

Anthony 'Bubs' White

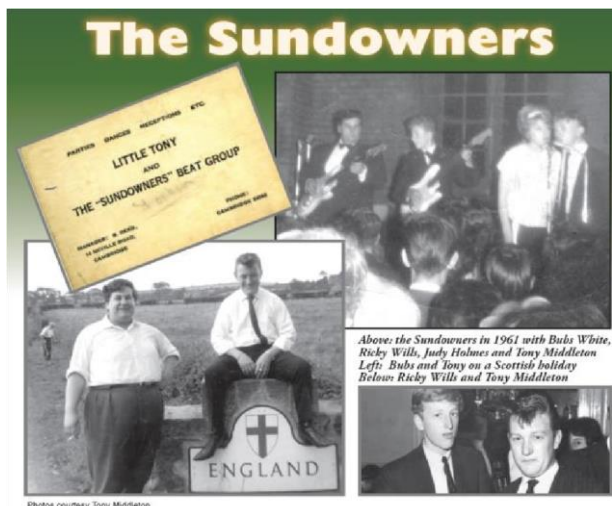
("I wouldn't have done it, but it would have been nice to have been asked!")

Anthony 'Bubs' White was born in Cambridge on St Valentine's Day, 1944. In 1959, he played in a skiffle band with Andy Peters; when they joined Noel Gooch and Tony Sainty, they called themselves The Chequers. The 1960 line-up was Bubs White (lead guitar), Noel Gooch (rhythm guitar), Tony Sainty (bass), Jenny Smith (drums) and Andy Peters (vocals). When Tony Sainty left the band, he was replaced by John Speak and later by Bob Ruckwood.



The Chequers with Bubs, centre

By the end of 1961, the Chequers disbanded. Bubs joined the Sundowners and Andy and Jenny joined the Burnettes. The Sundowners line-up became Bubs on lead guitar, Ricky Wills on rhythm guitar, Ivan Carling on bass, Nick Clark on drums and Tony Middleton and Judy Holmes on vocals. They played rock'n'roll numbers and a few instrumentals and played support for a lot of big names in those days, e.g. Gene Vincent, Freddie and the Dreamers, Johnny Kidd and the Pirates, Duke d'Mond or the Barron Knights. As well as the usual Cambridge venues, the Sundowners often played on US bases.



Photos courtesy Tony Middleton

The band continued until late 1963 when the Chequers decided to re-form. Bubs White returned to the Chequers who then comprised Bubs on lead guitar, Tony Middleton (vocals), Ricky Wills (bass), Andrew 'Fitz' Fitzpatrick, an American from a nearby US base (vocals), Andy Peters (guitar and vocals) and Jenny Smith (drums). In 1963, they appeared on television twice. On one occasion, Jenny remembers, the camera zoomed in on Bubs who promptly broke a string and had to improvise as best he could as no re-takes were allowed.

As well as appearing at the usual city venues and in Newmarket Memorial Hall, the band played on many US bases, too. Tony remembers that they were asked to stop playing on a base in July 1964 when it was suddenly announced that American country singer Jim Reeves had died in a plane crash. They played no more that evening.

In 1965, they mutated into The Soul Committee with Bubs (lead guitar), Ricky Wills (bass guitar), Martin Fabb and Dick Parry (saxes), Andrew 'Fitz' Fitzpatrick on main vocals and Phil Leaford on drums and vocals (Dick Parry would later play sax on the Bonzos' farewell album "Let's Make Up and Be Friendly"). The band engaged Stuart Dingley as their manager and got in Denis 'Drew' Andrews as a further vocalist. This dynamic band now provided the style to attract Liberty Records who in 1968 gave them a recording contract.



Photo © Jess Applin

Jess Applin was commissioned by the Ken Stevens Agency to take the promotional photos on this page but they were never used. From left: Dick Parry, Martin Fabb, Andrew Fitzpatrick, Ricky Wills, Bubs White and Phil Leaford

Their first record was called 'The Hard Way' and was produced by the famous Mike Batt; for that single, they dropped the 'Soul' from their name and became The Committee (not to be confused with the sixties US doo-wop band), entertaining many audiences with their power packed show.

One day they were playing one of these May Balls in Cambridge, backing the Bonzo Dog Band. Bubs weighed about 22 stone at the time, with long hair and a droopy, rather mournful looking, moustache in a black suit and bow tie.

Nothing was said on the night, but a few weeks later there was an article in the Melody Maker, saying the Bonzos were looking for this fat guitarist from Cambridge. Viv liked to recruit not just great musicians, but musicians who also looked a little eccentric. Bubs fitted the description to a tee. Not only a brilliant guitarist, but he was also just what Stanshall was looking for. Bubs knew they were talking about him, so he rang them up and joined the Bonzos for their final contractual obligation gigs.

"One early memory I have as far as playing with the band was at the North London Poly", tells Bubs, "I was playing a big guitar solo, and suddenly a massive cheer went up. I remember thinking: this is what it's like to be famous then. That was until I turned around and spotted The Who's iconic drummer Keith Moon who had come on stage!"

At the same time, he also joined Viv's newly formed biG Grunt band and made a BBC session featuring Viv, Bubs, Roger Ruskin Spear, Dennis Cowan and Ian Wallace augmented by Fred Munt on congas. Then he toured with Bonzo Dog Freaks in early 1971 with a variable line-up featuring Viv, Neil Innes, Andy Roberts, Dennis Cowan and Keith Moon, assisted by Gaspar Lawal and Shamsi Sarumi on African percussion. They guested on Top Gear in March 1971. In a biG Grunt video, recorded for The Marty Feldman Show, Viv asked Bubs to dress up as an angel. Bubs: "Viv was very sure on how he would like each person to look, and he would go for it, even if it took him years to get it. So, I fitted in with the look, and I also happened to be a good guitarist so that was a bit of a bonus for him."



BiG Grunt: Fred Munt, Bubs, Ian Wallace, Viv Stanshall, Dennis Cowan (hidden) and Roger Ruskin Spear (out of picture)

Later that year Bubs was involved in the recording of the last official Bonzo Dog Band album, "Let's Make Up and Be Friendly". The Bonzos were actually the very first band to record at the Manor, Richard Branson's newly opened residential facility near Oxford. "Bubs played brilliantly on the Bonzos record", states Andy Roberts, "he could rock ('The Strain'), and he could be intricate ('Rawlinson End'). With his curious image, he was absolutely perfect as a Bonzo, and he worked tirelessly on Roger Ruskin Spear's 'Waiting for The Wardrobe', as well as 'Legs' Larry Smith's 'Rusty'".

After Big Grunt and the Bonzos, Bubs went into session work and appeared on records by Ian Whitcomb (the Neil-Innes-produced "Under the Ragtime Moon"), the Scaffold ("Fresh Liver"), Jim Capaldi ("Whale Meat Again") and Viv Stanshall's first solo effort "Men Opening Umbrellas Ahead". In 1979, he joined the band Red Express; after recording the single 'Happy' - the band's only release - he left again. Parts of Red Express would later become the internationally successful Shakatak. By the early Eighties, Bubs had quit music business and was working in the labs at Cambridge.

In 1982 he began a pure maths degree at Warwick University. He hadn't been in Coventry long before he was approached by the band Quiet Riot (not the metal band!) and asked if he was Bubs White; days later he was a fully-fledged member of the Quiet Riot. It finally emerged that some of the band had included former members of local folk-rock band Dando Shaft, who had remembered Bubs when they had supported the Bonzos. In the meantime, Bubs worked as a part-time lecturer at Henley College, finally becoming a professional computer programmer.

Years later, Bubs would again work musically with his old Quiet Riot band member Rob Armstrong to produce a series of albums in their own computer studio, worth a mention is the album "A", produced in 1999, on which Bubs plays alongside Rob Armstrong, Gordon Giltrap, Martin Jenkins of Dando Shaft and Fairport Convention's Dave Pegg amongst others. Together with Armstrong and Giltrap, he recorded one song for the fundraising compilation "The Sky Goes All the Way Home".

Bubs was not asked to join the Bonzo Dog reunion tour in 2006 and knew nothing about it until it was officially announced. "I wouldn't have done it, but it would have been nice to have been asked!" was his comment.

Andy Roberts met Bubs in 2006, when a friend persuaded a reluctant Bubs to come and see Neil and Andy with the Rutles at Birmingham's Glee Club. Andy told "He had lost so much weight I wouldn't have recognised him in the street, but it was a delight for us to see him again".



Bubs with Neil Innes and Andy Roberts

On 19th January 2013, Bubs died at the age of 68 following a short illness. His funeral took place on 14th February (his 69th birthday) at Canley Crematorium in Coventry

Text passages taken from:

Cambridge Rock'n Roll History from The Coventry Telegraph

Andy Roberts' Homepage

Pop Trivia

The Music Scene of 60es Cambridge by Warren Dosanjh

DISCOGRAPHY

The Committee

1968 Single: *The Hard Way/Hey You* - Liberty LBF 15154

1969 Single: *Sleep Tight Honey/Memories of Melinda* - PYE 7N.17826

The World

1970 Single: *Come Out into The Open* - Liberty LBF 15402 (B-side of 'Angelina', not the album version)

Vivian Stanshall

1970 Single: *Suspicion* (V.S.& Gargantuan Chums)/*Blind Date* (V.S. & BiG Grunt) - Fly Records BUG4

1974 LP: *Men Opening Umbrellas Ahead* - Warner Bros. Records K56052

1974 Single: *Lakonga/Baba Tunde* - Warner Brothers K16424

2016 EP: BiG Grunt (*11 Moustachioed Daughters, Blind Date, The Strain, Cyborg Signal*) - Mega Dodo MEP-4 (recorded 1970)

still unreleased Radio sessions: 1971

20th March: BBC with Freaks

(tracks: *Come Out into The Open, Music for Rawlinson End, Bad Blood, Watcher*)

1975 16th October: BBC with Big Grunt

(tracks: *Trail of The Lonesome Pine, The Unbridled Suite/The Final Analysis, Aunt Florrie's Waltz, Socks*)

Jimmy Dawkins

1972 LP: *Transatlantic 770* - Excello Records EX 8024

(track: *The Things I Used to Do*)

Bonzo Dog Band

1972 LP: *Let's Make Up and Be Friendly* - United Artists UAS 229288

(tracks: *The Strain, Waiting for The Wardrobe, Straight from My Heart, Rusty (Champion Thrust), Don't Get Me Wrong, Rawlinson End, Fresh Wound and Bad Blood*)

Ian Whitcomb

1972 LP: *Under the Ragtime Moon* - United Artists UA LA021F

Scaffold

1973 LP: *Fresh Liver* - Island Records ILPS 9234

(tracks: *Devon's Dead, Plenty of Time, Fagorff, Fax'n Figgers, Nuclear Band, W.P.C. Hodges and Fish*)

Jim Capaldi

1974 LP: *Whale Meat Again* - Island Records ILPS 9254
(track: *Summer Is Fading*)

Red Express

1979 12" Single: *Happy/Happy (Instrumental)* - Quicksilver QUIK2

Martin Jenkins

1984 LP: *Carry Your Smile* – Oblivion Records OBL002
(tracks: *Ain't No Sunshine* and *Sally*)

Les Barker

1985 LP: *Mrs Ackroyd Rock'n Roll Show* - Mrs Ackroyd Records DOG001

Rob Armstrong

1999 CD: *A* - Folkprint FP008CD

Various Artists

2000 CD: *The Sky Goes All the Way Home* - Voiceprint SKYGOES1CD
(track: Rob Armstrong: *All the Way Home*)