

Are We Still Rolling?

Phill Brown

*Studios, Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll -
One Man's Journey Recording Classic Albums*



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One Man's Journey Recording Classic Albums

To Sally:

Thank you for everything.

I could not have achieved as much without you.

*“There’s my truth,
there’s your truth,
and then there’s The Truth.”*

-Steve Smith

*“This is my truth -
some may disagree.”*

-Phill Brown

**In memory of musicians, producers, family and friends
who did not make it to 2010:**

Robert Ash, Mark Bolan, John Bonham, Lenny Breau,
Linda Brown, Vicki Brown, Leslie Brown, Jenny Bruce, David
Byron, Sandy Denny, Dave Domlio, Jim Capaldi, Mongezi Feza,
Lowell George, Keith Harwood, Alex Harvey, Bill Hicks,
Nicky Hopkins, Brian Jones, Paul Kossoff, Vincent Crane,
Ronnie Lane, John Martyn, George Melly, Bob Marley,
Steve Marriott, Jimmy Miller, Denise Mills, Willie Mitchell,
Roy Morgan, Mickie Most, Harry Nilsson, Kenji Omura,
Robert Palmer, Mike Patto, Cozy Powell, Keith Relf, Lou Reizner,
Nigel Rouse, Del Shannon, Norman Smith, Alan Spenner,
Guy Stevens, Peter Veitch, Kevin Wilkinson, Suzanne Wightman
and Chris Wood.

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One Man's Journey Recording Classic Albums

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Foreword

This is not a technical manual (although it will certainly function as one) - it's a contemporary thriller. Phill Brown is a sound engineer. It's a mystery, even to people in the music business, as to exactly what a sound engineer does - are they part of the creative process or merely technicians? In the past 30 years, recording studios have moved from the engine room of a submarine to the bridge of a starship - baffling the outsider - although recording music will always be the same un-guessable adventure. That's what Phil Brown has written here - an adventure story.

Look at the chapter headings. Laid out in the form of a diary, he takes us through the crazy journey that is making music. Not as an academic journal, but as a spiritual experience. With his laconic navigation, we're steered through the centre of the ego hurricanes of creative madness. He is the Jiminy Cricket of recording sessions, and his excellent recollections of the excesses of morons and geniuses involved in creating melodies and rhythms for us to enjoy are sheer entertainment. It's a "how-to" book and a love story! A self-driven need to understand why creative people do what they do, and how to survive it and them.

— Robert Palmer, 9 September 1997

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-------|
| <i>Introduction</i> | – i |
| 01. <u>OLYMPIC STUDIOS (part one) – 02/11/67</u> | – 2 |
| 02. <u>OLYMPIC STUDIOS (part two) – 26/03/68</u> | – 11 |
| 03. <u>THE ROLLING STONES – 10/06/68</u> | – 22 |
| 04. <u>CANADA – 28/06/69</u> | – 32 |
| 05. <u>ISLAND STUDIOS – 21/07/70</u> | – 47 |
| 06. <u>JEFF BECK – 09/09/71</u> | – 61 |
| 07. <u>HARRY NILSSON – 29/02/72</u> | – 70 |
| 08. <u>MURRAY HEAD – 01/09/72</u> | – 74 |
| 09. <u>BOB MARLEY & THE WAILERS – 20/02/73</u> | – 91 |
| 10. <u>JOE BROWN – 04/05/74</u> | – 100 |
| 11. <u>ROBERT PALMER – 15/05/74</u> | – 104 |
| 12. <u>DANA GILLESPIE – 03/07/74</u> | – 115 |
| 13. <u>ROBERT PALMER – 18/03/75</u> | – 128 |
| 14. <u>PINK FLOYD – 15/11/74</u> | – 147 |
| 15. <u>STOMU YAMASHITA/ROCK FOLLIES – 16/02/76</u> | – 150 |
| 16. <u>ROBERT PALMER – 12/06/76</u> | – 164 |
| 17. <u>JOE SOUTH – 05/10/76</u> | – 174 |
| 18. <u>STEVE WINWOOD – 27/10/76</u> | – 184 |
| 19. <u>JOHN MARTYN – 11/11/77</u> | – 200 |
| 20. <u>SHAKIN' STEVENS – 12/01/78</u> | – 214 |
| 21. <u>ROXY MUSIC – 26/09/78</u> | – 224 |
| 22. <u>PAUL CARRACK – 19/03/80</u> | – 237 |
| 23. <u>MURRAY HEAD – 10/10/81</u> | – 250 |
| 24. <u>RED BOX – 04/09/84</u> | – 264 |
| 25. <u>GO WEST – 13/03/86</u> | – 272 |
| 26. <u>TALK TALK – 05/09/86</u> | – 277 |
| 27. <u>TALK TALK – 11/02/91</u> | – 290 |
| 28. <u>ALAN SPENNER – 28/07/91</u> | – 304 |
| 29. <u>.O.RANG – 14/11/91</u> | – 308 |
| 30. <u>THROWING MUSES – 07/11/93</u> | – 315 |
| 31. <u>FUSANOSUKE KONDO – 23/05/94</u> | – 323 |
| 32. <u>MARK HOLLIS – 21/06/96</u> | – 336 |
| 33. <u>DIDO – 30/05/07</u> | – 351 |
| 34. <u>EPILOGUE – 11/08</u> | – 361 |
| <i>Glossary</i> | – 366 |

Introduction

In the spring of 1995 I was in hospital having 12 inches of colon removed – an experience I can't recommend despite the considerable skill of Mr. Chilvers, the surgeon at St Anthony's Hospital, Cheam, in Surrey. It seemed that my lifestyle had finally caught up with me. The two consultants and the other doctors I came into contact with were all in agreement about the cause of my predicament. As one of them said, "Mr. Brown, this situation has been created by your long working days, poor diet, sedentary lifestyle and the combination of continuous adrenaline rushes and intense stress. The old saying 'bust a gut' comes to mind."

During my seven-day stay at St. Anthony's and previous two weeks of purgatory in a hospital in Tunbridge Wells, I had plenty of time to contemplate what I realised with surprise was nearly 30 years in the music industry. The doctors were right – my present poor state of health was in many ways the legacy of this career. However, considering the abuse that my system had suffered and the high casualty rate among my many friends and acquaintances, I reflected that my situation could have been a lot worse. At least I was still alive, which was a good position from which to start my recovery. While lying in my hospital bed with a drip in my arm and a cocktail of, for once, completely legal drugs pouring through my body, I consoled myself by recalling the more enjoyable projects I had been involved with. I had worked with some of the greatest acts in the business, including Jimi Hendrix, Joe Cocker, Traffic, Spooky Tooth, Jeff Beck, Led Zeppelin, Robert Palmer, Bob Marley, Steve Winwood, Harry Nilsson, Atomic Rooster, Stomu Yamashta, John Martyn, Little Feat, Roxy Music and Talk Talk.

ARE WE STILL ROLLING?

Now, in my hospital bed in 1995, I was unable to work at all for the first time in years, and my thoughts inevitably turned once again to past events. It seemed a good moment to look at my entire "story" so far.

When I began work at the bottom of the studio hierarchy as a tape operator, I discovered that there was an informal system of apprenticeship in the recording industry. I was expected to learn by watching and listening while I made tea and performed other mundane jobs about the studio. However, I never resented being the "dogsbody". To work in a studio and to train under such engineers as Keith Grant, Glyn Johns and Eddie Kramer was a privilege, and I gained a unique approach and attitude towards recording that I carried with me through the next 30 years. Although in those early days everything seemed strange and new, I could have no notion of the crazy sessions that lay ahead, the extraordinary people I would work with or the wildly varied types of music I would help to create.

The sequence of events that led me to become a sound recording engineer began when I was still at school in the early 1960s. In 1964 my elder brother Terry started working at Olympic Studios in London as a trainee sound engineer. Since leaving school, he had been working at the post room of J. Walter Thompson, the advertising agency where our father had worked for 15 years. My brother was expected to rise through the ranks and become successful in the advertising industry. To me this seemed a dismal fate. However, one day Terry delivered a package to Olympic Studios. He caught a glimpse of an exotic world of unconventional characters, mysterious equipment and most attractive of all, exciting music. He decided to ask for a job at Olympic. My parents were not keen on this idea. They were conventional and careful in outlook, and were concerned that Terry would lose his pension and security.

At that time I was 13 years old and in my third year as a day pupil at Stanborough Park, a private day and boarding school in Garston, Watford. The school was run by the Seventh Day Adventists – a non-conformist Christian sect with a firm moral code and strict principles. Children from all over the world were sent to Stanborough Park by parents who upheld these religious beliefs, but the school was also attended by local children. Most of these had failed their 11-plus examinations, an ordeal to which all children in state schools were subjected at the time. The successful minority was creamed off to a grammar school. The rest, which included me, would have to make do with “secondary modern” education. The only alternative was to opt out. This is what my parents decided I should do, due to the poor reputation of the three secondary modern schools within the area.

I found the combination of religion, strict morals and discipline that was enforced by Stanborough Park very difficult to deal with, particularly during my final two years at the school. I resented all the trivial rules and regulations: “Don’t be out of bounds. Wear a cap at all times when off the school grounds. Keep hair short, clean and tidy.” Plus I didn’t like being force-fed religious dogma and moral values. Each day there was a half-hour morning assembly, with a strong emphasis on religion. Once a month we would “march” into assembly to the music “Triumphal March” From *Aida* (by Giuseppe Verdi), and then a guest speaker would preach to us all. It may have been a Seventh Day Adventist parson from the other side of the world, or perhaps a local policeman. Once a year there was “Health Week”, where assembly became two hours long. Jars containing hearts, lungs and brains from both the healthy and the sick would be held up in front of the entire school to illustrate the perilous effects of smoking and drinking. One teacher, Mr. French, fainted onto the piano on his first viewing. Whether or not this

ARE WE STILL ROLLING?

experience affected him permanently, I have no idea, but as for the pupils the effects usually faded by the third viewing. This bizarre and gross annual performance did nothing to put me off smoking or drinking, and as with many a child, the effect of such an exacting and inflexible régime at school was more or less the opposite of what was intended. I developed a lifelong attitude towards rules and authority that has always been sceptical, to put it mildly.

When Terry left the advertising agency and started working at Olympic Studios, I began to see that there might be alternatives to the rigid attitude of mind promoted by my schoolteachers. Beyond that, I saw a possible way of avoiding the kind of working life that was led by my father and by other adults in my family – a life that appeared to me to be boring in the extreme.

After he had been at Olympic for about four months, Terry asked me if I would like to travel to work with him to see the studio. I was delighted. At the time my brother drove a 1947 Triumph Roadster, a large, low-slung two-seater that looked unusual among the family saloons of the day. One Saturday morning we both got into the car and set off for London, leaving behind the semi-detached house in North Watford where our parents had lived for 20 years. In retrospect it seems like the first step of a very long journey.

I can't remember exactly what I was expecting Olympic Studios to be like, but it wasn't a narrow, three-storey, bizarre-looking building. It was in a mews off Carlton Street. Evidently it had been used previously as a Jewish synagogue and later as a mortuary. Terry parked the car outside the studio in the mews – at that time there were fewer restrictions on car parking in central London. He unlocked the street door, and we found ourselves in a small reception area.

It was a Saturday, so there was no one at the reception desk, and the building was strangely quiet. Part of Terry's job was to prepare the studio for the day's session an hour or so before the musicians and the rest of the staff arrived.

Terry showed me the main studio – Studio One – which ran the whole width of the building. The walls, ceiling and isolation screens were all covered in cream-coloured acoustic pegboard tiles. The hushed atmosphere was now even more noticeable because of the "dead" acoustics of the recording room. In one corner there was a grand piano, a Hammond organ and a large collection of mic stands, cables and headphones.

Down in the basement I was taken through a series of small rooms, including ones used for maintenance, tape copying and tape storage. All these rooms had un-plastered brick walls, painted white. Fixed to them (but not concealed) were all the audio, telephone, electricity cables and air conditioning ducts for the offices and studio. It was an untidy and dirty area.

On the first floor was the control room. This was set parallel to the studio and looked down into it. Like the studio itself, the walls were covered in off-white pegboard acoustic tiles. There were four large loudspeaker cabinets standing on the floor against the wall. These, I learned, were Tannoy/Lockwood monitors. Years later in the mid-1970s, these became my favourite monitor speakers for recording and mixing. Immediately in front of the Tannoys was the sound desk. By today's standards this was extremely small and basic, with just 12 input channels. Each input had six large, Bakelite knobs to control top, mid and bass EQ, feeds for the headphones and a track/record selector switch. In the centre of the desk were four round VU meters and below

ARE WE STILL ROLLING?

these, four toggle switches to select monitors. Cables and wires oozed from the back of the desk and disappeared into either the wall or boxes lying on the floor. To the left of the desk was a small window giving a restricted view down into the studio room. To the right was a small seating area for about three or four people. On the remaining wall and floor space were the large 4-track tape machine and a couple of 1-track, mono machines, all housed in metal cabinets. Wires ran from these, connecting to a patchbay, amps and meters in metal cabinets on the wall. It all looked very dirty, with lighter patches on the wall where equipment had once been but was now removed, and there were badly worn areas of carpet, especially directly behind the desk.

In a separate building across the mews was Studio Two, where there was basic equipment for jingles and voiceovers, plus tape copying and editing facilities.

During this and many subsequent weekend visits to Olympic Studios, I gradually formed a picture in my mind of how the studio was laid out, and began to make sense of what at first looked like a confused jumble of equipment. Olympic then was perhaps a bit seedy, especially when compared to some of the studios I eventually worked in, but for me at the age of 13 it was an Aladdin's cave. For some months I spent every available weekend with Terry, soaking up the atmosphere at the studio and sitting in on sessions with such artists as The Yardbirds, Marianne Faithfull and P. J. Proby. I met several musicians, notably members of The Yardbirds, (including bassist Paul Samwell-Smith and Keith Relf, the harmonica player and singer), Big Jim Sullivan, who was a session guitarist for P. J. Proby, and Clem Cattini, a session drummer and previous member of The Tornados and Johnny Kidd & the Pirates. I would come to work with all these people in the years ahead.

One Sunday in 1965, I was at the studio when The Yardbirds were there to record a single. They were young and brimming with enthusiasm. By the end of that one-day session, they had recorded, overdubbed and mixed "For Your Love", which soon became their first Top 10 hit. Such a feat would be almost impossible today. Suddenly all I wanted to do was to be in that environment and record music all day – I was convinced that it would be brilliant fun and far better than "working" for a living.

Terry introduced me to many people from the world of music, including two staff members at Olympic, who in later years were to have a significant influence on my career: Keith Grant and Frank Owen. I would often sit in Studio Two with Frank while he mixed voiceovers on commercials or edited 1/4-inch tapes together for shows on Radio Luxembourg. He showed me how the tape machines and desk operated. All the projects were usually mixed to mono, as the wonders of stereo were still in their infancy. For voiceovers a backing track would be played and this, along with the live vocal, would be recorded onto a second mono machine. I was intrigued by these aspects of the job just as much as the "glamour" of the band sessions. In time Frank taught me how to edit 1/4-inch tape. I returned home and tried editing tape recordings of the Top 20 on my Brenell mono tape machine.

It was a great experience watching Frank and Terry making records on what would now be considered to be antiquated 4-track equipment. Even then I realised that with this way of working it was very important that the performance, the sounds and any necessary mixing were correct at the source. With more than one instrument recorded on each track, there was little that could be changed later. By watching them work and talking to Terry on the drives home to

ARE WE STILL ROLLING?

Watford in his Triumph, I learnt a great deal. By today's standards Olympic would be little more than the equivalent of a basic demo studio, but at the time the banks of equipment and machines looked impressive. In addition to Marianne Faithfull and The Yardbirds, The Rolling Stones, Dusty Springfield and Jonathan King had all worked at the studio during the mid-'60s.

After recording many classic records, including "Substitute" by The Who and "Everyone's Gone to the Moon" by Jonathan King, Terry left Olympic in 1965. Moving up the career ladder, he went to work as an engineer at Lansdowne Studios on Notting Hill Gate, under its studio manager and owner Adrian Kerridge. I still went and sat in on sessions with Terry whenever I could. During one of the visits to Lansdowne I watched a session for The Smoke as they recorded "My Friend Jack". This was the first time I witnessed a stereo mix. The single was immediately banned by the BBC, as the lyrics were said to promote drug abuse ("My friend Jack eats sugar lumps").

Meanwhile the path of my career at Stanborough Park is described by my school reports, which began with "a promising term" in 1962 and ended with "seems to have thrown in the towel" in 1967. By June 1967 when I had finished my exams and left, I had decided to be a sound recording engineer.

Having left Stanborough Park School and needing to support myself, I began working in the gents' outfitters department of the Co-operative store on St Albans Road in North Watford. The shop has long since disappeared. I sold the full range of collarless shirts, Y-fronts, thermals, suits, cuff links, tie pins and such. It was interesting for the first two weeks, but then it became the most boring, dead-end job imaginable. I would arrive at 8:30 a.m. and make tea

for Mrs. Metcalf. She was a large woman, about 50 years old, who smoked Craven A cigarettes. We had access to a backroom that contained a single gas ring, two chairs, a table and a shelf with a kettle and two mugs on it. There was a curtain that screened this room off from the shop. The weekdays were slow, with little to do except talk to Mrs. Metcalf. On Fridays and Saturday mornings we would be very busy, and the time would go quickly. The only real action and excitement that ever occurred was one Friday morning after the store had been burgled during the night.

Mrs. Metcalf had a habit of finishing sentences by saying, "...I've worked in retail all my life." I soon became determined that whatever else might happen, this would not happen to me. I didn't like the way I was told what to do – it was too much like school. However much I hated the work, I was cheerful about the future because I had already asked Keith Grant about the possibility of a job at Olympic when I'd seen him at Terry's wedding (to Linda Knowles) in September 1966. Keith had said that as soon as a vacancy came up he would let me know. At the time unemployment figures were low. There was a general feeling of "get out there and do it", and as with many a 16-year-old, the idea of failure never entered my head. I was pleased but not surprised therefore when four months later Keith offered me a job as tape op. "I've got a trainee job going. I'll pay you £10 a week. Are you interested?" he asked.

I started on the 2nd of November 1967 at Olympic Studios, which by then had moved to Barnes, just over the river from Hammersmith, West London. By this time my brother Terry had left Lansdowne and was building Morgan Studios on Willesden High Road for a partnership consisting of Barry Morgan, Monty Babson and Leon Calvert. He still worked occasionally as a freelance engineer at Olympic Studios,

ARE WE STILL ROLLING?

and we worked together on various projects, including *Gorilla* by The Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band and the second, self-titled Traffic album. We got on very well – we always had – and there were no ego or big brother problems. When we were working together on sessions, we were often referred to as “The Brown Brothers”.

The new Olympic Studios were built in 1966 in a converted cinema on Church Road, Barnes, London, just 100 yards from the Red Lion Public House. In this studio at the beginning of November 1967, I began my training as a sound recording engineer.

Olympic Studios (*part one*)

2 November 1967

At Olympic Studios I joined the staff of Keith Grant, Vic Smith, Alan O'Duffy and Eddie Kramer – engineers; Anna Menzies – studio booker; Sandra Read (whom I was later to date) – assistant; Dick Swettenham, Jo Yu, Hugh Tennant and Clive Green – maintenance men. Swettenham and Green went on to build Helios and Cadac desks; Jo Yu helped build Island Studios, Basing Street during 1969; and Hugh Tennant built RAK Studios for producer Mickie Most in the early 1970s. There were also Andy Johns and George Chkiantz – at that time referred to as tape ops (in later years this designation was replaced by the term “assistant engineer”). I started on the 2nd of November 1967 for a wage of £10 per week.

I spent the first week sitting in on Keith Grant's sessions. Keith was about 26 years old, 5 feet 9 inches tall, with short, dark hair, piecing eyes, goatee beard and a large beer gut, and he reminded me of the actor James Robertson Justice. He had an easy humour out of the studio, but at work had strong views on everything and was opinionated and strict. I spent my first couple of days sitting with the clients on the couch in front of the console, facing the control room window, just watching and listening. There was a great deal to take in, but fortunately because of my visits to studios with Terry over the past three years, it was not all foreign to me. Sometimes I would help Kevin Hewitt make tea for the musicians or move isolation screens between sessions. Kevin – an Irishman then in his late 40s – helped set up the studio for big orchestral sessions, and served as tea boy during the Musicians' Union's prescribed breaks. I was a little nervous on sessions at first, and spent most of my time quietly adjusting to this new environment. It was the complete opposite to

ARE WE STILL ROLLING?

my sheltered years at Stanborough Park School. I was now around people who smoked and drank heavily, spoke with sharp, aggressive wit and appeared to spend most of their time bent on enjoying themselves. It was a different world, and I found it refreshing and intensely exciting.

During my second week I learned to load and operate the Ampex 4-track tape machine and began to gain a basic understanding of the desk. There was a great deal of information to remember during sessions, but almost immediately I learned Keith's number one rule: "Don't speak unless spoken to. Otherwise keep quiet." Within two weeks I had learned about the range of different types of microphones and their positioning, the assortment of leads and power packs, how to edit 1/4-inch tape and make tape copies. I began working on Keith's sessions, the first of which was for Anita Harris and the album *Just Loving You*, recorded with an 80-piece orchestra. Alan Tew and David Whitaker were the musical arrangers, and Mike Margolis (Anita's lover, whom she later married) produced the album. The first time Keith called out, "Okay Phill, record," and then down the studio talkback, "Okay guys, we're rolling. Take one." What a buzz!

Anita Harris was small and attractive, with medium length, light chestnut brown hair, big brown eyes and a wonderful smile. She was a happy, friendly woman - as soon as she arrived each morning, she would come straight into the control room in a cloud of exotic perfume and give everyone a big kiss. She had no discernible ego, worked hard and treated all those involved as being equally important to the project. This included me, and I soon felt I was one of the crew.

The sessions were certainly "in at the deep end" for me. I would arrive two hours before the session was due to start and help Kevin to set up the screens, microphones, music stands, chairs and ashtrays. During the session itself my job was to operate the buttons for record, rewind and playback on the 4-track tape machine, and to

keep a list of takes, marking them either "F/S" (False Start), "B/D" (Break Down), "C" (Complete) or "Master". I also replaced any broken headphones and made tea. It was common practice for Keith to record an 80-piece orchestra in stereo on two tracks of the 4-track machine, leaving the other two tracks for vocal overdubs. It was impossible to change the balance of any instrument later (there was no control over the level of the recorded bass drum or hi-hat, for example), and any solo rides, echoes or individual effects that were required were added live to this stereo mix as the musicians played. Despite these limitations the results were often impressive, and remain so even when compared with recordings made with the advanced 48- and 56-track computerized technology of the 1990s.

Anita's project was followed almost immediately by another large orchestral session, this time with Dusty Springfield for the album *Dusty... Definitely*. She appeared just as she did on her television shows, with blonde, backcombed hair and eyes made large with heavy mascara and eyeliner. Only her clothes were different, as instead of her usual dresses, she wore shirts and cord trousers. Dusty had originally been very successful with the group The Springfields in the early '60s, and had her first solo hit in 1963 with "I Only Want To Be With You". Since then she had had at least 13 Top 20 hits and had appeared in her own television show. In contrast to the work with Anita, these sessions were more difficult. This was mainly due to Dusty keeping herself somewhat withdrawn from the proceedings and from the people involved. She sang very well, but appeared unhappy and troubled and was often in tears. She did not seem to enjoy male company, and mainly dealt with her manager, Vicky Wickham. Keith made up for the lack of humour on the sessions by doing cartwheels across the floor of Studio One and showing blue movies to selected members of the orchestra in his office during lunch.

ARE WE STILL ROLLING?

I also worked on a great many recordings of advertising jingles, often with musicians such as Jimmy Page, John Paul Jones, Ronnie Verrell, Tony Meehan, (one half of the early-'60s duo Jet Harris and Tony Meehan), Nicky Hopkins, Big Jim Sullivan and Clem Cattini. Within two years Page and Jones would be in the biggest rock band in the world – Led Zeppelin – but there was no hint of this in 1967. Some of the jingle sessions started as early as 8 a.m., and this would entail a 5 a.m. departure from Watford for myself. Once set up, I would operate the Ampex 4-track machine on commercials that were usually 30, 25 or seven seconds in length. A seven-second track was particularly difficult to balance and mix, for obvious reasons. There were no desk remote controls in that era, so I would be cued by Keith to record, play back or drop in. I worked with Keith on most of his sessions from November 1967 to January 1968. As well as Anita and Dusty's projects, there were albums with Leonard Cohen and Harry Secombe, jingles for Kellogg's and my old employers the Co-op, and film scores with John Barry. It was the best possible education for microphone technique and speed of working. When not on a session, I would be given the job of looking after the copying room, where I would spend hundreds of hours copying, editing and splicing leader tape onto copies of jingles, singles and finished albums.

Once I knew the ropes and was considered "safe", I was allowed to work with other engineers – initially mainly Vic Smith and Alan O'Duffy. At the time the Musicians' Union stipulated a maximum continuous work period of 3 hours for musicians during recording sessions, after which there had to be a break – also, the ACTT (Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians – the film and engineers' union) had strict rules for overtime pay. However, Olympic was not an ACTT union studio and did a large amount of work for the rock world, usually at night when everything was looser. Not being union controlled, the sessions almost invariably

exceeded the prescribed limit many times over. It became common practice to work for 15 to 18 hours in a solid stretch, with food breaks in the control room. At weekends there were often 24-hour sessions. The most extreme example occurred one weekend when I was working with my brother Terry and the band Freedom. We started work on a Saturday afternoon and the session became quite complicated. Before long we were working with three 4-track machines and creating tape phasing while mixing. We eventually emerged at 7 a.m. on Monday morning, 40 hours later.

Of all the staff I saw socially, I spent the most time with George Chkiantz. He was 20 years old, about 5 feet 10 inches tall, often unshaven with an unruly mass of dark brown curly hair. He chain smoked cigarettes and could stay up for days without sleep, fired by an intelligent and bizarre sense of humour from some other planet. He was a wonderful combination of technical boffin and seat-of-your-pants engineer, and had accomplished a great deal of work with Jimi Hendrix, The Rolling Stones, Family and the Small Faces as an assistant engineer. He pioneered the tape phasing effect used on "Itchycoo Park" by the Small Faces in the summer of 1967. George had given this new effect to Glyn Johns, who had recorded "Itchycoo Park" as a freelance engineer. It was rumoured that this had annoyed Eddie Kramer, the house engineer at Olympic, as Eddie thought that the effect should have been given to him first for use with Jimi Hendrix.

George helped me to understand the studio equipment, and could always answer any technical questions I might have. He lived with his girlfriend in a house in Bennerley Road, Wandsworth. It was full of loudspeakers, amplifiers and odd bits of electrical equipment laid out on tables. On the third floor there was a music room with a homemade valve amplifier and large 12" speakers. The "furniture" consisted of mattresses and cushions strewn on the floor, and there were beads and bells hanging from the windows, doorframes and

ARE WE STILL ROLLING?

mantelpiece. We would sometimes end up in this room late at night after sessions, drinking tea, listening to Simon & Garfunkel's *Bookends* and Family's *Music in a Doll's House* and smoking a sticky black hash that I later found out to be opium. We talked about sessions, the reasons for placing a microphone in a certain position, musicians, sounds and the spiritual world. He was a great source of inspiration to a 17-year-old, despite being only 20 himself.

As I came to the end of my first three months at Olympic, the traveling back and forth to Watford and the shortage of time for any social life were my only areas of complaint. To make it easier to get around, I started driving lessons in London, having arranged with the studio booker Anna Menzies to have the odd hour off work when necessary. The problem with my lack of social life was more difficult to resolve, as I was working between 80 and 100 hours a week. There were no nights out with the boys to the pub, no movies or dancing. The few times I saw old friends they seemed very childish, and I slowly drifted away from them.

On the evening of the 21st of January 1968 Jimi Hendrix arrived at Olympic at short notice for a last-minute session with Mitch Mitchell, Dave Mason and Brian Jones. They set up in Studio One, helped by Eddie Kramer and George Chkiantz. I was working in Studio Two with Alan O'Duffy and a small string section. Once this was finished and I had put away all the tapes, microphones and leads and cleaned up, I quietly entered Studio One's control room and sat at the back of the tape machine area near George. I would often spend the occasional half-hour sitting in on sessions after I had finished work. I wanted to pick up as many ideas as possible, and being a big fan of the early Hendrix material, I wanted to see what was happening. Although Hendrix had only been recording for just over one year, he was already successful, with four hits during 1967. However, he had not yet acquired legendary status.

Mitch's drums were set up on a drum riser in the middle of the studio and were mic'ed with Neumann U67s for overheads and an AKG D 12 on the bass drum. Dave Mason, the bass player from Traffic, was playing acoustic guitar. I did not realise it at the time, but Hendrix was already moving away from his original Experience trio. There was no sign of Noel Redding, and Hendrix was playing the bass guitar himself.

In the control room there were about half a dozen people, including Eddie, George, Brian Jones, a girlfriend of Brian's named Linda Lawrence and Roger Mayer. Roger was a technical boffin who made electronic gadgets, including distortion boxes and wah-wah pedals. George was supposed to be assisting, but in reality he was a key influence in the discussions with Roger about fuzz boxes and various effects, and made a significant contribution towards the sounds that were achieved. There was an easy and relaxed atmosphere. Although Hendrix appeared to be a little shy, he was also warm and friendly. He was wearing dark satin trousers, a psychedelic paisley shirt, blue jacket, beads, a black hat, a collection of large rings on his fingers, a scarf tied to his wrist and another one 'round his forehead. Brian's style was rather different. On this occasion he looked very dapper in a black jacket, white trousers and ruffled white shirt. As I had an early start the next day, I left at about 2 a.m.

A few days later Eddie Kramer asked if I would be able to assist him with further work on the track they had recorded that night. Evidently George would not be available on the 26th of January when Jimi planned to return to Studio One. Although wary of Eddie (I had only worked with him once before, during Traffic's *Mr. Fantasy* album), I immediately said yes. On the 26th I set up Studio One with Eddie, and we loaded up the master take of "All Along the Watchtower." The song had Mitch on drums, Jimi on bass, Dave on acoustic guitars and Jimi's guide electric guitar track. Over the years

ARE WE STILL ROLLING?

since his death there have been many stories about Jimi that describe “party” recording sessions, with the studio full of people, wild drug abuse and recordings made under the influence of acid. There was no hint of such chaos during the two days I worked with Hendrix. On the contrary, the sessions were completely free of liggers, and there were no visible signs of serious drug use by Jimi. Most of the time there was just Eddie, Jimi and myself in the studio, with the occasional visit from Roger Mayer. There was little conversation apart from the occasional polite request from Hendrix or a terse command barked at me by Kramer. These were the complete opposite to the Traffic party-style sessions I was soon to work on. With Hendrix the emphasis was strongly on getting results – both musically and sonically.

The recording equipment at Olympic in January 1968 was still only 4-track and very limited. This meant that many decisions about final sounds and levels had to be made while recording the basic instruments. It was common practice to record between two 4-track machines, bouncing the four tracks from one machine to two tracks (stereo mix) of another, allowing more tracks for overdubbing. The setup for Hendrix’s electric guitar overdubs was achieved simply by placing a Vox AC30 amplifier in the studio, close to the control room window. We then placed Neumann U67s both close and distant, with an AKG C 12A close to the amp. From the control room it was difficult to see what Jimi actually did with his hands while he played guitar. He was hunched over the amp with his back to the control room window, his head bent low. We tried out numerous guitar ideas and sounds – desk distortion, fuzz box, wah-wah, Leslie cabinet, harmonising, ADT, phasing, Pultec filtering, repeat echoes and backwards effects. Most of this technique was outside my experience and way above my head, so I just followed Eddie’s commands.

The two days flew by. Jimi was gone, taking with him a rough mix. A few months later at the Record Plant in New York, the recording was transferred to a recently installed 12-track tape machine – state-of-the-art at the time. After the overdubbing of percussion, vocal and more guitars, the track was finished, mixed and finally issued as a single in October 1968, reaching #5 in the UK charts. Initially many people did not realise it was a cover version of a Bob Dylan song, and subsequently Dylan's own performances of the song were heavily influenced by the Hendrix version. The track also appeared on Hendrix's *Electric Ladyland* album. During the recording, "All Along The Watchtower" had sounded amazing on the Tannoy Red monitors in Studio One. For me it was a magical and intense sound – even when unfinished, the track created a great rush when played loud in Studio One. Within months the finished track was being played constantly on the radio. It remains one of my favourite recordings for the way it never fails to trigger an emotional surge.