

FLASHING LONESOME WITH... THE DAILY FLASH

The offer of a Daily Flash interview for the Terrascope from one of our regular North American correspondents, Neal Skok, was received with a certain amount of glee here at Terrascope Towers. A band representing the very best of the West Coast musical and cultural explosion of 1965-67, a band who successfully blended jazz, folk, blues and early psychedelic elements into their sound, the fact that their only LP, 'I Flash Daily' on England's Psycho label (itself a collection of unreleased studio and live performances and now long deleted) wasn't released until 1984 somehow only served to further endear them to us. The Daily Flash have never been covered in depth in any contemporary magazine and in many ways remain just a name passed in hushed whispers amongst aficionados of touchstone 12-string and electric guitar music overlaid with multi-part harmonies, yet their history makes fascinating reading and crosses paths with countless more successful contemporary outfits - as you shall see.

The Daily Flash were however quite unique. Made up of four quite different components, bluegrass-mandolin-turned-rock-bass player Don MacAllister; hotshot local (Seattle) guitarist Doug

Hastings; 'straight' classical percussionist/jazz drummer Jon Keliehor and New York folk musician Steve Lalor, they emerged tangentially from the Seattle teen-dance scene of the early 1960s and quickly established themselves as Seattle's leading alternative psychedelic outfit. By 1966 they were at the heart of the psychedelic movement's Mecca, playing consecutive nights at San Francisco's Avalon Ballroom and Los Angeles' Whiskey a'Go Go with contemporaries such as Love, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Big Brother & The Holding Company, Moby Grape, England's own Yardbirds and others you've either read about in these pages already or will be doing so soon.

They released two singles, 'Jack Of Diamonds'/'Queen Jane Approximately' in 1965 and 'French Girl'/'Green Rocky Road' early in 1967 and although the A-side of the latter was a strong local hit in the Pacific Northwest, it failed to garner any national attention and the original members soon afterwards started to drift away - initially Keliehor to get 'spiritual' and Hastings to the Buffalo Springfield. With the addition of another Northwest guitar wizard, Craig Tarwater, and a drummer named Tony Dey the Daily Flash struggled on until early 1968 whereupon they finally gave up the ghost altogether. Their subsequent careers were varied in the

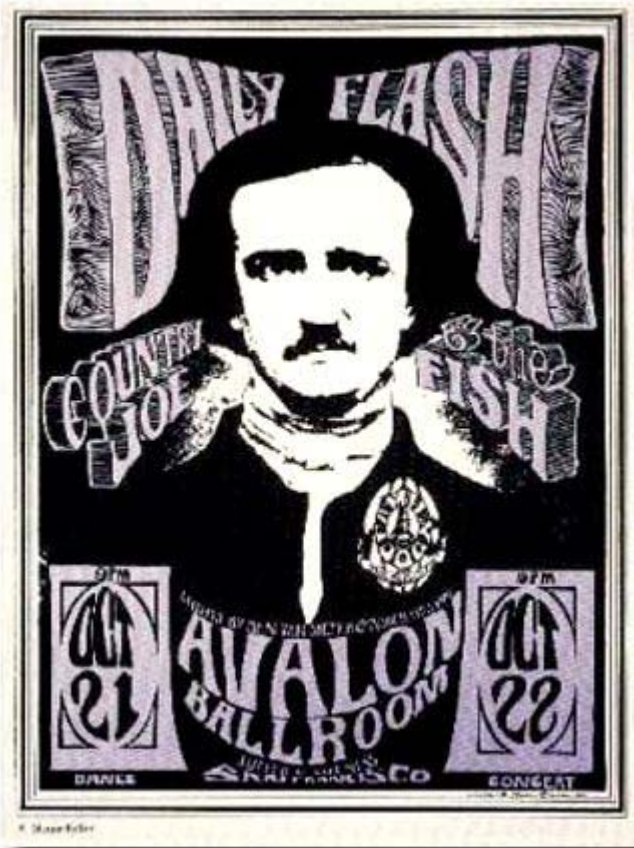
extreme but not wanting to take the wind out of the following article, I'll let Neal take up the story with the affable Steve Lalor, still today a busy local musician and only too pleased to talk to us for this Terrascope retrospective. Over to you, Neal:

Why don't we start from the beginning... can you give us some background to all four of The Daily Flash people?

Well, the furthest away from the rest of us was our guitarist Doug Hastings. Doug was very young at the time he joined the Flash, he was still in college and was very much into The Dynamics, he was listening to those guys a lot.

Was he in local bands at all?

He was playing in a lot of nameless garage bands and would sit in with The Dynamics whenever he could. He knew their guitar player Harry Wilson so he hung out with Harry and played when he got the chance to. At the same time Don MacAllister and I were involved in the first big folk boom in Seattle during the early Sixties. There was a big interest in acoustic music up here. MacAllister was in a bluegrass group with Paul Gillingham called The Willow Creek Ramblers, and I was a solo artist as well as being involved in a couple of group projects.



I believe you were originally from New York; when and why did you move to Seattle?

I came out west in January 1963, having dropped out of college in Ohio, landed in San Francisco and stayed there through to the late Spring. I was in the San Francisco Scene for a while with Janis Joplin, Roger Perkins and the rest of them and... I just didn't care for San Francisco a lot, there was a hard, cold attitude in the city. Not really a very friendly place at all. I decided to take an exploratory trip up to Vancouver, stopped off in Portland for a while and then because there was a good folk scene already in Seattle I decided to move there. Shortly after I got to town the Seattle Center decided to put

on an acoustic show, which was a huge success. It was turned into a weekly TV show that ran for a year and a half. I was on every show, and the pay from that was enough to live on.

Was it during this time that you ran into MacAllister?

Yeah, as I said he and I would hang out together and sing stuff we'd learned, Everley Brothers songs and eventually Beatles songs because the harmonies were so natural. Don was an excellent singer and wasn't afraid to try anything. I then moved back to San Francisco and had a folk group which was based at The Hungry I.

What were they called?

We were called The Driftwood Singers [they did one single for Jerden Records, no details to hand though - Ed]. When that kind of bellied up and we split MacAllister suddenly turned up in San Francisco and said to come back to Seattle. He told me he'd found this great drummer named Don Stevenson who sang as well, I was gonna love him. This sounded OK to me, so I put some things together and told him I'd see him in Seattle in a few weeks. I got to Seattle and found there was no Don Stevenson... instead there was a Jon Keliehor. The story was, Keliehor was with the musicians that eventually went to make up The Moby Grape - The Frantics. And when The Frantics went to California, Keliehor was involved in an auto accident in Eugene. He left his spleen in Eugene as a matter of fact, and ruined his 6 string acoustic guitar at the same time. He eventually sold it to me, and it's still downstairs here. Anyway, I had been really looking forward to being in a group with this Don Stevenson, but that wasn't to be and as it turned out Keliehor was the secret magic ingredient that makes groups happen... see, he knew music better than the rest of us and he was game to try anything and lead us down the road.

We were talking to Jerry Miller recently, and he told

us the same thing from The Frantics point of view. So anyway, it's 1963, '64; what are you as a folkie thinking of all the bands like The Sonics and The Wailers, the 'Louie Louie' type bands here in the Northwest?

I didn't hang out with them much. It wasn't the kind of situation where I could sit in comfortably. I did used to sit in with Tommy Chong up in Vancouver - he went on to be one half of Cheech & Chong - it was at an all-night place, and because of the type of music Tommy and those guys played was like an older, mid-Fifties type of rock & roll it was a lot more basic to play. The stuff that The Dynamics and The Sonics were playing was a lot more sophisticated, it had a black kind of edge to it but it was very horn-heavy as I remember it. The PA's of the day didn't even have speakers, they would have two large horns on the stage and one singer with a microphone right in his mouth screaming into it and sounding like an airline pilot. There was just no chance for harmony. When

the Flash went out we had to piece together a PA that catered to harmony singing. When we finally got one, and we were very well practised at the time, we turned up at a club called The BFD and we just smoked it, because the harmonies were coming over like a wall of sound, a wall of three-part harmonies. And

you're playing with MacAllister and Keliehor is your drummer - where did you guys find Doug Hastings?

MacAllister mentioned him to me, but no immediate decision was made. When I got up to Seattle I met Keliehor and as a matter of fact moved in with him and his mother for a couple of months - MacAllister lived there at one point too. We looked around for guitar players and decided that Doug Hastings was the guy whose ear was most receptive. So many of the guitarists of the time were into the big thing of the day, that early 'Seattle Sound', and although we liked that we didn't want anybody who was so far gone in that direction that they couldn't relate to the acoustic guitar or to melodic music. Doug seemed to fit the mould real well, he was willing to learn new directions... and he sure got them with us!

So, at what time was the line-up of The Daily Flash arrived at?

I would say it would be late 1964. Keliehor, upon arriving back in town, promptly contracted hepatitis through not taking care of himself. He was recovering from losing his spleen, remember. He could maybe get through a twenty-minute set, so we



Seattle hadn't heard anything like that before.

I remember seeing the Daily Flash at dances a couple of times back then, and as I recall you guys could do Beatles and Byrds covers like nobody else could. Anyway, back to forming the band:

carefully chose where we could play and showcase ourselves. We spent the rest of the time creating a mystique, putting up posters for non-existent gigs and that sort of thing. We were being talked about in the papers before we'd even played a gig, being mentioned as *the* alternative group! By 1965 we were really out there playing some gigs, and again we ran into the problem that people weren't willing to take a chance on the different style of music that we played. Often we would have to put on our own gigs, rent out the Carpenters Hall down town and just let people know it was going on. Our gigs soon became the focal point for the hip scene in Seattle.

What would your set list have looked like at this time?

Hmmm... 'Chimes Of Freedom', a couple of early Jesse Colin Young songs from his first two solo albums; 'It Takes a Lot To Laugh...', the old Dylan standby, and we would do a lot of jazz instrumentals. This kind of rock/jazz fusion was the very antithesis of the folk scene, we would be doing all these three-chord melody songs and then suddenly we'd be doing choral jazz changes. Groups just weren't supposed to be that eclectic.

So I take it that with this kind of material, you weren't getting to do the teen dances too much?

We did make it into that scene a little, especially when 'French Girl' came out. Our feeling was, we banded together to play for the masses, and the bigger the masses got the better it was. If they liked us and were willing to give us a listen, we'd throw some different ideas at them.

Were you doing any original material this early on?

We did very little original material at any point. We re-did obscure songs, we re-did folk and we re-did blues. It was all stuff nobody had heard of.

When did you do your first record?

That was when we were still in Seattle, through a guy called Ron Saul who was into distribution. He saw us and said we should make a record. We went down to the studios and cut Dylan's 'Queen Jane Approximately' with 'Jack Of Diamonds' as the B-side. It was about that time that MacAllister brought out his ace in the hole; he knew Charlie Green. Charlie Green and Brian Stone were a promotion team, they were trying to hype their big act at the time which was Caesar and Cleo, who later became Sonny and Cher.

When did you cut 'Birdses'?

That was the original B-side of 'Queen Jane'. Ron Saul cut those two at first, but he

wanted a harder tune for the B-side. 'Birdses' was originally a tune by Dino Valente, I'd heard it in the San Francisco folk scene.

So you released your first single on London (Parrot Records) in 1965...

Yeah, with no promotion of any kind. It was just doomed to die. We cut the record and we'd assumed it would die, but we didn't want to go to Charlie Green with our hands out. We wanted to go to him as somebody who could do things for themselves and then say 'but you could do it better, Charlie...' So, Charlie immediately re-cut 'Queen Jane' and as far as I remember he left the B-side alone. There's two versions of the single around, one has Charlie and Brian's name on it and the other one doesn't. Oh yeah, they're very different sounding. The sound quality is way better on the Charlie Green version.

I assume it's that version which turned up on the album many years later? [I Flash Daily', Psycho Records #32, 1984]

I think it is... I hope it is! It was released on Parrot again [Parrot #308] and it still didn't do anything.

So, did you move down to Los Angeles at this point?

Yeah, we actually went down to meet up with Green &

Stone and they said to move all our stuff down and they'd put us up at The Tropicana Motel.

This was early in 1966 and you hadn't played outside of Seattle at all - did this give you any problem?

No, we had been trying to get out of Seattle anyway. Seattle Police Department were always on our backs. Our band vehicle was a Packard hearse and we were forever getting tickets on it, and our place was busted because by this time we had made enough noise to be popular and therefore considered dangerous by them. So we moved to Los Angeles, and on the way down we played our first San Francisco gig, at The Avalon.

Your first gig was at The Avalon! Who was on the bill with you?

It was two nights, a Friday and a Saturday in April and both nights featured the Daily Flash and The Rising Sons with Ry Cooder and Taj Mahal. Plus, on the Friday night there was Big Brother & The Holding Company - without Janis, who hadn't joined at that point - and on the Saturday

night it was The Charlatans. I have a reel-to-reel tape that Dan Hicks gave us hoping that we would do some of his songs. They were great songs, too! But we didn't do any of them.

So where would you have been in the pecking order at these two Avalon gigs?

We headlined both nights. We always headlined at The Avalon, apart from the last couple of times out of 10 or 12 nights. It was always interesting playing there, sometimes enjoyable and sometimes not so enjoyable... it was just a place to drop acid, so what you had was around 500 people all in various other realities, sometimes tuning into the music and sometimes

not. They would go off and dance by themselves to a completely different rhythm and I would wonder if it made any difference whether we were there or not.

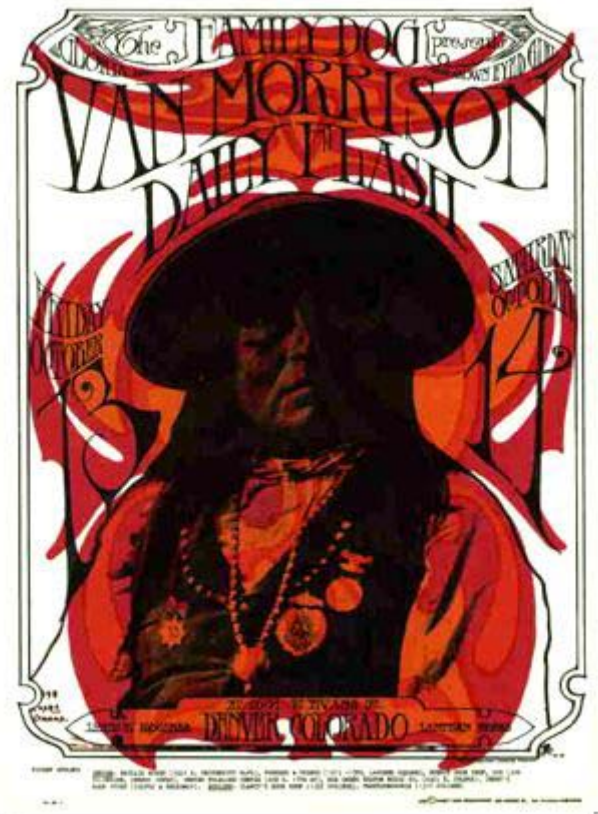
How come you were headlining though? Presumably Chet Helms hadn't heard you before?

No he hadn't, but he liked our name. He just liked our name. Plus, he knew that I had been in one of the top folk groups in town and that I knew Marty Balin who had been in another top folk group, and people like the Dead and Quicksilver. David Frieberg was an old friend.

So it was like the conquering hero returns! You played The Avalon those two nights initially, and then headed down to Los Angeles?

That's right, and stayed at The Tropicana Motel where Van Morrison was living at the time... whoever was anybody always stayed at The Tropicana, even Jim Morrison who actually lived in L.A. - he's stay there just because it was The Tropicana.

You're hooked up



solid with Green & Stone - they also booked the Buffalo Springfield around this time, didn't they?

They signed The Daily Flash and the Buffalo Springfield at the same time, plus they were very busy with Sonny and Cher. Cher's first solo record came out, 'All I Really Want To Do' which kind of put the fire out on the Byrds momentarily, that was to have been their big follow-up.

Did you play in Los Angeles at all?

We had a regular TV gig on an LA teen show called 'Boss City' where we played our versions of the hits of the day. During this period I also remember flying out to Phoenix to play some sort of psychedelic festival in a big hall. We played the Whiskey A Go Go and other Sunset Strip clubs, but things were real competitive and it seems like the Whiskey was a 'pay-to-play' venue.

What, even back then?

Yeah, everywhere else paid a pittance but at the Whiskey you had to pay to play there. Charlie did book us in sometimes. There were also some clubs on The Strip and when it seemed advantageous to us Charlie would book us there... actually, I just saw Oliver Stone's film about The Doors and their gig at the Whiskey was like a lot of our gigs there - people would stop

dancing and look at us and we wouldn't know if they were bored, pissed or lost in deep thought. I think there was also a kind of reservation about the fact that we didn't write our own music, it was kind of expected in those days and in The Daily Flash none of us were ever drawn towards being writers. The two principal singers, me and MacAllister, were both primarily performers and neither one of us wanted to write. That just wasn't the scene in those days - you were expected to write your own stuff, even if it was bad. Which it often was. Especially in the San Francisco groups - some of those guys had no idea at all.

Did that cause any tension within the group?

Yeah it did, the pressure to come up with original music caused tension. Charlie would take folk songs that we had done and apply our names to it - he said that was the way things were done. 'Green Rocky Road' was for many years Dave Van Ronk's signature tune, The Daily Flash did it and it came out with our names on as writing credits. That kind of bothered us. Here we were under pressure to do something we didn't want to do, namely writing, and whether we did it or not we were going to get credit for it! It just didn't make any sense at all. Also, MacAllister was a junkie and found a lot more Heroin in

Los Angeles than he had in Seattle so his focus began to be more into that stuff. Keliehor was more into his spiritual side... actually, we spoke about this a couple of months ago and I'd forgotten that his departure from the band was due to the fact that he had paid \$500 to go to some special event and a gig came up at the last second, a gig that was semi-important to us. He said no and we just said well, we'll just get another drummer then. Which is what we did.

So he was the first to leave?

No, actually Doug Hastings had already left. He got an offer from the Springfields - Neil Young had problems travelling, I think the pressure of being on the road was just too much for him, so they used Doug to travel with and had Neil working in the studio with them. Craig Tarwater was luckily for us waiting in the wings - he was the perfect guitar player.

Now, Craig played with Arthur Lee later - who was he with before The Daily Flash though?

He was in The Sons Of Adam. We knew him through moving to Hollywood, he was one of the musicians that just stood out. He was comfortable with himself and his guitar playing, plus I liked him a lot as a guy.

What do you think the high

point of The Daily Flash was?

Probably the second tour, with Craig and Tony Dey. Jon unfortunately wasn't with us then. Everyone who came to see us was expecting to see a great group, and because of that we played like a great group.

And how about your worst memories?

Oh, probably MacAllister puking in the middle of a song... that would happen far too often. When a rock and roll group starts out as 'one for all and all for one' and it all falls apart two years later, it's like going through a nasty divorce. There was a lot of unpleasant stuff going down about who owned what.

Has there ever been a Daily Flash reunion?

No, Keliehor talked about the possibility but nothing ever came of it. And I didn't feel it would be right without MacAllister.

When was it that MacAllister died?

In 1968. I'd always expected he would overdose so in the long term it came as no surprise, but I was surprised at the time. I'd seen him a few weeks before and he'd seemed as if he was clean.... I was always tolerant of his decision to self destruct, I wanted to

respect his right to kill himself.

This whole Daily Flash saga, it's amazing how well respected you were despite putting out so little product - two singles [the one not previously mentioned was 'French Girl'/'Green Rocky Road' - UNI 55001 in 1967]



Well, that's how legends get made - there's a lack of hard evidence available to refute the fact that we were legendary!

Any regrets about The Daily Flash?

It would have been nice if 'French Girl' could have been a hit, because as Paul McCartney once said nothing inspires like success, and if that had been a hit we would have risen to the occasion. At the time I think all four of us felt a lot of resentment that we had the perfect product, we'd made all the right moves and

yet nothing had happened. We were kind of frustrated about that - how could we make it sound better when we already thought it was perfect?

After Doug Hastings' brief spell with the Buffalo Springfield he was involved in the potential 'supergroup' Rhinoceros. The story goes

that Paul Rothschild called together all the best players he could think of - Kerry Magness, Jon Keliehor, Doug Hastings, Danny Weis, twelve people in all and put them all together in a room and announced that there was to be a certain process of elimination.... Keliehor and Magness (ex-Kingsmen) would have nothing to do with it - understandably - so they returned to San Francisco, linked up with Lalor and formed the band Popcorn, later to become Bodine (who released an album in 1969). When that split up Lalor toured with Danny O'Keefe (Calliope - O'Keefe was

formerly in the Time Machine), then quit the music business until the 1990's, when he can be found playing solo acoustic folk around Seattle and is involved in a pre-electric blues band performing material from the 20s and 30s. Hastings returned to college and finally finished his geology degree, and was last heard of somewhere in the North Sea looking for oil - he played regularly in London in the mid-1980s for the fun of it.

Of the others mentioned above, Craig Tarwater later appeared on Arthur Lee's 'Vindicator' album and played with Buddy Miles, MacAllister sadly died in 1968 as mentioned above, having worked as a (mandolin playing) sidesman for Bob Dylan on one tour and gigging extensively with Dr. John post-Flash; Kerry Magness got involved in gaffing in the film business and Keliehor moved to England after Bodine split, was involved in the London School of Contemporary Dance for many years and is now a highly respected percussionist on the world stage. In 1984 Psycho Records in the UK released a posthumous Daily Flash album entitled 'I Flash Daily' which, as well as including both sides of their two singles mentioned above, also features a live - and quite staggeringly good - version of 'Canteloupe Island' recorded at the Eagles Auditorium in Seattle in October 1967 (not

the Coliseum as stated on the sleeve, although the Flash also appeared at the Raiders show there as part of a package tour with The Seeds - hence why Keliehor is seen playing the Seeds' drum kit on the sleeve) and a version of 'Queen Jane Approximately' recorded live at the Whiskey A Go Go in November 1966. Their version of 'Green Rocky Road' can be heard on a compilation entitled 'The Sound Of The Sixties: San Francisco Volume 1' and 'French Girl' (from the master tapes, no less) appeared on a compilation entitled 'Baubles' (recently reissued) and finally, two songs appeared on a Rhino Records compilation of Northwest bands.

And that's it. Not an easy band to pick up on if you haven't heard them before - like I say, the Psycho album was deleted long ago - but it still turns up from time to time for under a tenner and will repay the investment many, many times over. Great band. Great article. Thanks Neal and thanks to Steve Lalor for his time and patience -

*Directed by Neal Skok; written and produced by Phil McMullen
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