

Clem Cattini - Drums

Born 1937 in Islington, London.

Discusses his early life with his parents. Father was Italian and ran a café in Borough, where Clem worked as a youngster.

Went with his friends to see the American Film 'Blackboard Jungle' and the rock and roll soundtrack made him want to be a rocker. They formed a rock and roll band, his friends learnt guitars and Clem took up the drums. The band was called 'Terry Kennedy's Rock n' Rollers'. Clem never had any lessons, he first played professionally at a family dance in Finsbury and subsequently got the sack from his dad's café, which he was pleased about.

He used to go to Archer Street on Monday mornings, hustling to get work. Mondays were packed with musicians and was a very social affair which led to getting work in the diary to play drums in function bands, one-night live performances, theatres, and clubs. He never had an agent but as Archer Street led to contacts with classical musicians, it acted as a musicians Labour Exchange, enabling him to always find drumming work. Eventually the police shut Archer Street down as the number of musicians meeting there led to the street being so busy it had to be closed to traffic.

Used to go to the 2i's Coffee Bar in Old Compton Street, Soho (1950s) Played there regularly as a main source of work with his band. It was here he got asked to go on tour with Max Wall. Also started depping as a drummer for Brian Bennett. By 1958 this was the place to go, played downstairs in the basement, only coffee served, no beer, played mostly American rock and roll. The 2i's used to get very busy, no health and safety, no fire door, would not be allowed today. It was the place where rock and roll really took off in Britain. Lots of famous musicians first played there such as Marty Wilde, Terry Dene, Tommy Steel and Cliff Richard. There was always a great atmosphere. The hand jive first started here too as it was all seated and there was no room to dance. Performances would finish around 1am and he could park right outside and take his drums in and drive home after.

Played other clubs - Whiskey-a-go-go, joined backing band for Terry Dene and the Dene Aces. Also then played the 100 Club and the 5-5 club, met the drummer Ginger Baker there who went on to play in Cream. Played at the original Ronnie Scott's in Gerrard Street – talks about trouble at the venue. Played with Johnny Kidd and the Pirates including drumming on "Shaking All Over" which reached number 1 in UK single charts. Also played on the Larry Parnes shows. He was a member of the Tornadoes who were the first British band to get an American number one single.

He was entirely self-taught and learnt on the job. Terry Dene told him if he was not good enough, he "would be out." And so, he would practice for 2 to 3 hours a day as he was determined not to go back to work in his dad's café. It was a hard job with all the travelling. He enjoyed it but the money was not good and when travelling round the country he would sleep in the coach and wash in the local public baths in the morning.

Played in lots of West End shows, including the Rocky Horror Show (18 months) and depped for Starlight Express and depped on the Elvis show. It was a challenge to play the pieces exactly right every night and says he never achieved it. The audience reaction though was what brought him joy.

He talks about how there could be trouble on stage, describes a night where the audience was throwing things, and he was hit with a plate, and someone punched a roadie. At one venue an audience member climbed on stage and wrecked all the band's gear.

Stand out time of creative satisfaction when drumming on the live sold-out performance of The Kids from Fame, at the Royal Albert Hall. Playing with Cliff Richard and Tom Jones were also stand out performances of his career.

Discusses stand out characters such as Larry Parnes who managed a lot of pop and rock acts and Dr Death (Paul Lincoln) who was a wrestling manager and co-owned the 2i's coffee bar and acted as manager for Terry Dene.

As he was married, Clem did not get into the alcohol/drug scene in the music industry. His honeymoon was spent on tour with Terry Dene. He discusses how he witnessed lots of drug taking and saw alcohol kill other musician's careers "and themselves". Tells anecdote about Johnny Kidd asking a police officer for a light for a spliff on Waterloo Bridge.

Key influences on his career were American drummers, particularly Max Wineberg. They thought highly of each other. His career was maintained by working with great people and getting good advice. Discusses how Andy White (who played on the Beatles track 'Love me Do) taught him how to read music. Describes an incident around a Top of the Pops performance with the Jackson 5.

Musicians Union – feels these have at times failed musicians. Talks about PPL – Public Performance Licence and how musicians missed out on getting compensated for their work and how they were let down by the union.

Has not seen discrimination based on gender or race, Johnny Moore of the Drifters was a good friend. You just had to play well. There were not enough women musicians, but music careers were not something women were encouraged to do in the 50's and 60's. Says he did not like how female dancers could be treated – like prostitutes.

Discusses stand out highs of career mentioning the Rocky Horror Show, which was fun and silly, and all the audience dressed up, working with Grace Kennedy, the Drifters, The Tornadoes and Gladys Knight.

The low points of his career were all the travelling and being away from his family. Describes touring with Tommy Steele's brother in Hamburg and how he didn't see daylight for 2 months. In the early days New Year's Eve used to be a bad night to perform as the audience would be very drunk. Tells how band leaders got £5,000 and band members only £50.00.

Changes he has seen in the music industry include the introduction of drum machines which has stopped the amount of session work. In live work nowadays, the audiences are not as big, dance halls have gone, less venues in west end.

Says live musicians need resilience to survive and music is something that needs to be created by feeding off other musicians, this can't be done in a studio.

Clem says he retired "before I got found out." Drumming is very physically demanding. Describes playing "Shaking all over" recently at a friend's party and not playing as well as in the past.

Says he is so blessed to have been able to do the greatest thing in the world, nothing else like it.