

## Guitar Adict:

## Philip Rundall



I'm now 71 years of age have been addicted to guitars since the age of 14, when I was misled by Bert Weedon into thinking that you can learn to play in a day. With 3 chords under my finger tips I formed a pop group with a school friend on lead guitar, my pal over the road bought a set of drums, a school friend of his played bass guitar and the first Roman Catholic I came into contact with, became the singer. We called ourselves The Stonemakers. This name became a little embarrassing later on when the Rolling Stones suddenly came on the scene.

I played rhythm guitar on a second hand Harmony Meteor arch top guitar that I bought in Charing Cross Road, down in London. At this point in my life being in a band was a great way to avoid dancing, something I didn't particularly like doing, but gave you a huge advantage in terms of attracting the attention of members of the opposite sex.

The band was one of the most popular bands in Bedford at that time and we had a large and loyal following over a period of about 4 years. We disbanded when players like Eric Clapton and Jimi Hendrix began to completely change our direction, but it was careers and higher education that led to the end of the Stonemakers. Those of us who are still alive continue to meet up every so often. Friendships forged both on stage and in the group van seem to endure for ever

I went to art school and then gained a post-graduate teaching qualification. I taught in a boys school in Lambeth and then moved to Cambridge, where I became a senior lecturer at Homerton College. While at College I didn't get musically involved with anyone but when I moved to Cambridge I played bass guitar with a folk band very briefly.

It was then that I got to know Jon Betmead, a folk singer I've long admired. We've played together on and off since those early days. Jon used to teach folk guitar to Primary students at Homerton and he also played guitar for the childrens' music club musicals. I was asked to take over the latter role and this got me back into playing in bands. I was invited to play in bands for adult shows too and through this played alongside an old guitar hero of mine, Dave King, like me, from Bedford.

This led to my playing second guitar in Dave's band, Safety Valve for, I think, 3 years. After this I was addicted to being in a band and the most significant one after Safety Valve was the Backyard Band, in which I played lead guitar. It was essentially a rhythm and blues band. This band went through some personnel changes and kept going for well over 12 years. It lasted about a year after I decided to leave due to hearing loss.

I formed an acoustic blues band with the Backyard Band singer and the sax player. We called ourselves Free Agents and recruited a double bass player and a very quiet drummer, the latter only playing with us occasionally. The singer / rhythm guitarist and I in fact went out as a duo, playing every week in local restaurants. I loved this as you can be so much more responsive and spontaneous with just the two of you. When this came to an end I joined forces with Jon Betmead, Dave Olney the double bass player and his wife and Nick Barraclough and formed the acoustic band, The Famous Four + One. When I left TFF+O, I didn't go out and play but focused on multi-track recording, both alone and with Jon Betmead.

I believe I have the best recordings Jon has ever made as he felt completely relaxed up in my loft studio, unlike commercial studios where one tends to feel under pressure.

What got me to go out and play again? It was bumping into John Mead who helps run Cambridge Acoustic Nights at CB2. He urged me to try playing solo with an acoustic guitar. So, my diary entry for 16th April 2011 says, "Played 2 songs. Very nervous, not having played guitar for ages, forgot 'Saratoga' and had to start again. Despite this I really wanted to try again!" Nerves for a long time were a big issue and I have always been determined to deal with this and the only way I could see my getting over this was to play in public as often as possible. So, as well as CB2 I regularly played at the Cambridge Folk Club.

A major move was to join Bryan Sutton's ArtistWorks on-line School of Bluegrass Flatpicking Guitar and then later, Mike Marshall's ArtistWorks Mandolin School. Having lessons with players of this calibre, and going to music camps in the US and Sore Fingers, here in the UK, has moved me on considerably as a player and this has helped build up my confidence.

I first played at the Plough and Fleece in Horningsea in 2012. I have since played in many settings but The Plough and Fleece remains my favourite. Why do I enjoy it so much? I love the fact that players of whatever level of ability are welcome. There are no big egos, the atmosphere is relaxed and fun and a wide variety of music is played. Even poems and stories are read along with the songs and instrumental tunes. It's a situation where you don't feel the pressure of being on stage, you all sit at a long table taking turns and you can accompany others if you feel you can add something. On occasions it feels as if the TransAtlantic Sessions house band is in town! I find playing with others a most rewarding experience. I earned money from playing music in semi-pro bands until I started going out on my own. Making music purely for pleasure and not being paid is immensely satisfying and being part of a musical community is what it's all about for me now.