

INTRODUCTION



Collections of Shadows' Radio Luxembourg recordings, both with and without Cliff Richard, have been in circulation from an early date, and continue to go the rounds in abundance, indeed in superabundance. Tapes made by fans have been transferred from reel-to-reel to compact cassette to compact disc with astonishing alacrity and regularity: surely a tidy sum of money must have been raked in over the years from those who deal in such commodities. Regrettably, though unsurprisingly, the unsystematic nature of the taping and dissemination of these recordings, allied to an almost complete absence of documentation for the first two series, has been a positive hindrance to forming a clear idea of what was broadcast and in what order. In fact, the gaps in our knowledge are enormous and, barring the discovery of some long hidden archive, largely unfillable.

Still, given the affection with which these programmes are recalled, however hazily, by fans of British RI in one of its most innovative and exciting periods, we have thought it worthwhile to look in some detail at The Shadows' material that has been rescued from oblivion. What we have done is rounded up from a variety of sources a fair number of representative examples of the tunes in question and have attempted to identify the legitimate contenders, to assess them as pieces of music, and set them in some sort of context. Sound quality (described in general terms in the Cliff & The Shadows web feature), is variable, ranging from the highly listenable (a clear minority) through tolerable to downright diabolical. Not surprisingly, there are good and there are bad specimens of the selfsame number going the rounds, whether because careful sonic tweaking has been applied in some cases but not in others, or because (more often, most certainly) we are dealing with tapings of the same broadcast by different individuals in widely diverse reception conditions — equipped, one might add, with a range of domestic recording equipment which is generally at the lower end of the price scale and consequently does not even begin to approximate to high fidelity. On top of all this, it is inevitable that the quality of an indeterminate proportion of the material will have gone from bad to worse over the decades, particularly when one bears in mind the numerous bugbears of compact cassette, notably incompatibilities between one deck and another arising from poor tape-head alignment and playback problems associated with Dolby B circuitry.

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