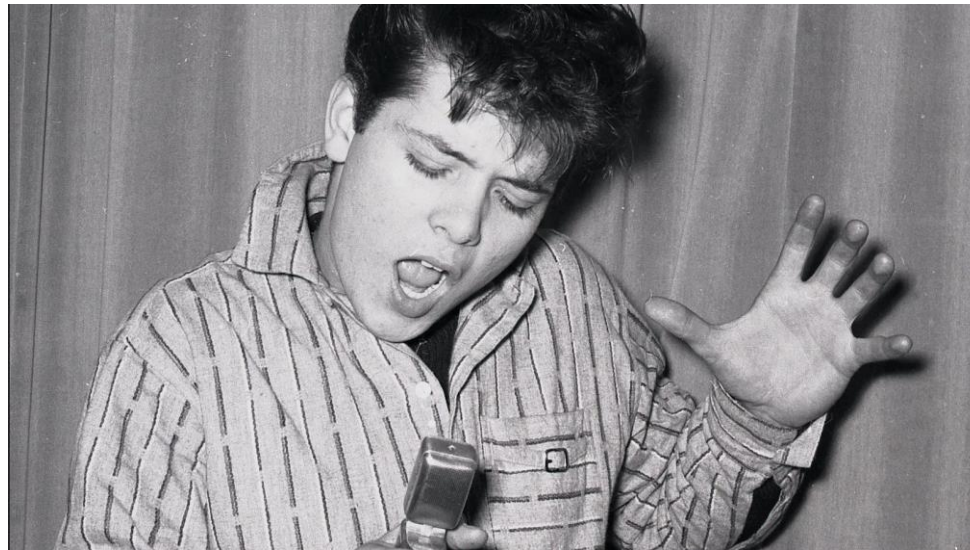


CLIFF RICHARD



<i>Recording years</i>	<i>Main genre</i>	<i>Music sample</i>
1958-2020	Early rock'n'roll	Move It (1958)

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CLIFF

Album released:

April 17, 1959

V A L U E
2 3 3 1 2

More info:



Tracks: 1) Apron Strings; 2) My Babe; 3) Down The Line; 4) I Got A Feeling; 5) Jet Black; 6) Baby I Don't Care; 7) Donna; 8) Move It; 9) Ready Teddy; 10) Too Much; 11) Don't Bug Me Baby; 12) Driftin'; 13) That'll Be The Day; 14) Be-Bop-A-Lula; 15) Danny; 16) Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On.

REVIEW

It is quite notable that Cliff Richard and the Shadows' (actually, at that time, still the Drifters') first LP was recorded live at Abbey Road Studios — in front of an actual audience of several hundred fans, politely screaming their heads off at certain culmination points but far from all over the place, so that each instrument and every overtone of Cliff's young voice could be heard crystal clear. In 1959, live albums from rock'n'roll artists were a relative rarity even in the US, and I certainly do not know of any major rock stars from that time who would start out live. In a way, this is quite a symbolic gesture — hinting at the overwhelming power of spontaneity and on-the-spot energy associated with rock'n'roll, and, more importantly, at the magic power that a 19-year old's presence could hold over the audience. In 1959, Cliff Richard was Britain's first major teenage idol — and it was important, nay, essential to market him right from the start as the UK's authentic and respectable answer to Elvis Presley.



The principal attraction of the show is stuck in the middle — ‘Move It’, the song that, in the eyes of everybody including the Beatles themselves, started rock’n’roll in Britain. Musically credited to the Drifters’ original guitarist Ian Samwell, there is not much «writing» involved in the actual melody, which simply exploits a well-established fast rockabilly pattern, but at least the lyrics are moderately original, not to mention prophetic — "They say it’s gonna die but please let’s face it / They just don’t know what’s a-goin’ to replace it" — and both the original echo-laden single and this far more in-yer-face live version are loaded with genuine enthusiasm: finally, we are taking something invented by the Yankees and running away with it! just go, Hank, go! (Though, honestly, I am not quite sure why Hank seems to have gotten offkey and offtempo at the end of his solo in the middle of the song — a pretty mood-killing moment, that one).

That said, **Cliff** is anything but a great record, and right from the start, it succeeds in showing all the limitations of both Cliff Richard, the artist, and the Drifters / Shadows as his backing band. The 19-year old kid was clearly passionate about the devil’s music, but neither did he have a particularly great set of pipes, nor was he allowed to cultivate a wild enough stage presence to pass for anything other than a decent local substitute for the real thing — be that real thing Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, Gene Vincent, Little Richard, or Jerry Lee Lewis, to name some of the people whose material gets covered on this release. At best, he could probably serve in the league of Ricky Nelson (whose ‘I Got A Feeling’ is also here and is actually a bit tougher than the original), which isn’t too bad but pretty much excludes you from the Bad Boy category. His is merely an ordinary vocal, and I cannot imagine a single reason on Earth why anybody could ever prefer any of these versions to the originals.

Musically, one could point to the Shadows as Britain’s first instrumental rock band of any importance — here, they already get two instrumental numbers completely to themselves — but for all the legendary synergy between the band’s rhythm section and Hank Marvin, the lead guitarist, the Shadows have a compensating flaw: too much discipline and restraint in their ranks, making their performances into pleasant and respectable musical exercises rather than the exciting ritual of exorcism that prime rock’n’roll is supposed to be. This is where the idea of the live recording really falls flat — it feels weird hearing those teenage screams while the band is presenting their near-mathematically calculated take on rock’n’roll on ‘Jet Black’ and ‘Driftin’, two numbers with dreamy surf overtones whose atmosphere is almost closer to «artsy» than «headbanging». On a technical and perhaps even compositional level, the musicianship here arguably surpasses the early Beatles — but on a visceral level, the Shadows might just as well be the Icebergs, in which case the screaming audience would rather bring on associations with the passengers of the Titanic...

Of course, this is precisely why Cliff and the Shadows were perfect for each other — he the embodiment of polite, watered-down rock'n'roll, they the embodiment of «discipline over passion». But this perfect matching only makes sense when it is accompanied by original material — heck, even 'Move It', derivative as it is, is a perfectly suitable vehicle as long as your mind has nothing direct to compare it to. On the other hand, this version of 'Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On' with which they end the show, once you fall into the hands of the inevitable association with Jerry Lee Lewis and the Nashville Teens at the Star Club, is an official glass of warm milk, even if there also happen to be acknowledged lovers of warm milk in this world.

The best that could be said about **Cliff** is that for a live recording from 1959, even one recorded live in the studio, the LP is a marvel of engineering — each cymbal crash, each bass pluck, every shaky inflection of Cliff's voice is captured so perfectly that it puts many, if not most, of contemporary American rock'n'roll recordings to shame. This is, of course, more courtesy of Abbey Road's experienced sound engineers and producer Norrie Paramor than Cliff or the band's — but, in a way, it is also a handy precursor to the clarity of sound on the Beatles' records, and a small hint that at least *some* of the popularity of the early British Invasion overseas just might have been due to the fact that, for the first time ever, the kids were able to hear some of those exciting rock'n'roll sounds without any accompanying sonic muck. But then again, the Beatles were all about original and inventive pop melodies — **Cliff**, on the other hand, pretends to be all about driving rock'n'roll, and where do you get driving rock'n'roll without a solid serving of sonic muck? In retrospect, this is all about «you had to be there», really — and, perhaps, all about showing thousands of hungry British kids the way to musical nirvana.





CLIFF SINGS

Album released:

Nov. 1959

V A L U E
2 3 3 1 2

More info:



Tracks: 1) Blue Suede Shoes; 2) The Snake And The Bookworm; 3) I Gotta Know; 4) Here Comes Summer; 5) I'll String Along With You; 6) Embraceable You; 7) As Time Goes By; 8) The Touch Of Your Lips; 9) Twenty Flight Rock; 10) Pointed Toe Shoes; 11) Mean Woman Blues; 12) I'm Walking; 13) I Don't Know Why (I Just Do); 14) Little Things Mean A Lot; 15) Somewhere Along The Way; 16) That's My Desire.

REVIEW

Maybe some of the managers at EMI Columbia had OCD or something, because **Cliff Sings** is one of the most mathematically precise audience-targeting LPs ever released. Sixteen songs in all, eight on each side, with each of the eights further subdivided in two halves, one consisting of rock'n'roll numbers on which Cliff is backed by the Shadows, one of traditional oldies on which his voice floats above the «Norrie Paramor orchestra» (though the Shadows' Tony Meehan still plays drums on every single).



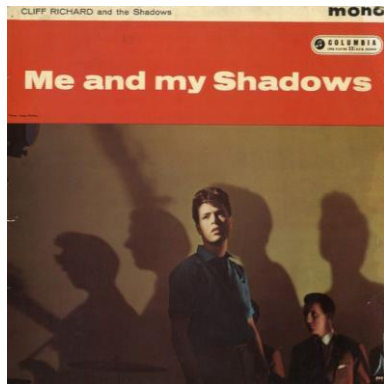
The very fact that exactly half of the record is for the kids and the other half is for their parents is nothing to write home about — pretty standard fare for late Fifties' and early Sixties' teen idols — but the sequencing is notable. Put all the rock'n'roll on one side, and chances are the second side will never ever be listened to. Put the rock'n'roll and the oldies next to each other, and chances are that just as the angry parents reach the limit of their patience and burst in the kid's room to

smash the record, 'I'll String Along With You' or 'I Don't Know Why' comes along and melts their flaming hearts. The new and the old hand in hand — teenage rebellion soothed by reverence for the elders — conflict and harmony in one soothing package — «supreme versatility», as Norrie Paramor himself proudly states in the liner notes on the back of the LP.

«Supreme» is, of course, a bit of an understatement, given that Cliff and the Shadows' studio take on rock'n'roll is not too different from the live one — quiet, restrained, and well-disciplined, a far cry from most of the artists who get covered here and hardly an essential listen for anybody other than a music historian. The band is tight, Hank Marvin's playful and slightly jazzy leads are technically impeccable, and Cliff's vocal range is astoundingly impressive for a 19-year old, but this is still a strictly diet version of rock'n'roll, with passion and excitement replaced by an almost academic approach to performance — the last thing one really needs when planning to bang one's head off to a 'Mean Woman Blues' or a 'Twenty Flight Rock'. (For instructive purposes, just play the opening bars of Eddie Cochran and Cliff back-to-back — note how «nasty» the thick and slightly distorted tone on the original is compared to the clean, thin, muffled tone on Cliff's version).

Melodically, the one song in this section which differs the most from its better known counterpart is 'I Gotta Know', which most people probably learn from the slower, doo-woppier version by Elvis; surprisingly, Cliff recorded it *before* Elvis (probably just a coincidence), and in a version that was musically closer to Elvis' early rockabilly numbers, with a much more pronounced Nashville spirit. The Elvis version, however, would be far more successful in exploiting the song's melodic potential, and Cliff's vocal journey hits far fewer peaks and valleys than Elvis'. Still, if you thought Elvis' version was way too slow or something, you can find yourself a formal excuse for singling this one here as an outstanding performance — no such luck with anything else, I'm afraid.

As for Cliff singing 'As Time Goes By' or 'That's My Desire', I suppose this will largely boil down to how much you enjoy the standards and how much the 19-year old's sweet-husky voice gets your own juices flowing. There's nothing particularly wrong with this stuff — technically, Cliff sings it miles better than, say, Paul McCartney ever could — but neither is he Frank Sinatra, and there can hardly be any talk about the man being able to lay down some sort of unique personality touch here: this is all just technically flawless imitation. And when somebody does equally admiring imitations of Carl Perkins and, say, Kitty Kallen ('Little Things Mean A Lot'), you know that's all there is to it, really: «Britain Got Talent» is what this is all about. Still, at least there is no denying that Britain really got talent — in 1959, there was arguably nobody else on the island who could find his way into the hearts of the old and the young as smoothly as this kid.



ME AND MY SHADOWS

Album released:

Oct. 1960

V A L U E
3 4 3 2 3

More info:



Tracks: 1) I'm Gonna Get You; 2) You And I; 3) I Cannot Find A True Love; 4) Evergreen Tree; 5) She's Gone; 6) Left Out Again; 7) You're Just The One To Do It; 8) Lamp Of Love; 9) Choppin' 'n' Changin'; 10) We Have It Made; 11) Tell Me; 12) Gee Wiz It's You; 13) I Love You So; 14) I'm Willing To Learn; 15) I Don't Know; 16) Working After School.

REVIEW

Arguably Cliff's finest hour, and not just because of the genuinely funny pun: this was the first (and last) of his albums to feature *mainly* original compositions, though Cliff himself had little to do with them — his Shadows were more than silently happy to take on most of the job, with credits more or less equally spread between Hank Marvin, Jet Harris, Bruce Welch, and former member Ian Samwell. (Cliff himself only takes a humble co-credit for 'I Love You So' — probably for writing the truly unforgettable lyrics "I love you so / I'll never let you go / I want you to know / That I love you so").



None of the Shadows were geniuses when it came to songwriting, of course, but the album, along with concurrent Billy Fury records, still remains in history as one of the earliest and most consistent attempts to introduce a «British school» of rock'n'roll songwriting, at least formally stripping the Beatles of that claim. With fast, pushy, rocking numbers like 'I'm Gonna Get You' and 'Choppin' 'n' Changin' (both of them symbolically positioned as A- and B-side openers), the Shadows are doing here for themselves and Cliff the exact same thing that the Beatles would soon be doing with 'I Saw Her Standing There' and 'Can't Buy Me Love' — combining their own pop instincts with imported rock'n'roll energy. And, curiously, sometimes it feels to me as if the main thing holding them back was not even their inability to find that perfect chord

change, but way too much dependence on Duane Eddy and early surf music — those thin, squiggly tones with their predilection for melodic symmetry and technique over all-out emotional excitement.

Then again, maybe not, because the chief weakness of an overall cool pop-rock tune like 'I'm Gonna Get You' is not so much the squeaky-fragile tone of its guitars as it is the disappointing resolution to each verse — after the first fast-poppin' three lines, seemingly building up hungry frustration ("I'm acting like a crazy love sick clown... been looking for you all over town... it seems that you're nowhere around..."), the verse breaks down on a stuttering, tempo-shifting "I'm gonna get you!" which sounds like the singer is temporarily stopping to catch his breath or something before resuming his doomed pursuit. Compare this to something like the Beatles' 'I'll Get You', with its similar message — that song is slower, poppier, happier, but each verse is rounded up with a positively triumphant exit, whereas 'I'm Gonna Get You' just suffers breakdown after breakdown — a classic case of good intentions marred by unsuccessful songwriting ideas.

'Choppin' And Changin' is the better rocker of the two, but, unfortunately, precisely because it contains almost no original songwriting ideas rather than the opposite — it is just a stereotypical fast-paced blues-rocker in the vein of 'My Babe', but at least the Shadows find the perfect pacing and Cliff is capable of singing it in a «dangerous» state of mind, building up from a menacing tone early on to a histrionic one, while Hank supports the frenzy with his own pitch-raising strategy. This is good stuff which you won't actually get from the Beatles because of their typical aversion to strictly blues-based numbers; in fact, it sounds very much like a precursor to the classic angry garage sound of the early Sixties, and would not feel out of place on **Nuggets** or any other such compilation.

That said, this is as far as «menace» goes on this album: everything else ranges from friendly pop-rock to sentimental balladry, with the exception of 'She's Gone', a Chicago-style mid-tempo blues-rock lament presaging some of the early Stones this time (do note the man's versatility — all of these may be inferior blueprints, but they *are* blueprints for the early careers of, like, 90% of classic British Invasion bands). 'You And I' is a nice steady-rollin' pop ballad in the vein of Buddy Holly; 'I Cannot Find A True Love' is something like a funny cross between 'That's Alright Mama' and 'I Got A Woman'; and 'Tell Me' gets the dubious achievement of *probably* being the first British song by a major star that puts its full trust into the power of "whoah whoah whoah"s and "yeah yeah yeah"s — the verse melody is pure Everly Brothers, but the chorus is something which the Beatles must have picked up quite early.

Curiously, those of the songs which are not credited to the Shadows seem to have been commissioned from the same team of corporate songwriters which was handling Elvis' career at the time — Otis Blackwell, Sid Tepper, Ben Weisman and Fred

Wise, Aaron Schroeder, etc. Overall, this isn't much of anything other than a symbolic wish to mold Cliff as Britain's answer to Elvis, and they'd have made a much more wise choice if they turned to Leiber and Stoller instead. Still, the name of Otis Blackwell at the very least sounds promising, and, true enough, 'You're Just The One To Do It' is quite a charming little ballad — *this* is a good example of how brilliantly you can resolve a three-line verse, one from which the authors of 'I'm Gonna Get You' could have learned a valuable lesson; and it is an excellent example of Cliff's flexibility and charisma as a singer, as you watch him smoothly descend from cooing serenader on the three-line verse to suave baritone charmer on the one-line chorus. So maybe he does do this thing as a *boy* where Elvis would have done the same as a *man*, but now that we are no longer in the cold grippin' hands of ageism, why should one necessarily be better than the other, right?

It could be tempting to speculate that an album like **Me And My Shadows** could have been a prelude to something great, but of course it could not: even with all the original songwriting, it is all about latching on to established formulas and modifying them with tiny tweaks here and there — no genuine signs of some sort of original vision, just enough of those little changes so as to be able to pocket most of the songwriting credits. Still, it is honorable enough that **Me And My Shadows** preserves a good dose of the rock'n'roll spirit, and that its pop inspiration comes from the likes of Buddy Holly and the Everlys rather than Pat Boone or Frankie Avalon: in that little interim era of teenage idols that separated classic Elvis from the Beatles, the presence of Cliff and the Shadows actually mattered. And out of all their records, this is the one which is still quite listenable and enjoyable today, regardless of historic context.





LISTEN TO CLIFF!

Album released:

1961

V A L U E
2 2 2 1 2

More info:



Tracks: 1) What'd I Say; 2) Blue Moon; 3) True Love Will Come To You; 4) Lover; 5) Unchained Melody; 6) Idle Gossip; 7) First Lesson In Love; 8) Almost Like Being In Love; 9) Beat Out Dat Rhythm On A Drum; 10) Memories Linger On; 11) Temptation; 12) I Live For You; 13) Sentimental Journey; 14) I Want You To Know; 15) We Kiss In A Shadow; 16) It's You.

REVIEW

Cliff's third studio album was released upon the heels of 'When The Girl In Your Arms Is The Girl In Your Heart' — an acoustic Tepper/Bennett «original» which could, perhaps, be mildly memorable if sung by Elvis, but hearing it sung by Cliff only makes you wonder if you'd thought any better of it if it had been sung by Elvis. Unfortunately, the same feeling accompanies much of **Listen To Cliff!**, an album that throws the promise of **Me And My Shadows** out the window and pretty much symbolizes Cliff's concession to the role of tame teen idol.



Although the Shadows still back Cliff on many of the numbers, all five Shadow-related compositions, credited to Bruce Welch and his friend Pete Chester, are unremarkable pop ballads — sweet, inobtrusive, with no major original hooks to speak of and no details worth mentioning. In fact, next to them the Rodgers and Hart standards like 'Blue Moon' and 'Lover' feel positively stunning — even if there are no reasons whatsoever to prefer this run-of-the-mill version of 'Blue Moon' as performed by the «Norrie Paramor Orchestra» to Billie Holiday or Elvis (heck, even Bob Dylan had a more musically interesting version on the universally hated **Self-Portrait**).

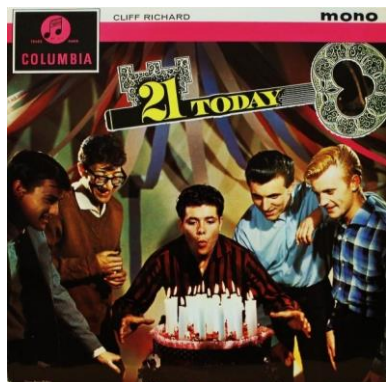
The album still pretends it might be of interest to the dying-out breed of rock'n'rollers by opening things up with a Rough

and Rowdy performance of Ray Charles' 'What I'd Say', with all the provocative lyrics taken out and, for no particular reason, replaced by a verse from 'Money (That's What I Want)' — and, what with the Shadows stepping in for the Raelettes on backing vocals, the song's infamous group sex act imitation now sounding more like a bunch of guys lugging heavy furniture across the room. (It doesn't even sound much like a group *gay* sex act imitation, which would at least have been a socially outstanding move back in 1961). It is still an okay performance, largely saved by Reliable Hank's immaculate instrumental break, but what is essentially the point of performing a quintessentially provocative number while taking out all the provocation? diet Coke all over again.

The only other instance of rock'n'roll on the album is stuck far away on the B-side, a cover of Fats Domino's 'I Want You To Know', whose main attraction, unsurprisingly, is once again a couple of jagged bluesy guitar breaks, very reminiscent in tone and structure of the types of solos Keith Richards would soon be playing on early Stones' numbers. Just a few more of these numbers couldn't have hurt — but alas, the closest we get to «energetic» elsewhere is 'Beat Out Dat Rhythm On A Drum' from the *Carmen Jones* musical, another strange as heck choice where little white boy Cliff Richard has to step into the shoes of big black girl Pearl Bailey and try to stir up jungle-level excitement... *why?*

The sad truth of the matter is that, of course, Cliff was still being marketed as the British answer to Elvis, and this transition had to mirror Elvis' own transition — if **Me And My Shadows** was Cliff's **Elvis Is Back!**, a record that could still combine pop hooks with leftover rock'n'roll energy, then **Listen To Cliff!** is more like his **Something For Everybody**, a record which openly admits that the rock'n'roll fad is largely over, the kids are all grown up, and society is all but ready to return to a more dignified and civilized existence. "I'm gonna take a Sentimental Journey, gonna set my heart at ease, gonna make a Sentimental Journey, to renew old memories" — no truer words have been spoken on the album. And while this was certainly not the end of Cliff's career, this was definitely the cut-off point after which he'd lost all hope to remain on the cutting edge of Britain's popular music.





21 TODAY

Album released:

Oct. 14, 1961

V A L U E

4 2 3 2 3

More info:



Tracks: 1) Happy Birthday To You; 2) Forty Days; 3) Catch Me; 4) How Wonderful To Know; 5) Tough Enough; 6) 50 Tears For Every Kiss; 7) The Night Is So Lonely; 8) Poor Boy; 9) Y'Arriva; 10) Outsider; 11) Tea For Two; 12) To Prove My Love For You; 13) Without You; 14) A Mighty Lonely Man; 15) My Blue Heaven; 16) Shame On You.

REVIEW

Okay, so it's a marketing gimmick and all, but believe it or not, Cliff Richard *did* actually turn 21 on October 14, 1961, and much as I would like to joke about how he ceased to be relevant on that very day, we shall actually have to wait a bit more, because (a) the Beatles were still not around and (b) this is actually a nice little album in its own right, seriously more enjoyable than **Listen To Cliff! (When You've Totally Run Out Of Sinatra Records)**. I do not know if the strategy was in any way connected to Cliff's coming of age, but the idea is to definitely and intentionally provide a Cliff-o-pedia, including a little bit of everything he did up to the present day and perhaps throw in a bit of extra. There's balladry, there's rock'n'roll, there's upbeat pop, some old standards, some pseudo-Mexican trash, some country-western, some blues, you name it, we got it, to everything that's happening in the world of music our answer in Britain is one and the same — Cliff Richard! (It was his first #1 record, by the way).



So, first and foremost getting 'Happy Birthday To You' out of the way (a nice surfing arrangement from the Shadows, interspersed by tons of barely intelligible «party banter» that, weirdly enough, presages the style of **The Beach Boys' Party!** by a good four years), let us take a quick look at the original material. The Shadows only contribute three tunes, of which 'Without You' is a catchy little Elvis-style pop rocker, while 'Shame On You' is a slightly more original early example

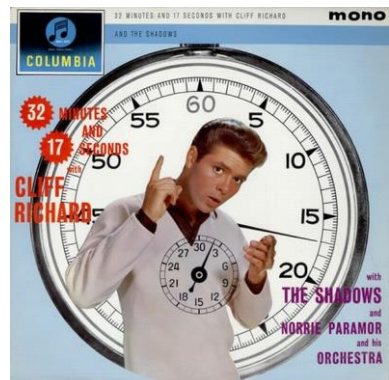
of pre-Merseybeat Britpop... wait, no, I think I am just confused by all the sweet yeah yeahs, because the melody is rather in the style of the Everly brothers. Of the third song, the honey-dripping ‘Y’Arriba’, the less said the better (it is for this kind of material that the horribly abused term «cultural appropriation» has been originally invented, I hope).

Two more tunes were commissioned from the Elvis-supporting team of Tepper and Bennett, both of them syrupy upbeat ballads whose blatant sentimental cuteness is not much helped by either Hank Marvin’s warm and wobbly guitar tones (‘Catch Me’) or the thin festival-style orchestration (‘Outsider’)... but I guess Cliff sings them with enough of his still believable teenage innocence to not come across as completely unbearable. Speaking of songwriters connected with Elvis, Cliff actually does a much better job on the toughened and tightened rock version of Johnny Otis’ ‘Tough Enough’, a song whose original catchiness suits the Shadows’ robotic style to a tee — I’d love to hear this kind of song delivered by the likes of John Lennon, but in his absence, Cliff Richard will have to do, as long as he can pull off a good roar on the chorus and as long as Hank keeps playing those alarm-like rock’n’roll licks.

For even more rock’n’roll, check out the cover of Chuck Berry’s ‘Thirty Days’ (which, for some reason, becomes ‘Forty Days’ — did they transcribe the words by ear? and did Chuck mess up his interdentials on the recording? bizarre...) and... well, actually, nothing else. But what is perhaps more interesting than Cliff’s meek take on Chuck Berry (nothing, really, that the Beatles or the Stones could not do with twice as much energy and debauchery) are the Shadows’ innovative takes on such old standards as ‘Tea For Two’, which is given a moody quasi-bossa nova arrangement, and ‘My Blue Heaven’, with some delicious bass work from Jet Harris; both songs also feature unpredictable key and tempo changes in their mid-sections, suggesting that the boys might have been thinking about coming up with a new kind of progressive jazz-pop (and then, of course, the Beatles came up and murdered that idea in its cradle).

All in all, this is definitely a rebound from the helpless sweetness of the previous album, if still not quite up to the energy and freshness standards of **Me And My Shadows**. At the very least there is enough subtle creative nuances here to suggest that, if not for the rock revolution, this style might have eventually grown into a truly mature brand of art-pop, well, I mean, given a decade or two... but, of course, the world just wasn’t going to wait *that* long, was it?





32 MINUTES AND 17 SECONDS

Album released:

V A L U E

Sept. 14, 1962

2 2 3 2 2

More info:



Tracks: 1) It'll Be Me; 2) So I've Been Told; 3) How Long Is Forever; 4) I'm Walkin' The Blues; 5) Turn Around; 6) Blueberry Hill; 7) Let's Make A Memory; 8) When My Dream Boat Comes Home; 9) I'm On My Way; 10) Spanish Harlem; 11) You Don't Know; 12) Falling In Love With Love; 13) Who Are We To Say; 14) I Wake Up Cryin'.

REVIEW

Damn digital era — *my* copy of this album actually runs for 33 minutes and 16 seconds, and I have no idea if this is just because of extra intervals between tracks, or because there has been a bit of slowing down during the analog-to-digital transfer, or because it's the general theory of relativity that's been at work here... though the latter would probably be too much of an honor for an album that is not in the least memorable. Actually, it is not a serious drop down in quality from **21 Today**, just a bit blander and less inspired on most counts, giving you a very clear idea that absolutely nothing has changed in the field of British popular music from late '61 to late '62. Three weeks later, the Beatles would release 'Love Me Do' — which is, even all alone by itself, superior in spirit, if not execution, to everything on this LP — but Cliff's reign would still continue unabated for several more months. It is kinda telling, though, that in this case he ended up upstaged by his own backing band: the Shadows' second album, released almost at the same time, went all the way to the top of the charts while **32 Minutes** stalled at #3.

Indeed, it seems as if the Shadows, whose tracks now occupy slightly less than half of the album, were by now saving their best efforts for their own career — as evidenced by the fairly lackluster cover of Jerry Lee Lewis' 'It'll Be Me' which opens the album, on which Cliff clearly imitates Jerry's grinning singing style but can never hope to match it because, like the good



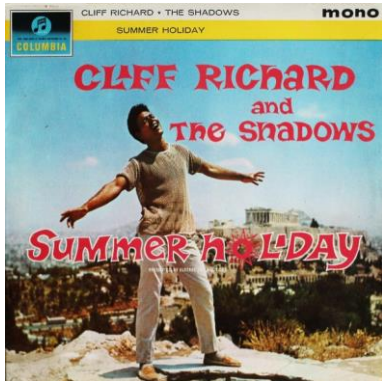
clean English kid he is, he always has to keep decorum and restraint in the back of his mind. Hank Marvin, too, sounds distraught and unfocused with his solo, and the slow-as-hell and robotic rhythm section has anything but true rock'n'roll drive on its own mind. Released as a single, the song still became a Top 10 hit in many European countries, but this simply reflected ongoing hunger for the real thing.

Other Shadows-backed numbers include 'Blueberry Hill', this time imitating Elvis with the same kind of pale-shadow effect; another Tepper-Bennett original, 'I'm Walkin' The Blues', a kiddy ditty with one of the cheesiest bridge sections ever found in these cheesemasters' repertoire ("when you moved out, Mr. Blues walked in" — who the hell calls the blues *mister?*); an okayish rewrite of 'Saints' ('When My Dreamboat Comes Home') on which Brian Bennett's powerhouse drumming may be the only point worth mentioning; and a very, very weird arrangement of the blues song 'You Don't Know', credited to doo-wop artist Walter Spriggs and formerly recorded by B. B. King — for some reason, the band here thought that it would be cool to set it to the instrumental hook of 'Hoochie Coochie Man' and rework the vocal part to the melody of 'Fever'. Oh, and utilize only acoustic guitars for the recording. The result is... well, at least it's a little weird.

Under these circumstances, Norrie Paramor's orchestral tracks almost end up looking superior, particularly the solid cover of 'Spanish Harlem' and the proto-Dusty Springfield upbeat vibe of Bill Crompton's 'Let's Make A Memory'. Still way too many Tepper-Bennett contributions on this side of the divide, though; but at least the album closes with a Burt Bacharach composition ('I Wake Up Cryin'), and although I have never been swayed over by the Bacharach legend, at least this song has a funny spider-ish bassline saving it from dissolving into murky orchestral sap.

On the whole, though, trying to divide these songs into «quality cuts» and «filler tripe» is a rotten affair — it is another of those records where you either buy into it or not, period. At least there was some sense of purpose behind **21 Today** (to celebrate Cliff's birthday!), but this follow-up does not even try to surprise you with the diversity factor, and fails more so than before to convince the world that the UK pop scene is anything more than a second-rate imitation of the US scene.





SUMMER HOLIDAY

Album released:

Jan. 18, 1963

V A L U E
 3 2 2 1 2

More info:



Tracks: 1) Seven Days To A Holiday; 2) Summer Holiday; 3) Let Us Take You For A Ride; 4) Les Girls; 5) Round And Round; 6) **Foot Tapper**; 7) Stranger In Town; 8) Orlando's Mime; 9) Bachelor Boy; 10) A Swingin' Affair; 11) Really Waltzing; 12) All At Once; 13) Dancing Shoes; 14) Jugoslav Wedding; 15) The Next Time; 16) Big News.

REVIEW

Summer Holiday was not the first Cliff Richard soundtrack (the almost equally popular **The Young Ones** preceded it by about a year), and certainly not the last, but given that it was arguably the most commercially successful and yielded the largest number of hit singles, this is the one I have chosen to briefly touch upon as a representative sample of Cliff's movie era, forfeiting the rest. In all seriousness, it is hilarious just how literally Cliff's managers took to heart the idea that he should always function as the British shadow of Elvis — meaning that by early 1963, his career revolved almost entirely around acting and movie soundtracks, and even as the whirlwind of Beatlemania was shaking old-fashioned values to the core, they kept doing and doing it, even if the UK film industry was never in a position to catch up to the speed of Hollywood. *Summer Holiday* was followed by *Wonderful Life* in 1964, then *Finders Keepers* in 1966, establishing the «Cliff Richard musical» formula, and although in retrospect it seems like this decision at least helped Cliff establish a relatively firm and stable niche (and not go crazy from public oblivion or anything), it certainly killed off any hopes of getting him to somehow fit in with the times, one way or another.

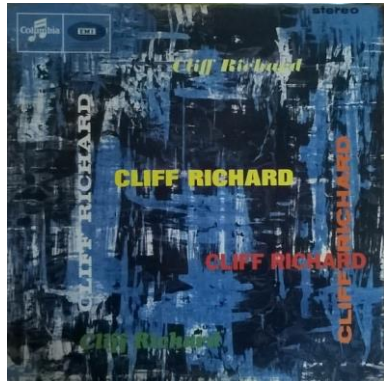


The example of *Summer Holiday* is telling — both the movie and the album are pure sentimental fluff, typical British musical fodder whose melodies, even when they exist and are potentially attractive, are so choked up with ritz and glitz that you instinctively begin reaching for your top hat (even if, admittedly, Cliff never wore one in the movie). Tracks such as the opening ‘Seven Days To A Holiday’ simply put you on a vaudeville merry-go-round and tell you to dance the night, all your troubles, and anything that might remain of your brain away. Of course, there are moments in time and space when this style is acceptable, but coming from the artist behind the UK’s first rock’n’roll hit, it is generally depressing.

It gets a little better when the A.B.S. Orchestra and the Michael Sammes Singers go away — unfortunately, they come back *way* too often — and the Shadows step into the light: the title track, which was a real big hit, is a lightweight singalong pop ballad with nice lead licks from Hank Marvin, though still marred by excessive honey-drippin’ strings from the Norrie Paramor Orchestra. Alas, it gets best when Cliff disappears completely and the Shadows are left all alone for a few minutes: ‘Foot Tapper’ is one of their best instrumentals — their last #1, the future theme song to *Sounds Of The ’60s*, and just an overall fantastic tune whose lead guitar melody borrows a bit from the rockabilly lingo, the twist idiom, and peters out in pure pop fashion. The other two instrumentals, ‘Les Girls’ and ‘Round And Round’, aren’t half-bad either — the second one, in particular, has an almost gritty guitar tone for the Shadows’ standards, and while it’s on, those painful memories of the A.B.S. Orchestra recede deep in the back of my brain.

Only for a while, though, because once the Shadows’ three-pack is over, we are back in schmaltz territory. Fast forward a big chunk of the album, and you get Cliff back with the band for ‘Dancing Shoes’, a passable and catchy twist number with a funny alarm-bell guitar lead; ‘The Next Time’, a passable and catchy ballad with a bit of that oh-so-early-Sixties autumnal French feel; and ‘Big News’, a fast-rolling pop song with an annoyingly repetitive chorus. But at least all these three songs have signs of life to them, which is more than can be said for the rest. Actually, nothing much can be said about the rest, other than as far as British schmaltz goes, this is fairly high quality schmaltz — but I do not usually write about schmaltz, and even my forced popoptimistic training of the 2010s has not led me to re-evaluate schmaltz as a potential artistic high for the pre-rock’n’roll era, rather than the outdated superficial muzak which it was rightly viewed as by people with good musical taste at the time.





CLIFF RICHARD

Album released:

April 1965

V A L U E
2 2 2 1 1

More info:



Tracks: 1) Angel; 2) Sway; 3) I Only Came To Say Goodbye; 4) Take Special Care; 5) Magic Is The Moonlight; 6) House Without Windows; 7) Razzle Dazzle; 8) I Don't Wanna Love You; 9) It's Not For Me To Say; 10) You Belong To My Heart; 11) Again; 12) Perfidia; 13) Kiss; 14) Reelin' And Rockin'.

REVIEW

I wish I could say that Cliff Richard's first «proper» album after two years of non-stop musical soundtracks and suave recordings in Italian and Spanish for the Hot Latin Market was a «return to form»™. After all, it was self-titled, and a self-titled album in the middle of a stagnant career often means some sort of reboot, rehaul, reinvention, or at least an attempt at shaking off some of the old cobwebs. But given that the recording sessions for the album are listed as having been stretched all the way back to 1962 (!), and seeing as how the opening track is a cover of an Elvis movie song from that same year, you know your hopes will be nipped in the bud before you even put the record on.



If we set March 22, 1965 — the day Bob Dylan's **Bringing It All Back Home** was unleashed upon the world — as that one symbolic date which separates rock music's innocent childhood from its responsive adolescence — then, formally, **Cliff Richard** (the LP), coming out just a few weeks later, can be excused for not paying one iota of attention to whatever was happening out there. The problem is that it is corny, boring, and forgettable even according to the innocent standards of 1963–64. Even if the record, as usual, is still divided into the «sweeter» half with the Norrie Paramour Orchestra and the

«harder» half with the Shadows, this division is felt nowhere near as strongly as in the good old days of **Me And My Shadows** or even **21 Today**. This is because when he is with the Shadows, Cliff now prefers to use them for his tepid embrace of calypso and bossa nova, rather than for rock'n'roll — or for suave country balladry, only a few steps removed from the generic sap of the old standards he entrusts to the Orchestra.

There are exactly two rock'n'roll oldies in the track listing — one of them is Bill Haley's 'Razzle Dazzle', done very close to the original and adding absolutely nothing to it: Hank Marvin imitating Franny Beecher and Cliff imitating Haley himself is a curious one-time experience, but lends itself to repeated listenings with about the same ease as the Foo Fighters covering the Rolling Stones on some tribute album. The other is Chuck Berry's 'Reelin' And Rockin' (actually, a mash-up between that one and 'Around And Around'), on which Cliff and the band show that they can neither capture and expand upon Chuck's sense of humor nor push the song into a properly aggressive direction like the Stones could. In the end, both songs just feel like a couple of stale bones thrown out to «rock'n'roll fans» who still need some proof that this is the same guy who did 'Move It' six years earlier.

A few of these songs were apparently recorded in Nashville in late August of 1964, when Cliff's American marketeers decided to bring him over to record some properly «American» material for his ever-more-skeptical overseas customers. This was the session that yielded the non-LP single 'The Minute You're Gone', which still failed to make any impression on the US charts but did go all the way to #1 in the UK (Cliff's first #1 without the Shadows); the B-side, 'Again', which was even slower and sappier, did make it onto the LP, as did 'Angel', the Elvis cover. All three are about as interesting in terms of melody, arrangement, and passion, as the average Doris Day record.

Of the Latin-style songs, the less said, the better just as well; I do like how the Shadows manage to throw in a faint echo of Buddy Holly into Cliff's otherwise completely lifeless version of 'Perfidia' — if you follow Hank's brightly jangling guitar, you shall notice him briefly going off into 'Words Of Love' during the instrumental section. (The Shadows themselves did a much more musically inviting instrumental version of 'Perfidia' without Cliff three years earlier, on their **Out Of The Shadows** album — should have stuck to that arrangement). But 'Sway', following the Dean Martin / Norman Gimbel rewrite of '¿Quién Sera?', is a pure waste of the band's acoustic guitar skills; and 'Magic Is The Moonlight' kind of turns me off with its title already — leave that stuff to Bing Crosby and Nat King Cole, who were at least *experts*.

You know things really go downhill when the catchiest song on the album is a recent Ricky Nelson recording (Mann-Weill's 'I Don't Wanna Love You') and when it sounds slothy and overproduced next to the Ricky Nelson recording in question. You

know they *really really* go downhill when the most emotional performance is delivered on the pop standard 'House Without Windows' and you are almost ready to go, «wow, he finally made a bit of an effort on this one!», before you remember that he is just trying to mimick Roy Orbison's delivery from 1963's **In Dreams**. Blast this modern era of total availability, right? In 1965, there must have been plenty of British households without immediate access to Roy Orbison's imported LP-only material. These days, all you have to do is the tiniest bit of clicking around, and the need for pale and limp substitutes dissipates instantaneously.

Overall, this is just bad — a very, very dull pop record. It may be relatively free of thoroughly tasteless embarrassments as may be encountered here and there on contemporary Elvis movie soundtracks, but at least those Elvis embarrassments could at least give you curious topics to write upon. **Cliff Richard** is simply dead as a doornail, easily the least interesting and exciting record he'd come up with up to that point. Still made the UK Top 10, though — it's a love that lasts forever, it's a love that has no past.

