

#09: DON'T BUG ME BABY
(Leon Luallen/ Johnny Bragg)
1960



Cliff's energetic performance of *Don't Bug Me Baby* captured on camera during his variety debut at the Metropolitan in Edgware in November 1958.

This classic Milton Allen rocker goes to the very roots of Cliff's love of rock 'n' roll and was one of the earliest numbers he performed in 1958. Originally recorded at EMI's Abbey Road Studios on Friday 3 October 1958 it was planned to be Cliff's second single release that November. However, Norrie Paramor felt it was "too American in sound" and so opted instead for another Ian Samwell composition, *High Class Baby*, which had also been recorded the same day. The track lay dormant and unheard in EMI's archives for forty years until it was released on the 4CD *Rock 'n' Roll Years* set in 1997.

Cliff sang this song when he first formed The Drifters in mid-1958, and it also featured in his repertoire during his four week season at the Butlins Holiday Camp in Clacton, Essex, England during August 1958 – although it does not feature on the 9-track reel to reel recording which exists of one of the live shows.

Cliff also performed *Don't Bug Me Baby* together with *Move It!* on his debut television appearance on ABC TV's 'Oh Boy!' on Saturday 13 September 1958. Ian Samwell was on lead guitar and Terry Smart backed him on drums, with support as well from some musicians from the series resident band Lord Rockingham's XI. Unfortunately this historic performance was never captured on film or recorded for posterity.

When Cliff had formed the classic Drifters line-up (later The Shadows) of Hank Marvin, Bruce Welch, Jet Harris and Tony Meehan by November 1958, they soon began to deliver some blistering versions of their own rock 'n' roll favourites – and *Don't Bug Me Baby* was one of them.

He sang it at his variety debut at the Metropolitan Theatre in Edgware Road, London, for three weeks commencing on Monday 17 November 1958, together with other superlative rocking classics like *Baby I Don't Care*, *Summertime Blues*, *King Creole*, *High Class Baby* and of course *Move It!*

A dynamic version is featured on Cliff's debut live album in February 1959 and they also performed it live in Manchester on 11 April 1959 for BBC Radio's 'Saturday Club' broadcast on 18 April. The performance for Radio Luxembourg was cut during one of the early 1960 recording sessions and retains much of the raucous and edgy sound of the earlier broadcasts. This stands out as one of the superior tracks in the 'Me And My Shadows' shows – and captures a quality of sound, notably in Cliff's voice, which sadly escapes many of the official Columbia recordings. The sound quality of

the recording is only average however and does not do full justice to the song.

MC: Surely one of the 1959 RL broadcasts, just listen to the stabbing style and harsh tonality of that lead guitar, so redolent of the *Cliff* recordings, this number in particular!