

## SCOTTY MOORE

"Have you heard the news? Scotty Moore and DJ Fontana are playing in Ebbw Vale." I never thought I'd ever hear that sentence. I'd always imagined that when I finally got to see Scotty Moore it would be in a hot, sweaty nightclub in Memphis. He would see my face in the crowd and, recognizing a kindred spirit, invite me up onto the stage, where a spare guitar awaited me. We would play the night away while the ghost of Elvis flitted back and forth across the stage, trying to elbow its way to a microphone. But no. Circumstances dictated that one of the biggest nights of my life was destined to take place at the Beaufort Theatre in Ebbw Vale.

We found a couple of seats about ten rows back with a clear view of Scotty's hands – the heart of the action. After spending all those years sitting in front of a record-player trying to learn every note Scotty played, I wanted to see if I'd got it right. The fleeting glimpses of Scotty I'd seen over Elvis's shoulder in innumerable film clips weren't enough to know for certain. This was the moment. And, to my righteous delight, I'd got it right. All the chord shapes were right and so was the picking style.

He still appeared to be playing at half-power but the originality shone through and I found it intensely personal. I knew almost every note before he played it, and to hear the direct source of one of the triggers of my musical existence was both strange and satisfying. I'd finally got to see Scotty Moore before one of us died.

## RORY GALLAGHER

Rory Gallagher was a one-off. He had an honest, workmanlike approach to the guitar. He literally rolled up his sleeves and burned. And he looked like an angel wearing a lumberjack shirt.

We – the Manband – shared many a bill with both Taste and the Rory Gallagher Band over the years, so he became a bosom acquaintance. He was an open and affable man with, it seemed to me, a genuine simplicity of nature. There was no side to him. What you saw was what you got. But he had an aura of slight detachment, during which, I assumed, his soul was back in Cork, strolling along the shores of the Celtic Sea. I have two abiding memories of him – one personal and one artistic.

We were sharing a large dressing room at a gig in Germany. Both bands had soundchecked and everybody was just kicking their heels until showtime. Both band's guitars were laying, tuned-up and ready to go, in open guitar cases on convenient surfaces. Rory wandered over to me and stood over my Telecaster, shaking his head. My guitar was painted in a zebra-striped, bull's-eye design with two holes, very badly cut, through the body. I'd destroyed the natural beauty of the Custom Telecaster but, I like to think, I'd created an alternative aesthetic, perhaps only visible in a parallel universe.

"How could you do this to a beautiful guitar?" he said, running his hand up and down the fretboard, checking the action.

"You can talk," I replied. "Look at the state on your guitar. It's hardly factory-fresh."

"Ah," he said, "but mine is down to benign neglect. Your's is grievous bodily harm, with intent."

## MICKY JONES

Nobody could use an Echoplex like Michael. There's a transitional section in 'Bananas', of indeterminate length, which splits the song in two. There is before the stop, and there is after the stop. During the stop, the band played a series of four, out-of-time, rising, three-chord clusters. The final chord of the final cluster was allowed to hang in the air.

Because the chord figures were out of time, the band had to be nodded back in, and I was the designated nodder. This put me in a delightful position because I was judge, jury and executioner, and Micky was in the dock. If I was less than impressed, I could cut him off by nodding the band in early. If I was impressed, I would allow it to decay at its own chosen speed into nothing. His echoscapes were mostly studies in abstraction but occasionally he veered into evocation. One in particular sticks in my mind. I only heard it once, but I can still hear it.

Coming out of the final chord, he set up the slow clip-clop of a walking horse, augmented it with a delicate warbling sound, and topped it off with a sombre peal of bells. As his hand came off the strings, it set off a quiet but insistent 'brrr' sound, which I assumed was an unintended aberration. The whole thing sounded like a lone rustic walking his horse down a woodland lane on a sunny Sunday morning, serenaded by birdsong while, in the distance, church bells called the deluded of the parish to prayer. I could feel the summer breeze on my face, I could feel the warmth of the sun and I could almost smell the horse manure. I allowed it to decay all the way into profound silence.

I waited for a second or two, just long enough to hear the initial eruption of applause, before bringing the band back in.

Back in the dressing room, I cornered him. I waxed lyrical about his brilliant evocation of the countryside idyll. When I felt I'd gone far enough, I leavened it with a little criticism.

"Pity about the 'brrr' sound," I said. He looked at me with barely disguised contempt.

"That," he said huffily, "was a woodpecker."