



THE CHAMP

(The Hawk Talks) by Alan Hawkshaw

Foreword

Let me start at the very beginning.

Well as close to the beginning as I can get. I suppose it was John Hauckshay, born in 1615 just outside Leeds that started the ball rolling. . . (that's as far back as I could get with my genealogical research). He lived in one of the small hamlets that existed on the main road from Leeds that ran in a north-westerly direction towards Ilkley, the town that inspired the famous song *On Ilkley Moor 'baht hat*, meaning 'without one's hat', a description that could only be understood by a Yorkshireman.

'Put wood int' oil'..... 'shut thee gob'.....'hey-up'....'ee bah gum'... were frequently uttered in Yorkshire, translated as '*Shut the door*' ... '*Shut your mouth*'....and, well 'hey-up' can mean '*watch out*' or '*how's it going?*' or even '*look-out*', while 'ee bah gum' is indefinable, even to me. So clearly, I was destined for an articulate if not bright future, only to be hampered by the fact that nobody outside Yorkshire would know what the heck I was talking about.

John Hauckshay didn't let these limitations stop him from pursuing and marrying a local girl, spawning a son named Samuel, (born 9.9.1632), who begat Henry, who begat Samuel, who begat Henry, who begat Christopher, who begat John, who begat Christopher, who begat Louis, who begat Walter, who begat William.

Well, William Alan actually, and that's where I come in.

Almost without exception, all of the above rose no further than farm labourers, or vendors of some kind including Henry (b. 1737) (*begatted* by Samuel), who turned out to also be a part-time vigilante. In the mid 18th century, chicken rustling and sheep stealing were the equivalent of car-theft nowadays, but forming a posse of irate urbanites today to deal with it would be highly frowned upon by HM Constabularies. In those times of course the law was on the side of the victim, so presumably the local cops turned a blind eye . . . well good for you, sixth generation Uncle Henry!

Without a doubt though, all those mentioned above were a much different class of ancestor than those of my wife Christiane, whose pedigree make mine look comparably low-life. Mayors, doctors, priests, vicars, professors and others in noted positions preceded her. She rarely rubs it in though. A certain look she sometimes gives me does that for her. I cower into submission, always . . . I KNOW MY PLACE!

I do have one ace up my sleeve though. Sir John Hawkshaw, born 1811 and died 1891, who had become a most prominent Civil Engineer in the UK, almost as distinctive as Isambard Kingdom Brunel, (with a name like that he'd *have* to be distinctive). Sir John was responsible for the design and structure of Blackfriars Bridge, Charing Cross station, the whole of the UK's northern railway network, consulted on the Suez and Panama Canals and crammed lots more engineering wonders into his 79 years. I can't claim he is a direct ancestor as he came into the world via a 10th generation uncle of mine, but nevertheless he provides *some* mark of distinction in my broader ancestry. Sir John's son, John Clarke Hawkshaw, married into the Wedgewood family, the famous pottery people, another name I can ancestrally drop. Digging even deeper there is a connection to Charles Darwin, but I'll settle for the more comfortable riff-raff pedigree and move on.

Anyway here I was, born into a troubled world, Adolf Hitler getting ready to try and control the very Freiheit (freedom) of Europe, previously painfully fought for by our brave lads in the 1914-1918 war. My dad was part of that war, surviving it with both his brothers, a miracle in itself. On their return to Leeds they were then able to enjoy a relatively calm period throughout the twenties and thirties, despite a major economic depression around 1930. Dad still had a good job as a machine-minder in a print works, plus his piano-playing pub gigs. Meanwhile, Adolf and his buddies had other ideas . . . nothing to do with my dad's gigs . . . but which would result in yet another world war a few months after my second birthday. Not a great start to life, but at least I was too young to fight in it.

About all I can recall of the early war years are air-raid sirens waking the whole neighbourhood, and me being gathered up in my mother's arms, to rush down to the air-raid shelter in our back garden. Yet not many bombs fell on Leeds. Those that did may have actually improved things a little, considering the

ugliness of some of the housing estates closer to town, especially around Water Lane, Leeds's most depressing street, home to the print-works I was destined for. My three elder brothers all served in the military . . . Eddie, the oldest and next to him Walter, both caught up in the last years of World War 2. Raymond, born in 1930 did his national service in a postwar Germany.

So with this brief history of my forefathers in mind and my entry onto planet Earth, we can get down to the point of this book, which is partly in response to a question that I am repeatedly asked, namely: 'How did I get into the music business'?

Well, there is a short and a long answer, so for the purposes of this book I decided to provide the long answer to the question, starting with a little pre-birth background, intended to establish, due to the bunch of commoners I am a descendent of, whether I was destined to be delinquent, ordinary, normal, or perhaps a genius.



I can claim to be none of these. One cannot be in the music business for 40-odd years and expect to be normal, ordinary even. Delinquent and genius are possible, but I'm neither of these either. So if we assume that I am blinkered in some aspects, but visionary in others, what results is someone who though short on left-brain matter, is compensated by a musical imagination that may or may not have come from John Hauckshay, but which was already becoming apparent through the musical skills of my father, his brothers, and perhaps my grandfather. They of course would never get the opportunities that would eventually present themselves to me. Logie Baird hadn't yet invented the television and BBC radio didn't start broadcasting until 1922, about 20 years after Marconi invented it.

Having said all that, this book was actually started in the year 2000, although I put it aside after writing about a hundred pages or so, because the Yorkshireman in me kept emerging, telling me it was pretentious, and who the heck cares anyway about somebody who's had a very average career in the music business?

Quite a few people it seems, probably due to the ever-growing global library-music enthusiasts who not only collect, trade and comment on my contribution to the industry in general, but to production-music in particular, and I'll get around to the definition of library music later.

Critics though, may suggest there's another reason for this book . . . *egotism*. Well maybe. Nobody writes an autobiography without exercising the ego, I'll concede that, but I am also writing it because in my early years I had very little confidence in myself. I was incredibly shy as a young boy. This developed into an inferiority complex that made me want to BE somebody. OK, I was pretty good at rugby and cricket, but not much good at anything else, and the school I attended was for the children in our community, a collection of rough and ready academic failures, who were not expected to try and improve their future lives. As ever, the ruling classes and some of our greatest military leaders knew we could be effective in a war, but only in vast numbers, expendable, as cannon fodder.

My only hope of escape from the *tres ordinaire* life virtually mapped out for me, was music. I knew this from a very early age. Whatever I had to do in the meantime though, had to be done on others' terms. Despite all those who thought I was just a dummy, a waster, I hoped music would one day earn me some credibility, some respect, and on my terms, but I soon found out it would take effort.

Playing my 12-bass accordion at a local Leeds audition centre when I was about 10 years old came as a great wake-up call when the other kids blew me off the stage with their playing. If they'd put me on earlier, I wouldn't have been aware of the competition I was up against. The pitying looks from the contestants' parents as I exited the stage planted in me an angry determination that one day 'I would show 'em'!

Music acted as a magic carpet that allowed me to soar over all other of life's challenges. But like most things, and in retrospect, it came at a price, with the carpet making frequent stops to let me experience life from all angles, up, down, left, right, in and out. I've gone hungry, lived through one world war and been made to serve my country in a later conflict. I've been hired, fired, insulted, ditched, made a fool of, bashed, humiliated, tempted, yelled at, spat on. And rescued.

Rescued from what? From my own fear of failure for one thing, a curse that dogged every aspect of my life. Nobody likes to fail, but I've finally learned failures are necessary for growth, for strength, that they are the building blocks of positive progression. The failed audition above was the seed of this way of thinking.

But most important of all, I've been privileged, honoured, befriended, rewarded, blessed. And I *mean* blessed. What great people have come into my life, enhanced it, enriched it, making it so worthwhile that I would willingly do it all again. And if I did I wouldn't want to change a thing - no, wait a minute, that's not true - a *few* things maybe - just keep reading and we'll get around to some of them.

The fact of the matter is I'm happiest when I'm working with real musicians, singers, writers, and enthusiastic people to bounce off. All creative people need feedback, positive praise, recognition and encouragement, but constructive criticism should be welcomed, a lesson I was slow to accept.

Since I'm philosophising, I've also learned that talent is a privilege, a gift, an opportunity to give as well as receive, a *responsibility*. Talent is God given. It is for the benefit of others as well as the one on whom it's bestowed. Any creative skill becomes redundant without people to appreciate it, the listeners, the viewers, the critics even. What's more, in the music business, talent cannot and will not ever succeed on its own. Its success depends on talents of a different kind; personal management, producing, publishing and so on. It's just that the bearer of musical talent, or any talent for that matter, gets all the credit. In the music business, who you know and being there at the right time are significant factors and often the key to success, providing you have all the right ingredients; ambition, a willingness to listen, a passion and a hunger for the arts. And yes, luck plays an enormous part in it, but everybody has the means to create openings for luck to work, for serendipity to unfold. All you have to do is find it, because it won't come to you.

End of philosophical indulgence.

This book will hopefully satisfy the curiosity of the library music enthusiasts from the many countries it now exists in. Nobody I know of actually wrote library music as a career. It was always done in-between other commitments, session-work, film and TV and so on. There was never any pressure associated with writing library music. OK, a couple of exceptions would have been the Dave Allen theme, Grange Hill, even Channel 4 News, all written close to the recording sessions, but generally it was something done in our 'down-time'. Many media composers were too busy to compose for the libraries, with TV, Film and Radio being just too demanding, and financially rewarding. No fees were ever paid to a library writer, and no such composer would see any income for at least a year from the issue dates, with nothing guaranteed. In other words it was a slow-burner at best, therefore priorities were with earning an immediate income.

My library composing career came about because of the opportunity given to me by the then head of the KPM Music Library, Robin Phillips. I am greatly indebted to Robin, and to the guy who introduced me to him, Guy Fletcher, probably my oldest buddy in the business. Guy and I had met in a newspaper talent competition, both our respective groups competing for the £1000 prize and the attendant publicity. Although my group The Original Checkmates won first prize, the real prize was meeting Guy and its effect on my future.

But getting down to the business in hand, I hope to provide some of the facts, figures and events leading up to the recordings, the dates and times of key sessions and the personnel on them. Also, I will write about some of the artistes I have worked with: Serge Gainsbourg, Cliff Richard, David Bowie, Tom Jones, Olivia Newton-John, Donovan, Barbra Streisand and a whole bunch more. I know, I know – I'm unashamedly name-dropping, but if I'd used their real names; Harry Webb (Cliff Richard), Donovan Leitch (Donovan), Terence Nelhams (Adam Faith), William Perks (Bill Wyman), David Robert Jones (David Bowie), David Albert Cook (David Essex) Arnold Dorsey aka Gerry Dorsey (Engelbert Humperdinck and so on, it would have lost something. Just reading their real names makes me realize they were a bunch of *Herberts* to start with, just like the rest of us.



I have constantly referred back to my diaries, the earliest of which began in 1967 and through until 1981 that journalised my London studio years, although my 1967 diary went missing somewhere down the line. If anybody sees it for sale on Ebay, I'm bidding.

The weird thing is that as I look back and scrutinise the day-to-day entries in the diaries I find myself recalling everything in detail, even the asides written between the actual bookings such as . . . 'Pick up kids from school' . . . 'Call Olivia for routining . . . (meaning sorting vocal keys) . . . 'Ring Benbo for golf' (Brian Bennett) . . . 'No work today, Boss Cat' . . . a reference to the time I was so busy I had to book time off to see my then favourite TV show, *Boss Cat*. Video and digital recordings didn't exist, so one had to view the live broadcast.

The reference to '*Golf with Benbo*' reminds me how I nearly got fired from playing piano with Cliff Richard. We'd miscalculated an afternoon game, making us arrive with only minutes to spare for the evening performance at the London Palladium. Entirely Benbo's fault of course, he would insist on that extra hole. I had just enough time to change into the upper half of my dinner suit, leaving on my colourful golf trousers. This didn't matter because my lower half would be hidden from the audience. I was on a boxed-in raised platform of three keyboards situated centre-stage directly in front of the band and right behind Cliff's centre microphone. I could have been sitting *without* trousers and no one would have known.

The show was going well until halfway through that old pop standard *Many A Tear Has To Fall*. I turned from one keyboard to another, a black-cloth-draped electric piano facing the audience. As I lay my hands on it to play, the instrument left the rostrum, its legs having been set too close to the edge. The noise as it hit the stage was deafening, but even worse, my lower half was now exposed to the audience, the golf trousers bathed in a reddish glow from the stage lighting. The odd socks I was wearing, one blue, one yellow, added to the farce. Had I been pant-less, they'd have had to call the interval.

Attempting to lift the keyboard back on to the stand as the song continued was a mistake. Apparently the entire audience lost interest in Cliff . . . all eyes now focused on me in my struggle to lift the piano with its splayed legs back up onto the makeshift platform. Rescue came as the song finished and two yellow-jacketed stagehands rushed on to help me - or take me away as someone suggested they should have done.

Harry . . . I mean Cliff, never batted an eyelid.

And here's another reason for this chronicle. Most musicians have a wicked sense of humour. The stories you will have to endure if you continue to read on are kosher, unelaborated, a behind-the-scenes insight into the old saying, 'If anything can go wrong . . . it *will*.' And it often did. We'll get around to that.

But before we get into the real story, let's fast-forward to the 21st Century for a minute. Non-touring, one-off live performances I still find exhilarating. Over the years I've appeared in live shows and concert tours with Cliff Richard, Olivia Newton-John, Emile Ford, Johnny Preston, The Shadows and others, usually performing the same repertoire night after night. Yet it's the occasional live show that works better for me, some of the best being the KPM All-Stars concerts at the Camden Jazz Club and at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. Lengthy tours lose their spontaneity. When Keith Mansfield and I sat down to write our various library pieces 45 years or so ago, separately or together, we never envisaged how popular they would be in the 21st Century, and certainly never expected them to be performed live on the concert and jazz stages. The music business never fails to amaze me! And just for the benefit of any of you anticipating entering this industry, don't ask me for advice. It will always remain a mystery to me how I stumbled from one career event to another in the hands of fate, yet always seeming to land on my feet.

Come to think of it, in the early stages of my professional life I was always inches away from having to get 'a proper job'. I never regarded any area of the music business to be hard work, be it session-work, producing, composing, arranging or publishing. That's only because I enjoyed it so much . . . but to contradict myself, the fact is, as I became more and more involved in the different parts of the business, it did become incredibly stressful, multi-tasking, never finding that happy balance. But it was infinitely preferable to the alternative!

And so I served two apprenticeships, one in the printing trade and one as a professional musician that came with an obstacle course laid with hidden traps, precipices, minefields, challenges, successes and failures, highs and lows. With no academic musical education, no real practical experience, I would find myself learning the trade on the shop floor, as I did in printing, except there was little room for error, in a profession where reputation is everything.

As you read on, give me the benefit of the doubt and accept these chapters for what they are, a self-indulgent account of a failed 11-plus student who got lucky despite an uneventful ancestral history.
