

The Talismen

1963 – 66

Trevor Cook	29/5/44 – 07/0320/11	<i>Drums</i>
Clive Devine	10/10/47	<i>Bass & vocals</i>
Steve Outhwaite	17/5/43	<i>Guitar & vocals 63/65</i>
George Rainsford		<i>Guitar & vocals</i>

Replacement members;

Alan 'Digger' Dike *Guitar & vocals 1965*

Plus

Laurie Jeffs *Guitar & vocals 1966*

The Complete Story... So Far

RISING from the ashes of the Cliff Richard & The Shadows inspired, Johnny & The Falcons, the Gloucestershire based four-piece recording band **The Talismen**, were just about the biggest thing in Cheltenham during 1965 since the rhythm & blues fanatic **Brian Jones** had headed for London to form **The Rolling Stones** a couple of years earlier.



Comprising of the guitar-playing schoolboy wonder, **Clive Devine**, on bass & vocals, **Trevor Cook** on drums, **Steve Outhwaite** guitar & vocals and **George Rainsford** on guitar, harmonica & vocals. These four guys had being *cool* down to an art form!

Following guitarist **Steve**'s return from Liverpool University saying he had seen the future of British music with Mersey beat acts such as **The Beatles** and **Gerry & The Pacemakers** through to **The Searchers** and **The Merseybeats**. Steve knew with the arrival of these bands the cards of moody young singers like **Shane Fenton**, **Adam Faith** along with **Mike Sarn** and **Marty Wilde** etc were well and truly marked.

After rehearsing **The Searchers**' debut chart success of *Sweets For My Sweet* to near perfection, the decision was made. Overnight out went both Johnny and the old group image of short hair and suits plus those twangy old **Shadows** hits and in came smart leather jackets, mops top hair do's, current chart guitar and vocal harmony hits and a new name and **The Talismen** were born.

By early '64 and working their way round the Cheltenham pub circuit as best they could, it wasn't long before the fledgling Talismen came to the attention of local teenage impresario, **Roger Kendrick**. Whilst not being particularly music oriented himself, Kendrick was full of good money making ideas and our *wanna-be* pop stars were up for his ideas too.

Within a short space of time **Kendrick**, now acting as unofficial group manager, had the four-piece working on the next level of bookings, hotels, social clubs and their prestigious local town hall. On occasions the group might also find themselves as the headlining act at a Kendrick promoted event promoted locally around the Cheltenham area. Now travelling from booking to booking in the relative luxury of a Ford Thames 15cwt van, **The Talismen**'s gig turf gradually expanded not only county wide but into the neighbouring counties of Wiltshire, Oxford, Hereford and Worcester. Eventually the beckoning hand of Birmingham would welcome them onto their talent hungry pub music circuit.

Kendrick, keen to expand his own promotional ideas as well as those of the group, soon convinced local pub landlord **Harry Webley** that what Cheltenham really needed was an equivalent of Liverpool's **Cavern Club**. Within a few weeks, funded by **Talismen** gig cash **The Grotto Club** at **The Wheatsheaf Inn** in the town's Old Bath Road was built in the pub's little used skittle alley. Despite objections from the surrounding neighbourhood an entertainment licence was granted and the club opened. From day one the club took off big time with keen music loving teenagers eager to see the latest local and regional happening groups and singers of the day.

With **The Talismen** now working the pubs and clubs of the Birmingham area as part of their regular three or four night gig run of bookings, the **Svengali** like mind of **Kendrick** started to move into over-drive.

During their, by now, frequent visits to Britain's *Second City*, **The Talismen** found themselves working on the same circuit as acts including **The Rockin' Berries**, **Carl Wayne & The Vikings** and **The Spencer Davis Group**. Venues visited often included **The Morgue**, **The Kings Head** and **The Hen & Chickens** on the Hagley Road. **Silverblades Ice Rink** and **The Moat House** in the city centre plus **The Oldhill Plaza** and **Top Spot** in Erdington. It was whilst the group were playing at the **Top Spot** that **Denny Lane & Ray Thomas** of **The Moody Blues** taught **Talim** guitarist **George Rainsford** how to play harmonica, R&B style. Venues like these would become both very familiar and invaluable to the group during that long hot summer of '64.

It was just one of those nights in Birmingham that several of members of **The Talismen** began thinking there might be more to group life than simply arriving back home at dawn most mornings having just slogged up and down the A38 all for a few pounds each. Whilst playing in the Birmingham area one March weekend of 1964, bass player **Clive Devine** purchased a copy of a Brum based magazine, *Midland Beat*, which was full of useful info on the venues and groups from all over the midlands area. Taking the sixpenny magazine back to Cheltenham to show **Roger Kendrick** some useful gig leads, the erstwhile **Kendrick** picked up on the fact *Midland Beat* were planning to run a popularity poll of local groups. Imagine the ensuing publicity Kendrick suggested to the group, should **The Talismen** to win such a poll.

By September of that year, after purchasing dozens of copies *Midland Beat*, a very successful vote capturing campaign was organised at **The Grotto Club** and across Cheltenham. By June 1964 a carefully posed photo of **The Talismen** adorned the front cover of edition number nine of the *Midland Beat*. The magazine proudly heralded them as winners of their first popularity poll. Within a short space of time bookings rolled in from all over the Midlands for our Gloucestershire four-piece by the score – a job done!

By the autumn of '64 the group had worked with enough record company signed acts around the Birmingham area to know it was a case of not what you knew about his industry but rather who you knew within it. **Steve & Clive** sat down with their manager and hatched a sure-fire plan for success. By now the

group was aware that **The Grotto Club** was beginning to attract the attention of not only Birmingham based groups. Artists' agents willing to trade off **Talisman** venue gigs for engagements in their own areas contacted the club along with London agencies wishing to work on the same basis with their artists.

Feeling perhaps a nightly London commute of around two hundred plus miles to work the club scene there was a step too far at this stage, **The Talisman** approached **Kendrick** to take a demo tape to the London based record companies and producers to try and secure the group a recording contract. The only problem with this plan was the fact **The Talisman** did not possess a demo tape – or at least nothing better than home recorded tape at that time.

Kendrick energetically set about seriously checking out several quality named recording studios for his group to record their first professionally recorded multi-track demonstration tape. Within a few days the prestigious City of London located **Kingsway Studios** in Holborn was booked for a three hour recording session. With stereo recording still in its infancy three original **Talisman** penned songs were selected for the state-of-the-art mono tape session. *Don't Mix It With Money* and *Rebound Joe* were the first tracks to be committed to tape followed by the very **Merseybeat** sounding, *I'll Be Good To You*.

Following initial rejections from record companies using the direct approach tactic, **Kendrick** eventually hit on the idea of contacting one of the agents keen to get their acts into **The Grotto Club**. Along with **Robert Stigwood**, **Don Arden** and **Tito Burns**, the **Arthur Howes Agency** was about as big as you could get in the world of group management and package tour promotion during the mid-sixties. After a quick listen to the group's demo material **Arthur Howes** made a quick phone call to the now London domiciled American record producer of **The Who** and **The Kinks**, **Shel Talmy**. Keen to return home deal in hand, **Kendrick** then hot-footed it to **Talmy's** West End office where he successfully negotiated an audition for his group from Cheltenham with one of the industry's most sought after producers.

Following the hastily convened **2 Eyes** coffee bar audition in **Tin Pan Alley**, the group signed a production deal with **Talmy's** company which would soon find manager **Roger Kendrick** looking for another act to manage. **Talmy** insisted he managed and produced **The Talisman** as part of an all-inclusive deal for the four-piece r&b/beat group. Eager to make it big in the pop business, the group reluctantly agreed to the deal on offer. A

stranglehold deal that certainly would not stand up to any type of court action in this business savvy day and age!

One snowy December day during 1964 saw **The Talismen** record to titles for their debut single at **IBC Studios** in Great Portland Place, London for an, as yet, unknown record label. The legendary studio engineer **Glyn Johns** took charge of the recording desk for the two songs, six-hour session.

Always quick to pick up on what was breaking back in the States, **Talmy** had already instructed the group to work out an original arrangement for *Masters of War*, a track from **Bob Dylan's** top selling album, *The Free Wheelin' Bob Dylan*. The session went so well that day the group was not only able to complete *Masters of War* a live set favourite, *Casting My Spell* went into the can within a few takes as well.

It is widely thought **The Talismen** were the first ever British group to rearrange and cover a **Dylan** song on vinyl; possibly beating **The Byrds** with their offering of *Mr Tambourine Man* by some two or three months. Prior to the singles release in America, future **Led Zeppelin** guitarist and famed studio session man, **Jimmy Page**, would later dub additional harmonica to the group's studio efforts, making the single a rare record collector item in years to come.

Following the single's release on **EMI's Stateside** label during April of 1965 *Masters of War* began to receive its fair share of radio air-play. **The Talismen** appeared on an **EMI** sponsored *in-concert* style live show for **Radio Luxembourg** and the popular pirate ship **Radio Caroline** gave the group's **Bob Dylan** composition regular spins during their round the clock broadcasting schedule.

Sadly, due to the single's non-chart appearance the group narrowly missed out on both an appearances on **ITV's** premier Saturday evening pop show, **Thank Your Lucky Stars** and a multi-date pop package tour taking place later that spring. Despite missing out on chart status the group continued to work regularly around the Midlands and the North West of England on the strength of now being billed as **EMI** recording artists.

Thinking perhaps **The Talismen** might benefit from some performance sharpening backing gigs, their now manager, **Shel Talmy** arranged for the group to back an up-coming singer of the day, **Bobby Shafto** on a brief run of West Country engagements. Following the **Shafto** gigs **Talmy** then set about organising a trip to Europe for the group. Using his extensive network of contacts their new manager then set up a month long residency for the boys

during September '65 at **The Hotel International** in Zurich, Switzerland. The Swiss residency proved to be a steep learning curve for the group with the boys having to quickly learn how to vocally pace their act in order to sing six nights a week and still speak the following day! Working their way through the vocal problems the group soon found themselves at a new performance level and ready to move on.

Despite the offer of a second single to be produced by **Talmy** back in London for release later that summer, the group opted for a trip to Italy. A decision the group would later question.

The Italian deal would also lead to the group being offered a more permanent backing group job for an Italian star complete with an album deal in Rome. Somewhat annoyed at the group's head-strong Italian deal decision, **Talmy** announced he would have nothing further to do with the group and tore up his agreement with **The Talismen** and the group were now without the management hand of either **Kendrick** or **Talmy** to guide them through the sharp witted and underhand methods of the Italian music business scene. A situation, as the group would soon find out for themselves, that the Italians would soon exploit to their own advantage.

Part of the Italian deal would see **The Talismen** relocate to Rome where they would be the British backing group for the teenage Italian star, **Rita Pavone**. **Rita's** business manager, **Teddy Reno**, now took over the day to day management of **The Talismen** and they were to become part of his plan to make **Rita** a big star in both Britain and America.

Following a two week return to Cheltenham to organise Italian work permits etc, the group's original lead guitarist, **Steve Outhwaite**, then left the group to be hastily replaced, with mixed fortune, firstly by **Alan 'Digger' Dike** and then **Laurie Jeffs**.

Despite initially receiving little financial reward for their efforts, and often having to resort to eating in their record company's canteen in order to survive, 1966 would see **The Talismen** blossom into stars of the Italian concert and TV scene as they toured to promote their hastily recorded **RCA** ten-track album ***Talismen Style***. Despite a much talked about a new Italian song for the boys to record, the album contained nothing new from the group and was simply an **RCA** promotional tool of cover versions that included *Monkey Time*, *I'll Be Doggone* and *Spanish Harlem*. However, regular appearances with and without **Rita Pavone** would give **The Talismen** their fifteen minutes of fame as they became Italian household names and were stars at last!

The following year, with the group's one album RCA recording deal complete and their contracted **Rita Pavone** period at a close, the empty pocketed group headed for home via one last gig in Switzerland and, hopefully, fresh fortunes back in England.

However on their arrival back in Britain the group were shocked to find the beat boom more or less over – flower power and psychedelia were now the hip trends. Totally disillusioned by the British music scene of the day, the group reluctantly agreed to go their separate ways. Sadly, at this point the **Talismen** story would come to an abrupt halt - and many would say a somewhat premature end to an otherwise unbelievable career.

But like all unbelievable careers, **The Talismen** story would not end there and by 2009, following a chance meeting with bass-player **Clive Devine**, musician and writer **Chris Stanbury** would soon encourage the mighty **Talismen** machine to once more roll into action.

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So what has become of the various members of **The Talismen** in the 21st century?

Guitarist **Steve Outhwaite** took his Liverpool University gained degree to America and settled there with his wife and family. He now heads a division of a multi-national electronics company and regularly travels the world on their behalf.

The now retired **George Rainsford** lives in France playing guitar and harmonica with various ex-pat and local bands in France.

Bass-player **Clive Devine** continues to live in Cheltenham with his family and until around 2006 he successful owned and ran **The Jazz & Blues Cafe** in the town centre. **Clive** occasionally keeps his musical hand in playing with local bands including the Sixties and Seventies music playing band **ROCKology**.

Following a large period of his post **Talismen** life connected with glass and the glazing industry, drummer **Trevor Cook** spent the winter months of each in semi-retirement with his wife **Lisa** and drums on the Spanish island of Tenerife, returning to his home in Cheltenham during the summer months.

Sadly, since writing the original copy of this group biography, **Trevor Adrian Cook** passed away on 7th of March 2011 shortly before his 66th birthday following a hard fought battle with cancer. With **Trevor's** passing **The Talismen** have not only lost their drummer but a large chunk of enthusiasm for further group reunions. **Trevor** will be sadly missed by all whose lives were

touched by his chaotic and enigmatic charm and infectious enthusiasm for life.

Although usually very professional with both fans and business contacts alike, Trevor was often regarded as the group member who could always be relied upon to entertain guests over the dinner table with outrageous tales of **Talisman** life in Italy. So, as a fitting, and repeatable, tribute to Cookie's musical career here is one such tale he would love to tell.

Amid all the hustle and bustle of **Talisman** group life in Rome **Trevor** well remembered a moment of panic as the boys were preparing to travel north to appear in concert with **Rita Pavone** at the famous *La Scala Opera House* in Milan.

This particular engagement in the group's schedule was to be a special occasion for **The Talisman** because, as the show's opening act, the group were to be not only the first British group to play at the prestigious Italian venue but the first group to ever play there.

"Typical of us," remembered Trevor "we had left everything to the last minute and we were late for the meeting with our manager, **Teddy Reno**, at his house in Ariccia. **Reno** wanted to give us some last minute instructions about the concert in Milan so it was important we made the meeting. Basically we miscalculated the time it would take us to get across to Ariccia in the foothills of Rome from our apartment.

We weren't exactly hanging around as we drove through the streets to **Reno's** house when from off the pavement stepped a man in a long leather coat carrying an umbrella. There was an umbrella sounding bang on the side of our van as we sped away from both the umbrella and long leather coated gent. We were probably breaking the speed limit for sure but we knew we wanted to make it to the meeting on time. Probably not giving the umbrella incident another thought we drove on and had our meeting as planned.

"A few days later we received an urgent phone call from **Reno** saying we had been reported to the police for the umbrella incident. and he wanted to see us in his office asap. At this point **George** thoughtfully suggested, "This is it boys, they're going to throw us all in the slammer for sure now!"

"A couple of days after **Reno's** call" continued **Trevor** "we found ourselves all tramping off down to the office of the local Chief of Police. It turns out the long leather coat and umbrella belonged to none other than the District Chief of Police himself. We all stood

in a line in front of him, feeling like naughty school boys waiting for the cane, whilst the chief gave us a dressing down.

“Thankfully none of us saw the inside of an Italian gaol and needless to say we were free men to drive to Milan for our all-important engagement at the ***La Scala Opera House***.”

During May 2004 the various members of **The Talismen**, including **Alan ‘Digger Dike** reunited briefly in their home town of Cheltenham to play at a *surprise* 60th party for drummer **Trevor Cook**. The group also played a one-off show at **Clive’s Jazz & Blues Cafe** in the town the following lunchtime.

The Talismen

1963 – 66

Vinyl & Compact Disc releases by **The Talismen**

From 1965 - 2009

- ***Masters of War c/w Casting My Spell***
Stateside SS 408 - 1965
- RCA Victor (Italy) - Cat no: unknown ***Talismen Style*** released during 1966
- ***Gotta Move*** - LCD Records 21-2. A reissue of the Italian vinyl album plus original Shel Talmy produced recording for the Stateside label single (both A & B-sides). The CD features **The Talismen** with addition material by **The Panthers**. Believed to be a French manufactured two in one CD released during 1998 consisting of the following tracks by **The Talismen**:

1. *Casting My Spell*
2. *Masters of War*
3. *You Break My Heart*
4. *The Monkey Time*
5. *Doctor Feelgood*
6. *I’ll Be Doggone*
7. *Mona (I Need You Baby)*
8. *I Can’t Explain*
9. *Forbidden Fruit*
10. *What Kind of Boy*
11. *I Gotta Move*

12. *Spanish Harlem*
13. *Daddy Rolling Stone*
14. *Parchman Farm*
15. *Casting My Spell (Version 2)*

Tracks recorded by **The Panthers**

1. *Hey Woman*
2. *I'll Be Pleased*
3. *Hi-Heel Sneakers*
4. *Baby*
5. *I Just Want To Make Love To You*

Jimmy Page – ***This Guitar Kills – More Sixties Groups And Sessions*** via Castle Music/Sanctuary Records. Cat No: CMEDD 741.

This Guitar Kills is a two disc compilation CD package of songs featuring the session work of **Jimmy Page** and includes several notable Midlands based groups such as **Neil Christian & The Crusaders** and **The Redcaps** and of course **The Talismen**.

Disc 2 of this two disc compilation lists both **Talismen** titles recorded by **Shel Talmy** at **IBC Studios** in London during 1965 for the group's **Stateside Records** release during May of that year.

These sessions were completed prior to **Jimmy Page** forming **The New Yardbirds**, a precursor to **Led Zeppelin**, with Midlands based musicians from the group **Band of Joy**.

- **TFC Records - *Back In Style* 2009**

A 20 track career compilation CD featuring **The Talismen** and the Italian singer, **Rita Pavone**. The disc also includes 3 previously unreleased bonus tracks recorded by the original line-up during 1964 at the legendary **Kingsway Studios** in Holborn, London.

Casting My Spell
Masters Of War
Doctor Feelgood
Strong Love
Monkey Time
Parchman Farm
What Kind Of Boy
Forbidden Fruit

Doggone
Mona
Spanish Harlem
I Can't Explain
Never Said A Word
Treno
Casting My Spell (Alternative version)
Gotta Move
Daddy Rollin' Stone
Bonus tracks
I'll Be Good To You
Rebound Joe
Don't Mix It With Money

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The number of web site based internet sales of ***Back In Style*** right around the world continues to amaze group members as the regular email messages of praise and support arrive at the Inbox of their web site at www.thetalismen.co.uk.

To many younger purchasers of the CD most of the tracks are completely new to them and simply fit the current *Freakbeat* genre to a tee, whilst older buyers say the sound of the CD completely recreates the whole Sixties R&B vibe.

The release of ***Back In Style*** was promoted by **The Talismen** during the autumn of 2009 with a reunion performance by the Sixties group back at the venue where it all started for them back in 1964, at **The Grotto Club**. Double the club's regular capacity crowded into the out of town pub, **The Wheatsheaf Inn**, to witness what would be drummer Trevor Cook's last live performance with his group prior to his death in March 2011.

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All information on, and images of, **The Talismen** have been supplied with thanks to original group member **Clive Devine**.

Chris Stanbury © 2011