in a powerhouse performance, but it is also expressionless: the menacing atmosphere of the studio version is lost, and it is hard to resist the impression of speed for speed's sake.

The frantic pace is sustained in the live version of **PENETRATION** from the *In Space* album of January 1964, entry [64/8] (and another Japanese A-Single; coupled with [64/1] **OUT OF LIMITS**, see below). The result is rather better — here it is less of a spacey number and more of a riff-laden belter in surfing mode, Don Wilson and Bob Bogle working well together to provide a naggingly pattering accompaniment to Nokie's fluid lead lines.

The Ventures covered a Beatles' song for the first time on the *Knock Me Out!* album from February 1965 [65/1], and turned John Lennon's **I FEEL FINE** into a twangy,

punchy slab of RI. The number is muscular enough to sustain the increased tempo deployed onstage, with deft licks from Nokie providing a winning alternative to the clever dual lead patterns of the studio version. A punchy performance all round in fact.

Japan naturally enough took to The Animals' mega-hit **THE HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN** from the October 1964 album *Walk, Don't Run Vol.2* [64/25] (and the flipside of the Japanese hit [64/26] **DIAMOND HEAD**). This was a stellar performance from the group with top-drawer organ support. The latter is lacking in this *All About* set, so for Nokie the way was clear to go to town on the intense and convoluted improvising of the studio cut. One further live version was released before the decade was spent, with Gerry McGee on lead, on the *In Tokyo '68* set, where an organ was to hand. But neither that, with its school concert styled solo spot, nor the plummy and indeed laboured lead guitar lines (under-rehearsed?) encourage repeated listenings.

A second number culled from the *In Space* set [64/1] is **OUT OF LIMITS**, here taken at a brisker pace and of course lacking the stirring organ contribution. This is another conspicuous example of guitar pyrotechnics supplanting the evocation of atmosphere, so forget about eeriness or unease and lap up a dynamic ensemble performance, with rhythm and bass once again energetically contributing to the tremendous drive (listen in particular to the synergy displayed at 1:25).

Next up is a tune billed as **BESAME MUCHO TWIST**, which had appeared, as just [62/16] **BESAME MUCHO**, on the May 1962 LP *Twist Party Vol.2*. That was a pretty sedate twist workout; the audience at the Kosei Nenkin Hall was regaled with an uninhibited hell-for-leather dash with the entire group firing on all cylinders, some considerable distance removed from the "romantic melody" announced by the compère!

A fuzz-laden **LOVE POTION NO.9** had put in an appearance on the 1965 album *Knock Me Out!* [65/2]. No fuzz onstage, but plenty of tricky embellishments from wizard Nokie, who is clearly determined to leave no nook or cranny unoccupied, with the remaining players mirroring and even accentuating the slam of the studio cut.

From the same 1965 album [65/6], **WHEN YOU WALK IN THE ROOM** with its knockout melody was a real natural for live treatment. Again, no fuzz but a wonderful fruity twang and lots of elaborate licks from Nokie supported by colleagues who by this stage of the concert were really beginning to motor, as only The Ventures in the sphere of RI sixties-style knew how. Wonderful.

RAP CITY was another outstanding piece on the album *Walk, Don't Run Vol.2* [64/29] (also the B-side of the Japanese hit single [65/8] **SLAUGHTER ...**). The live outing unsurprisingly sets Brahms in the really fast lane and comes close to slapping a dangerous driving ticket on him in the process. There are effortlessly flowing lead lines from Nokie Edwards (though his tone is markedly astringent when set beside the resonance of the single) and some pulsating rapid-fire rhythm work from Don Wilson.

The *Play Telstar* album from January 1963 featured the Herb Alpert hit **THE LONELY BULL** [63/2] whose elaborate arrangement was followed quite closely. Here though we are in jaunty four-piece guitar instro territory: forget the atmosphere of the ring, concentrate on the beat, savour Nokie's deft fingerwork, the invigorating crispness of that rhythm guitar, and note a rare snatch of a group member (Don Wilson almost certainly) giving expression to his own elation when things hot up (1:50 and thereabouts).

TELSTAR itself (cf. [63/1]) follows on naturally, one of two onstage examples from this decade of what would become a very popular and much savoured number in

the group's everflowing stream of concerts in the years to come. No organ is featured in *All About*, but the quartet has no problem whatever in generating an ample soundstage and a rollercoaster ride. Taken at a fair lick, the fulsome slightly vibratoed lead guitar varied with a piercing treble setting, the slashing rhythm guitar, the pounding bass and the robust percussion conspire to produce something of a blockbuster. It makes the original classic sound so wan. The same cannot be said for the effort on *In Tokyo '68*. It has an organ, but that is as muffled and ill-focused as the rest thanks to the sound recordists — a pity, as it was plainly delivered with a kick and seems to have gone down well on the day.

Yet another representative from the *Knock Me Out!* album [65/5], TELSTAR's close relative **MARINER NO.4** is the next on the playlist. Delivered at speed and divested of the organ and therefore screened to a great extent from overclose comparison with its illustrious source of inspiration, this comes over as a forceful guitar-led intro with the Wilson/Bogle partnership providing strenuous support — if only the lead guitar sound had been less wiry though.

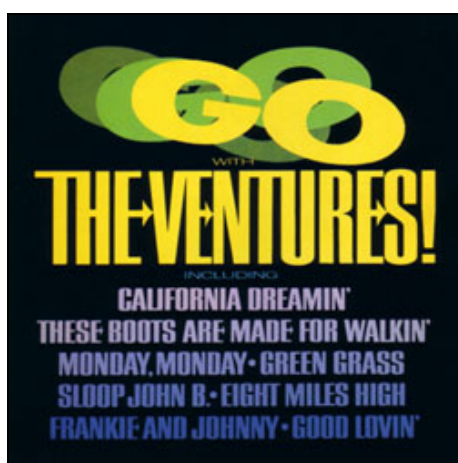
SURF RIDER was one of the standout numbers on the May 1963 *Surfing* album (formerly SPUDNIK: [62/36]). This live version offers an altogether rougher ride which does not impress everyone (see Keith Shaw in *Ventures Resurgence* 56⁹): the studio cut possessed a certain *gravitas* which vanishes here with an upping of the tempo, elaborate ornamentation from Nokie, stabbing rhythm guitar, and an overall brashness.

DIAMOND HEAD, another from *Walk, Don't Run Vol.2* [64/26], was a hit single in Japan. This is one that actually benefits from the frenetic pace adopted for the two live performances released in the 60s (also on the *Live Again* set from January 1968, the slicker of them), since the bustling soundstage, Don Wilson's constantly hammering accompaniment in particular, renders the gimmicky 'bird whistle' effect less obtrusive and not quite so contrived-sounding.

June 1966 LP

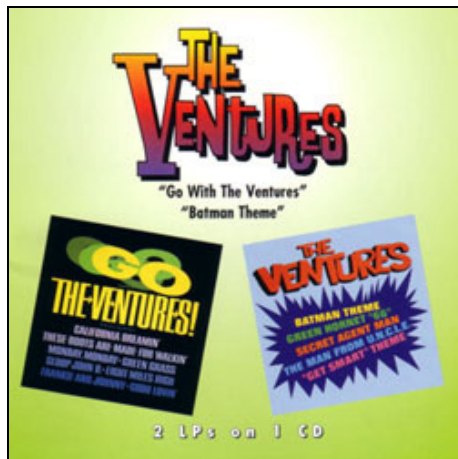
Go With The Ventures

Dolton BST 8045 Stereo/ BLP 2045 Mono

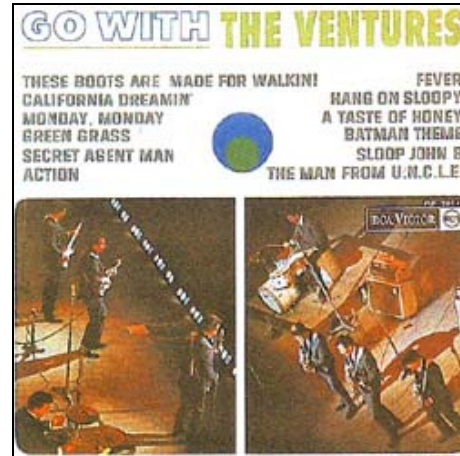


By 1966 the home market was beginning to assert itself vigorously once again in the face of the incursion of UK artistes. In fact, The Ventures' previous two 1966 albums had marginalised them, and the tendency is continued with this new one, with only one hit song written in Britain (but carried into the best sellers by an American act),

and, in the case of the fourth track, a borrowing from The Kinks in a maladroitness effort to rock up a native traditional tune. Eight of the numbers in the set, diverse in style and Venturised with varying degrees of success, were inspired by recent or very recent hit parade material: Gary Lewis & The Playboys, Nancy Sinatra, The Mamas & The Papas (two songs), The Young Rascals, The Byrds, The Beach Boys, with FRANKIE & JOHNNY recently aired by Elvis Presley. The remaining tracks, one of which made widely available for the very first time a studio recording of a Japanese-related piece, were group compositions, supplemented by one stemming from close associate Danny Hamilton.



The album peaked at #39 and was 25 weeks on chart; Larry Knechtel is on keys.



<<<<CHOICE CUTS>>>>

The scintillating **GINZA LIGHTS** provided a foretaste of some of the delights recorded for the Japanese market (it was released there as a single in July), while **GO** showed how brilliant riffs can be given a refreshing facelift. Of the covers, **CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'** is beautifully arranged and sensitively performed.

1 [66/51] **GREEN GRASS**

(Roger Greenaway/ Roger Cook)

The composers of this lightweight ditty, nowhere near the quality of the best of Greenaway/Cook collaborations, released a version themselves as David & Jonathan in 1967. The year before, Gary Lewis & The Playboys had taken it to #8 in the US

charts, its geniality and touchingly whimsical lyrics, savouring of simpler times (“While the bluebirds sing their magic song/ We will love the summer long”), suiting his style well. The Ventures turn in an agreeable enough version but it has a *Workers’ Playtime* air to it (though it was Roger Day’s theme tune on Radio Caroline, as DP recalls!), especially when those chirpy female backing vocalists make their presence felt. One would like to know who chose this one as an opener. On the musicians involved in this number (and EIGHT MILES HIGH) see pp.29–30 below.

2 [66/52] GINZA LIGHTS

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

Written for Japan and a huge hit there, the tune takes its title from the fabulous neon lights to be marvelled at in the Ginza district of Tokyo, home of the Sony Building and other monuments to Japanese enterprise. No wonder it caught on there: it is, aptly enough, a brightly lit composition, positively sparkling in fact, noble, stirring and performed *molto con brio*. According to Del Halterman¹⁰ Dennis Budimir is on harmonizing lead guitar, and there is remarkably energetic accompaniment from Wilson and Taylor, as usual located at either extremity of the stereo soundstage, while potent bass is fired from the centre ground with the leads. No wonder either that it has become a firm favourite with tribute bands and other RI outfits.

3 [66/53] THESE BOOTS ARE MADE FOR WALKIN’

(Lee Hazlewood)

It is a matter of some amazement to me that The Ventures’ account of this hit (a US/UK #1 in 1966, a smash internationally) has provoked cries of “predictably atrocious” (Dave Burke) and “crap” (Dave Peckett). I myself am no fan of Ms Sinatra (or of Mr Hazlewood, for that matter), but this number is rather special: the recurrent drone of the descending bass lines, the sting of the vividly projected closely-miked vocal, the progressive background build-up (0:56 then 1:41) as the singer piles on the scorn, the triumphalism of the ebullient outro. The Ventures arrange things differently. The distinctive drone is still there, but the percussive effects are more pronounced. At the original’s two key points identified above, it is not the accompaniment but the lead guitar that changes direction. At 0:54 there is a switch from a relatively straightforward representation of the melody to a much busier, convoluted, and above all jaunty style, while at 1:38 the focus is on the treble strings and the tone is clipped and more assertive still, heralding the brief but explosive fade.

4 [66/54] FRANKIE AND JOHNNY

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

The group’s interest was no doubt sparked by the film of this name starring Elvis Presley premiered on the last day of March 1966; his big band style version of the traditional song climbed to #25 early in May. The Kinks had enjoyed a US Top 10 placing in the last quarter of 1964 with ‘You Really Got Me’, and The Ventures graft its catchy riff on to the song, while enlisting the help of some hollering female backing vocalists. It was presumably meant to be a just a bit of fun, but the cocktail has proved unpalatable to just about everyone, and no wonder — it must be reckoned one of the most forgettable items in the group’s extensive corpus. A pity really, as the uptempo sequences swing nicely and could have been put to much better use.

5 [66/55] AD-VENTURE

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

There are more ad-venturous Ventures tracks than this, but it is certainly a splightly little piece. The emphasis is on sharp, stabbing riffs helped on their way by an energetic bass-line, with a short dramatic pause for breath at 0:50. It was perhaps conceived as a number in the 'spy flick' mould. An organ lurks in the background; a solo from that would have livened things up a bit.

6 [66/56] MONDAY, MONDAY

(John Phillips)

This is the highest achiever of all the singles released by The Mamas & The Papas, a chart-topper in the US in May 1966 (and a #3 in the UK). A pretty tune at best, its lyrics are trite and uninspired; it is the soaring harmonies, especially the two girls working on the lyrics in close conjunction with the two male singers, that are really distinctive. The Ventures' own female backing vocalists lack something in polish, and one wonders how much care was expended on their contribution, mainly concerned as they are with furnishing strings of la-las and other subsidiary fills, leaving the spotlight firmly on Nokie's lead lines. After the first minute or so everything begins to sound desperately relentless and unrelieved, so very cold and clinical in comparison with the Phillips piece that closes this album.

7 [66/57] GOOD LOVIN'

(Rudy Clark/ Art Resnick)

"Marvin Gaye's voice, Ray Charles' piano, Jimmy Smith's organ, Phil Spector's production and The Beatles' writing" was how Felix Cavaliere, frontman of The Young Rascals (later just The Rascals) saw his outfit. Looking back now, that assessment seems to be well within the bounds of self-delusion, but the group did have their moments, and though of relatively minor significance in the UK, they were big in America. Their brand of so-called 'blue eyed soul' took off in 1966, when they seized upon The Olympics' 'Good Lovin' of the year before and took it to #1. Creditable by American standards of the time in the broad 'beat group' genre, it is lively with powerful channel-hopping harmony vocals and translates well into instrumental form. The Ventures hammer their way through it with the usual tight ensemble performance (the rhythm guitar in particular is well projected), the girl vocalists chime in effectively, there is a nimble-fingered break from Nokie, and a brief but punchy organ solo reflecting the original but re-applying the trick mentioned above of spanning both left and right channels.

8 [66/58] EIGHT MILES HIGH

(Gene Clark/ Roger McGuinn/ David Crosby)

Of all the compositions so far sourced by The Ventures from the American songbook this futuristic piece, usually referenced from the *Fifth Dimension* album, is perhaps the most complex and definitely the most outlandish (the harder-edged single, a US #14/UK #24 in 1964, even more so). EIGHT MILES HIGH has given rise to endless debate and speculation, but it is clear enough that the strained, unsettling lyrics, employing imagery bordering on the xenophobic, are concerned with the bleak, alien nature of the plane's destination (London, unnamed) and the personal threat posed on arrival there (litigation against the group). As for the instrumentation, the writer of the BBC website *Sold On Song* has summed it up well: "Always open to diverse influences, McGuinn's memorable guitar lick was inspired by jazz saxophonist John

Coltrane's 'India', and his sparkling modal runs during the solos were a direct imitation of Coltrane's 'sheets of sound' style, perfectly reflecting the lyric's sense of dislocation and confusion. This is further enhanced by the chopping rhythm guitar and frantic drumming".

The Ventures simplify the structure drastically, so much so that the convolutions generated pretty well continuously by McGuinn's 12-string Rickenbacker are largely removed from the frame and the emphasis falls on tracing the melody, with only a couple of sustained bursts of intricate fingerwork erupting, a propos of nothing, from the left channel (1:35/ 2:27). There are sporadic dramatic flourishes, though not at the close — a seriously misjudged anti-climax taking the form of an uneventful fade of all things. It seems pointless to analyse further: all in all, this is a wan reflection of the edginess and drive of the original, though in truth it is hard to know what could have been done with something as off-the-wall as this. AT comments: "It needed a decent arrangement, this is very sparse — more guitars, some organ, a more positive lead line". DB takes a different view: "The Ventures pull it into much sharper focus, tightening the arrangement and cutting away the fat, and I love the way the main theme is carried by a reflective sweet-toned lead and then punctuated by dark, aggressive slashes. It fades on the climax which is entirely right".

9 [66/59] ESCAPE

(Danny Hamilton)

The occasional sputtering runs reminiscent of the classic 'Pipeline' (cf. [63/15]) presumably serve to underline the author's surf allegiances, but they rather undermine the drama of this twangy piece, whose tone suggests that it would be at home in one of those innocent agent on the run series or similar. It is an impressive piece nonetheless: the combination of pounding percussion and thudding bass lines builds tension and lends a sense of urgency, while an organ joins in for the later stages to provide added sonority.

10 [66/60] SLOOP JOHN B

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

The Beach Boys Meet The String-A-Longs seems a scary prospect to put it mildly. But meet they do, for the latter's 'Wheels' (cf. [61/14]) is used by The Ventures as the underpinning for another very recent hit, 'Sloop John B', which brought The Beach Boys a 1966 #3 (and UK #2). The latter lavished untold resources on a slight song that was ill equipped to take the weight, putting everything but the kitchen sink into the accompaniment (the usual guitars etc. including a 12-string, but also organ, glockenspiel, clarinet, flute, sax, maybe more). All the while, the song's stream of bitter complaints were delivered in tones more appropriate to a jolly sea shanty. The Ventures are very upbeat too (though the lead guitar at least does have a mordant edge to it), with a degree of cosy warmth imparted by the soothing vocal accompaniment. Eminently forgettable.

11 [66/61] GO

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

Take a riff or two from Chuck Berry, one of the best in the business, and go. There is nothing to fault here if tightly played twangy instrumentals are your bag. This is one in the same vein as [65/40] A GO-GO GUITAR from the year before, maybe not quite as electrifying but still infused with the spirit of the golden age of rock 'n' roll,

with a stylish organ solo, ultra-crisp rhythm accompaniment, and a nice groan from the bass slipped in at 0:48!

12 [66/62] CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'

(John Phillips)

This is the earlier of the two Mamas & Papas hits covered on this album (US #4 in March 1966; UK #23). In terms of expressiveness, atmosphere and vocal delivery it leaves MONDAY, MONDAY trailing. The tone is wistful, melancholy, the feeling of homesickness conveyed succinctly by images contrasting the safety and warmth of a place far away with present reality. The Ventures make no attempt to make their backing vocalists work with the lead guitar in the striking way in which the lush four-part harmonies are interlaced in the original. What they do capture is the mood of yearning: the tonality of the lead guitar and also the sweep of the soaring organ solo interface tellingly with the soft, lilting tones of the female chorus. Also reflected is the song's strong forward momentum (it is not by any means a passive lament: there is a dark suggestion that "I might leave today"), chiefly by Don Wilson's snappy and well-focused rhythm accompaniment but also by Mel Taylor's robust percussion. A winner.

September 1966 LP

Wild Things!

Dolton BST 8047 Stereo/ BLP 2047 Mono

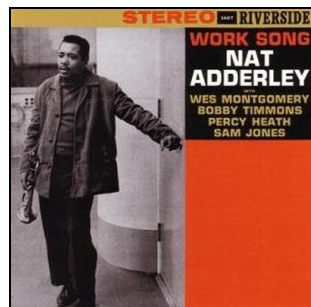


This is an album that appears to please most Ventures fans most of the time, the heavy application of fuzz considered a major attraction, and it certainly enjoyed respectable sales: it peaked at #33 and was 26 weeks on chart. It hardly marks anything approximating to a radical stylistic departure however: it has its fair share of punch and grittiness in the best Ventures manner, but certain of the descriptions bandied about by reviewers, such as “screaming” and “heavy metal”, seem themselves on the wild side. Evelyn Freeman is on keys once again; on additional personnel employed see p.30 below.

The concept of ‘wildness’ stemming from the Chip Taylor-penned smash hit is played upon in the matter of titles assigned to some forceful group compositions (tracks 2, 5, 8, 10, 11; cf. track 4 from associate Danny Hamilton). The rest of the music is chart-sourced, this time all from earlier in 1966. There are no fewer than three chart-toppers among the six chosen (HANKY PANKY, WILD THING, SUMMER IN THE CITY), these forming an unbroken run in the months of July and August. (The previous album had covered from this same year [66/53] THESE BOOTS ..., [66/57] GOOD LOVIN’ and [66/56] MONDAY, MONDAY; the next would take on board [67/19] I’M A BELIEVER.)

<<<<CHOICE CUTS>>>>

The spotlight deserves to be trained this time on three of the covers, for their pace and stylish arrangements: SWEET PEA, SUMMER IN THE CITY and THE PIED PIPER.



1 [66/63] WILD THING

(Chip Taylor)

So long as the song stayed in America, its country of origin, nothing much happened, as Jordan Christopher & The Wild Ones who recorded it in 1965 instantly passed into perpetual obscurity. It was when it arrived on English shores that Chip Taylor began to make his fortune (he wrote the sublimely melodious and sensitive ‘Angel Of The Morning’ within a year or two of one of the rawest, most basic pieces of the 60s, in a studiously controlled way that is: terms like proto-punk are misplaced). It was a #2 in the UK, where it came up against The Rolling Stones, but in May 1966 it climbed to the top of the American charts.

The Ventures put on an entertaining show: Reg Presley’s nasal innuendo-laden utterances are represented, partially at least, by Don Wilson in Peter Lorre mode (priceless!). That apart, there is twang galore, and an organ break, with no attempt to mimic the curiously incongruous Presley ocarina solo (an instrument that appeared famously, played by Arthur Smith, in the theme tune to the 1966 spaghetti western *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly*, but taken up before that, no doubt by virtue of its hoary antiquity and way-out design, by the folk revivalists of the 60s).

2 [66/64] FUZZY AND WILD

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

Stylistically akin to the brass-charged macho detective/law enforcement theme tunes in vogue at the time, though there is also an unrelenting starkness about the piece that would be at home in Gotham city. The hard stuff is represented by lashings of wild fuzz, rasping and in your face, but the highlight of this punchy track is the call and response patterning involving lead guitar and a very funky organ, served up twice to good effect (0:47/ 1:30).

3 [66/65] SWEET PEA

(Tommy Roe)

Tommy Roe is often portrayed condescendingly, by people who have never written very catchy songs themselves, as one of the composers/performers who foreshadowed the 'bubblegum' genre a couple of years further on. But there is bubblegum and bubblegum, and if there is any truth in this evaluation it has to be said that he is to be compared with its more able proponents. SWEET PEA (a US #8 in 1966) is in fact well named: it is as appealing as the fragrance of the flower, but also tuneful and effervescent, given a real lift by spare but beautifully judged support from guitar, organ and percussion. The Ventures capture all these attributes admirably, providing punch but not imparting an inappropriately hard edge to the music. Quite apart from the terrific twang of the Mosrite and the tight ensemble performance (with judicious organ accompaniment), they have really got the female backing vocalists licked into shape on this set — nowhere more effectively than here, where their insistent chanting gives the number added zip.

4 [66/66] WILD AND WOOLY

(Danny Hamilton)

The expression 'wild and wool(l)y', which has its origins in the American 'Wild West', means lawless, unruly, ungovernable. This is in keeping with the styling, a steamrollering, macho-sounding piece exuding self-confidence: mark the harsh metallic tone of the lead guitar, the aggressive bursts of drumming, the jaunty organ passage, and last but not least (suggesting unstoppableity?) the thrusting, highly repetitive and unnervingly protracted sequence of 1:06 through to 1:25.

5 [66/67] WILD CHILD

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

A divertingly different take on the idea of throwing fuzz at the listener until it hurts. This time the deep-throated fuzz is provided from the rhythm guitarist in something approximating to an inverted [65/35] LOUIE LOUIE pattern, coupled at one point with a growling, slowed down version of the 'You Really Got Me' riff, all this complementing an acerbic lead guitar pushing out batteries of quick-fire licks. English hip-hop exponents The Wiseguys sampled the main riff and some fragments on their 1999 single 'Start The Commotion' which appeared in Mitsubishi adverts.

6 [66/68] SUMMER IN THE CITY

(John Sebastian/ Mark Sebastian/ Steve Boone)

One of the most striking songs of the 60s. The Lovin' Spoonful had a US chart-topper with it in 1966 (it only made #8 in the UK). Its main theme is the oppressive urban daytime heat, from which the hours of darkness afford some relief. The Ventures dutifully reproduce the atmospheric traffic noise, though not that awesomely booming

drum sound devised by engineer Roy Halee and carried over into Simon & Garfunkel's *Bookends* set. To accentuate the notions of discomfort and disorientation the song is delivered in clipped tones and with a fevered intensity, well reflected in the driving pace of The Ventures' version which has effective backup in the form of an insistent-sounding female chorus in almost constant attendance.

7 [66/69] THE PIED PIPER

(Artie Kornfeld/ Steve Duboff)

Crispian St Peters was so astonishingly boastful and given to slag off fellow artists from Elvis and The Beatles downwards that he threw away a promising career. That is most likely why the body of material he recorded in the 60s with backing from such accomplished sessioners as Jimmy Page, Big Jim Sullivan and Vic Flick, many of them beautifully crafted pop songs, was largely ignored — all save three, two of which, both American-sourced, were very big sellers. THE PIED PIPER was originally written and recorded by the American singer/songwriting duo of Kornfeld and Duboff: calling themselves The Changin' Times, they released it as a single on the Philips label in late 1965. The record became a minor West Coast hit, but only made it to #87 nationally. For St Peters though it turned out to be a UK #5/USA #4 in 1966. It is truly Best Of British —immensely catchy, astutely arranged with telling tempo changes, attractive flute ornamentation, beguilingly repetitious lyrics and a powerful forward momentum. The Ventures do it proud, turning in a splendidly dynamic performance with sparkling playing from the entire group, the four principals plus the by now expected organ, so skilfully deployed. Nokie's guitar sound is delightfully vibrant and just after a minute and a half he comes up with some tricky embellishments, but alas scope for a virtuoso display is restricted as the number is faded at under the two minute mark. But what an outro! As GW notes, Don Wilson recorded a vocal version of this stellar piece for release on a Japanese single in 1966.

8 [66/70] WILD TRIP

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

A basic 12-bar structure, but an inventive arrangement and ear-catching cocktail of sound make this mid-tempo piece that bit unusual. The mean, twangy lead guitar, treated to an occasional flamboyant tug of the tremolo arm, is supported by non-stop tom-toms producing an irrepressibly bouncy, staccato rhythm, well described by Dave Peckett as "a semi Bo Diddley beat". There are vibes too, and a whistling (!) organ break, all too brief but very stylish.

9 [66/71] HANKY PANKY

(Jeff Barry/ Ellie Greenwich)

"It wasn't written to be a song, just a B-side" declared Jeff Barry with disarming candour. His group The Raindrops recorded it as just that in 1963. Tommy James & The Shondells issued their version that same year, ad-libbing in the wake of an imperfect recollection of the lyrics; when it was re-released in 1966 it shot to US #1 and James got together some Shondells with fresh faces to capitalise on his success. Atrocious lyrics aside, the production is about as refined as a Palaeolithic axe-head (James did get better). The Ventures offer it up as a bouncy instrumental, enlivened by a disciplined-sounding girlie chorus and catering for hardline RI fans with a typically nimble-fingered Nokie solo break and a swinging organ passage with neat vocal trimmings and vigorous percussive support.

10 [66/72] WILD CAT

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

Strongly redolent as it starts up of a style of music-making belonging to the 50s, a decade that was sounding increasingly remote from the sounds of the day, this is a strutting piece which develops into something of a stomper and ends up sounding fresh as a daisy. It boasts a breezy organ solo, and vibes too lend some colour to the stark contours of the guitar line.

11 [66/73] HOW NOW WILD COW

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

The dynamics of the intro with this particular conformation of pounding drums picked up by heavily strummed guitar might suggest that a Johnny Otis or Buddy Holly type opus is on its way, but we are rapidly into a country-styled knees-up, much like The Shadows' 'Cotton Pickin' from 1965. Perhaps as a sign of the times (pop turning now in more sophisticated directions), there are none of the whoops or other expressions of glee that crop up regularly in this kind of environment. As it is, we have a tight, flowing piece propelled by Don Wilson's razor-sharp banjo-like rhythm, and rollicking percussion, with a thudding bass helping to maintain a rock-steady beat. Nokie Edwards must have felt in his element here, and he delivers the twang in fine style.

12 [66/74] THE WORK SONG

(Nat Adderley/ Oscar Brown Jr)

Cornetist Adderley's original version from 1960 is an elegant affair, with measured call and response patterns meticulously set out. Herb Alpert took it up and climbed to #18 with it in 1966: it is much less formal and much much zippier, and it is this that serves as The Ventures' model. Predictably, our heroes are brisker still, and tighter and punchier by far. Vibraphone (continuously) and organ (in the second half) provide extra pep and colour.

1966 FURTHER TRACKS

January 1966 Single (Japan), Liberty LR 1500

[66/75S] KIMI TO ITSUMADEMO

[66/76S] YOZORA NO HOSHI

(Kosaku Dan)



KIMI ... and [67/47] GIN-IRO NO MICHU were served up by The Shadows on a Japan-only LP in November 1967; for extensive background to these consult *A Pocket Guide To Shadow Music*, pp.200ff. The Shadows were beaten to the post with both, though only just in the case of the latter, which was put on sale on a Ventures LP in Japan the very month The Shadows were touring there. (In fact if they were listening they would have heard the originators performing it as a vocal: The Wild Ones, who were a support act on their tour.) In any event, the demos that came subsequently to EMI's UK HQ (The Shadows recorded these numbers in the second half of July) may well have been the same as those used by The Ventures, cf. on [68/22] BOMBAY DUCK.

An automatic choice for The Ventures, KIMI TO ITSUMADEMO was a composition of Ventures addict and promoter Yuzo Kayama (*aka* Kosaku Dan), in Japan itself a mega-hit vocal by him in 1965 and into 1966. For many, perhaps most, this would count as Hank Marvin's most effective performance among the 1967 Japanese numbers essayed by the group, as he caresses his way with little or no embellishment through a captivating melody, attracting spare and elegant support from the rest. The Ventures' version has a much more pronounced lilt, also in evidence on the earliest concert rendition, issued on the January 1967 Japanese LP *On Stage Encore!* (see [67/8L]), while the organ accompaniment lends a breezy spaciousness to the soundstage. A stereo version released on the 1999 2CD (Japan) *Pops In Japan/ Pops In Japan Vol. 2* allows the rich textures to shine through even more radiantly, and a female vocal chorus provides extra colour.

The flipside too is one of the most admired Japanese pieces recorded by The Ventures, with good reason. With its "storming surf drive", in Gerry Woodage's words, it is as good an example as any of The Ventures' pre-eminence in the field of high-powered RI — crashing chords, an exhilarating deep-toned guitar break at 0:59 in the wake of all the piercing treble twang, and one of the most telling organ contributions in their entire repertoire. Both tracks are conveniently available on the 1998 Disky CD (Holland) *Pops In Japan*.

January 1966 A-Single, Dolton 316

[66/77S] SECRET AGENT MAN

Single Version

(P [Phil] F Sloan/ Steve Barri)

See above, entry [66/19] for this #54 single (B-side: [66/17] 00-711). The track is conveniently available on the 1996 EMI CD *TeleVentures*.

June 1966 Single, Dolton 320

[66/78S] BLUE STAR

Alternative Version

(Victor Young/ Edward Hayman)

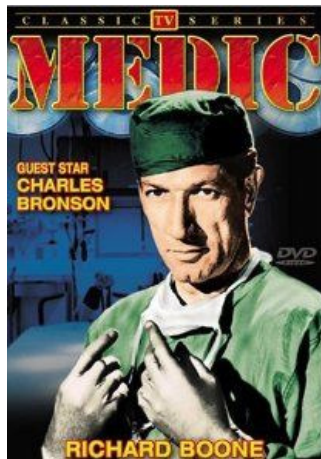
[66/79S] COMIN' HOME BABY

(Ben Tucker/ Bob Dorrough)

On the A-side, this furnished specially with delicate vocal overdubs, see entry [64/30] of October 1964 album *Walk, Don't Run Vol.2*.

'Comin' Home Baby' was a 1962 #6 for the remarkable Mel Tormé in an R&B arrangement by Claus Ogerman involving striking call and response sequences with female backing vocalists. Notable instrumental versions in differing styles followed in 1963 from Quincy Jones and Kai Winding. With The Ventures, it is high drama all the

way as they deploy the driving guitars technique reinforced by powerful vocal and organ support; there are background traces too of The Zombies' 'She's Not There' (cf. [65/9]). A splendid cut.



The two tracks are conveniently to hand on the 1997 CD *In The Vaults* (B-side) and the 2005 CD *In The Vaults Volume 3* (A-side).

July 1966 A-Single, Dolton 321
[66/80S] ARABESQUE
(Henry Mancini)

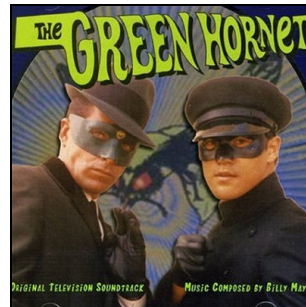


A bustling rendition of Mancini's theme tune for the 1966 spy thriller of this name starring Gregory Peck and Sophia Loren — too bustling, it has to be said, with the horribly cheesy backing vocals set against rasping guitar lines and becoming

inordinately intrusive. Mancini's own version is more stylish and very distinctive, indulging the composer's liking for out of the way instrumentation in big production pieces, in this case sitar and fuzz guitar. The track is conveniently available on the 1997 CD *In The Vaults*.

August 1966 A-Single, Dolton 323
[66/81S] **GREEN HORNET THEME**
(Billy May)

See entry [66/24]. Conveniently available on the 1997 CD *In The Vaults*.



December 1966 B-Single, Dolton 327
[66/82S] **KICKSTAND Single Version**

See entry [65/57EP].

December 1966 EP (Japan), Liberty 4204
[66/83EP] **BLUE SUNSET**
(Kosaku Dan)



Strictly 'Red Sunset' according to the Japanese title. A stylish, tuneful and atmospheric number, faintly oriental in texture. The lead lines, shimmering and deeply resonant by turns, evoke an aura of warmth and tranquillity, with ethereal-sounding female vocal support coming in late on but with great effectiveness at 1:40. Here we have a prime example of the many Japanese-sourced and Japanese-targeted compositions long denied to the majority of Ventures enthusiasts in North America and Europe. The number appeared initially on a Japanese EP then shortly after on an album bearing this title (Liberty LP 8056), both pictured above.

1966

POST-60s RELEASES

[66/84U] DICK TRACY

&

[66/85U] DICK TRACY

Extended Version

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

The famous comic-strip detective with the jutting jaw and nerves of steel made his mark in various media but was not especially successful on the small screen. William Dorrie, producer of the 1966 Batman series, produced a pilot for a TV series in 1967 but it was not well received. The Ventures had recorded a theme tune in November 1966 which lay in the vaults until July 1980, when it was issued in Japan on the 2LP *Rare Collection*, King K18 P12/13. It is certainly a cracker of an ensemble performance: think of the pace of [66/13] BATMAN THEME, the excitement of [69/19] HAWAII FIVE-0, and the mordancy of 'Goldfinger'. The track is conveniently available on the 1990 EMI CD *Walk, Don't Run (Legendary Masters)*. On the EMI *TeleVentures* CD of 1996 there appeared an extended version, of remarkable sonic clarity and slam, sporting a 45-second preamble — heady stuff indeed. For the details consult *Ventures Resurgence* 46¹¹.

[66/86U] ECHO

(Weld/ Heath/ Corona)

Rel.2007: CD *In The Vaults* 4/7

Recorded in August 1966, a cover of a 1963 single from The Vaqueros on Audition (one of a number of minor labels controlled and marketed by ABC-Paramount). It's an impressive addition to the catalogue, a driving piece performed with characteristic tightness and poise and notable for loud-ringing lead guitar, an authoritative bass-line and carefully crafted vocal backing that enlivens proceedings by surging to the fore for a brief spell midway.

[66/87L/U] THE PINK PANTHER THEME

Live Version

This track, a live rendition of a number that had appeared on the August 1964 LP *The Fabulous Ventures* [64/24], saw its first release in 1992, on the Japanese *The Ventures Live Box* (Liberty TOCP 7125-7128), and it was slotted into the 1995 US CD *Live In Japan '65* which contained material found on the Japanese 2LP *All About The Ventures Live*, see the entry under March 1966. This is an example of record companies scraping the barrel to satisfy the perceived appetites of the retro market. Nokie is badly out of tune, a circumstance not disguised by severe string-bending and what sound like diversionary fancy embellishments. The number must have been dropped like a hot brick when the 1966 album came to be pieced together. There seems no point in dwelling further on this aberration, save to say that on a better day it would have come across as engaging enough.

1966

DAVE'S VIEW FROM THE VAULTS

1

In November 1965 Don, Bob, Nokie and Mel recorded their fabulous arrangement of 'Nut Rocker' (known as 'Nutty') for the *Where The Action Is* LP, along with Evelyn Freeman, Frank DeVito and Julius Wechter. Work on the album stretched into December when the same team recorded 'Lies' and 'She's Just My Style'. Fascinatingly, around this time The Ventures also recorded a Shadows number, not an instrumental as you might have expected but one of Hank Marvin's vocal compositions. It makes it even more of a puzzle if I tell you that a later version of the tune was issued by The Ventures but nobody has ever realised its true origin. The track in question was based on The Shadows' 'I Want You To Want Me' (the flipside to 'Atlantis') and an early version is logged under that same title. You can hear The Ventures running through the number and thinking: what can we do with this? With many alterations and changes it eventually evolved into the group original 'Little Bit Of Action'. Try playing both the tracks alongside each other and you can hear the basic resemblance. As The Ventures presumably had a copy of The Shadows 45 it's a surprise that they did not take the opportunity of recording Jerry Lordan's outstandingly melodic 'Atlantis' at the same time.

2

In January 1966 Don, Bob, Nokie and Mel worked on 'Secret Agent Man' alongside Frank DeVito and Jimmy Bryant. Renowned country guitarist Bryant originally made his name during the fifties on Cliffie Stone's *Hometown Jamboree* show after being recruited by the programme's resident steel guitarist Speedy West, with whom he established a recording partnership for Capitol Records. Also in January 1966, Don, Mel and Nokie recorded 'Man From Uncle' with Evelyn Freeman, Frank DeVito and Julius Wechter. 'Batman' was also recorded in the same month with Nokie, Mel, Bob and Don joined by Evelyn Freeman, Frank DeVito, Victor Feldman and Paul Beaver. The latter was a jazz musician who had developed a reputation as a sound effects man, and he was doubtless responsible for some of the imaginative noises to be found scattered throughout the *Batman* LP. According to legend the album was written and recorded in just seven days. Engineer Bruce Botnik, who worked on this album as well as others by The Ventures, has commented: "It was nothing in those days to record two to four songs on a session. Like when I was doing The Ventures — to do an entire album in a double session, with live stereo and mono mixes, and the LP would be on the street within days".

3

The Ventures are sometimes fairly critical about Joe Saraceno as a producer, but it has to be said that the run of albums he produced from 1965 right through to the end of the decade were consistently excellent and amongst the band's very best work. It is also noticeable that all four of The Ventures were normally on the sessions and, as far as I can tell, there were none of the irregularities that Bob Reisdorff indulged in during their earlier years. *Go With The Ventures* is another typically good Saraceno production, perhaps not as dynamic as some of The Ventures' other albums from this period but solidly worthy nevertheless. Sessions began in April when Don, Bob, Mel and Nokie recorded 'Eight Miles High' and 'Green Grass' for the album. Along with them on both tracks were Julius Wechter, Dennis Budimir and Larry Knetchel.

Budimir was another accomplished guitarist who originally came from the jazz world, and he had recorded with Chico Hamilton, The Harry James Band, Bud Shank and also Peggy Lee. By contrast keyboard player and guitarist Knetchel came up with the rock generation and served his apprenticeship with Duane Eddy, later becoming a part of Phil Spector's Wrecking Crew as well as a founder member of Bread.

4

Recordings for the *Wild Things!* album were made during July 1966. Both the title track and 'Summer In The City' featured Mel, Don, Bob and Nokie along with Evelyn Freeman, Ron Anthony and Victor Feldman. The latter was a British born jazz musician who played drums, vibes, percussion and piano. He moved to the States in 1957 where he worked with Woody Herman and recorded with Benny Goodman, George Shearing, Cannonball Adderley and Miles Davis before branching out into rock music. Guitarist Ron Anthony was another jazzier who played with Frank Sinatra for eight years as well as George Shearing. There is a fascinating trio of recordings from the *Wild Things!* sessions which demonstrate perfectly how an original number took shape in the studio. The tune begins titled as 'Joe's Always Late' (presumably a reference to Joe Saraceno's tardiness), then as it progresses it becomes 'Something Old, New Wild' and finally 'Fuzzy And Wild' — the track we all know and love.

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|------|
| Title: 3TRK MASTER/PLAY GUITAR | | Format: 15 | 1/4 INCH - 3 TRACK AUDIOTAPE | |
| Artist: VEN00002-00-00 VENTURES, THE | | Status: 2 | SESSION TAPE | |
| Date Created: 1 / 2 / 1966 | | Origin: NOT ENTERED | | |
| IN Location | HZ-HZ-12-1-40-0004-4-01-09 | Iron Mountain # | 358134062 | |
| Studio | LIBERTY RECORDERS | Tracks on Format | 3 | |
| Side/Track/Track Title | Version | Timing | Master # | ISRC |
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| Notes: | | | | |
| 1 / 2 CALIFORNIA DREAMIN' | TAKE 11 | 00:02:33 0 | | |
| Notes: | | | | |
| 1 / 3 MONDAY MONDAY | TAKE 8 | 00:02:45 0 | | |
| Notes: | | | | |
| 1 / 4 GREEN GRASS | TAKE 7 | 00:02:00 0 | | |
| Notes: | | | | |
| 1 / 5 EIGHT MILES HIGH | TAKE 3 | 00:02:50 0 | | |
| Notes: | | | | |
| 1 / 6 FRANKIE & JOHNNY | TAKE 9 | 00:02:30 0 | | |
| Notes: | | | | |
| 1 / 7 ARABESQUE | TAKE 16 | 00:02:29 0 | | |
| Notes: | | | | |
| 1 / 8 LIKE YOU'VE NEVER | DON WILSON/TAKE 13 | 00:02:30 0 | | |
| Notes: | | | | |
| 1 / 9 ARABESQUE | 4 TRK/TAKE 3A | 00:02:29 0 | | |
| Notes: | | | | |
| 1 / 10 SOKY | GROUP O/D-TAKE 6A | 00:00:00 :0 | | |
| Notes: | | | | |
| 1 / 11 I WANT YOU TO WANT ME | BASIC/TAKE 17 | 00:02:21 0 | | |
| Notes: | | | | |
| 1 / 12 SOKY | TRACK/TAKE 32 | 00:00:00 :0 | | |
| Notes: | | | | |
| 1 / 13 WASHINGTON SQUARE | TAKE 10 | 00:01:59 0 | | |
| Notes: | | | | |

13:11

Sunset Sound Recorders JANUARY 31, 1966 15 IPS MAB
(MONO ORIG MSTR) MASTER REEL CONTROL FILE 5788 BRUCE BOWEN

Client: DOLTON RECORDS - "VENTURES/BATMAN" - REEL NO. BLP-2042-1/2

| MASTER No. | TITLE OR DESCRIPTION | TAKES AND TIMES |
|------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| BLP 2042-1 | SIDE ONE | |
| 1 | BATMAN THEME | 2:15 |
| 2 | ZOGKO | 1:55 |
| 3 | JOKEE'S WILD | 2:15 |
| 4 | THE CAFE | 2:20 |
| 5 | CO-711 | 2:14 |
| 6 | THE MAN FROM UNCLE | 1:47 |
| | 3 Second Speeds txc | 1:47 1:52 |
| BLP 2042-2 | SIDE TWO | |
| 1 | SECRET AGENT MAN | 2:04 |
| 2 | HOT LIFE | 2:10 |
| 3 | YAMP CAMP | 2:05 |
| 4 | UP, UP & AWAY | 2:04 |
| 5 | GET SMART | 2:24 |
| 6 | GREEN HORNET 'CG | 2:00 |
| | 3 Second Speeds txc | 1:45 1:47 1:52 |
| | AFTER NEW LEADER | NOT PART OF C/P |
| 1 | SECRET AGENT MAN | STEREO DOLBY 9/19/75 |
| | 3 Sec. Master | |

REFERENCES IN TEXT

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

- 1 VR 26 [1991] 6-7.
- 2 NGD 43 [1995] 19.
- 3 P 55 [2002] 14-16.
- 4 H134.
- 5 P 26 [1995] 64-65.
- 6 P 37 [1997] 32.
- 7 P 73 [2007] 25-26.
- 8 P 55 [2002] 16.
- 9 VR 56 [1999] 8.
- 10 H137.
- 11 VR 46 [1996] 23.