



■ Manfred Mann at London Heathrow Airport in 1965

Living and breathing to make music

Manfred Lubowitz (Mann)
Musician

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It was the name on the lips of all pop fans in the early 1960s, a name synonymous with number one hits including *Doh-Wah-Diddy-Diddy* and *Pretty Flamingo*.

But as musician Manfred Lubowitz reveals in his Greenwich home, if it had been up to him, he would never have lent his name to the band Manfred Mann.

Instead the five member group who scored chart-toppers on both sides of the Atlantic could have been called The Government.

He explains: "I distanced myself from it. It was my stage name and our producer thought it was a good name for the band. I was embarrassed by it at the time. I took a weekend to try and think of other names but they stuck with it."

Now in his 70th year, Manfred is readying himself for a

tour of Europe this summer with the Earth Band, who formed in 1971 after his original group came to an end.

The keyboardist, a Greenwich resident since 1988, has now lived and breathed music for half a century, from performing *Mighty Quinn* on *Top of the Pops* in 1968 to practising and recording songs in his home studio near Greenwich Park today.

He unwittingly rode the coat-tails of fame in the '60s.

'Cold-blooded'

But as a twenty-year-old jazz musician, leaving his native South Africa in 1961, he had a more functional reason to get into the pop game than chasing girls or getting on magazine covers.

He said: "I hated South Africa. Me and all my friends wanted to leave it. We didn't like what it stood for. It was the most important moment of my life, deciding to come to the UK."

Whereas the Beatles had a



■ Manfred is still inspired

Ticket To Ride, Manfred needed a ticket to stay.

Basically, he wanted to earn enough money to make sure he would never have to return to South Africa and so he made a decision – one he honestly describes as



■ Manfred has made Greenwich his home for more than 20 years

"cold-blooded" – to push Manfred Mann, as they were by then known, towards pop music.

"If I couldn't earn a living, I would have had to go back and if you want to be successful, you need to have hits."

Racism

Not that London immediately presented itself as an alternative to Johannesburg, with two things immediately unsettling the young musician.

He said: "Firstly I was overwhelmed by the amount of racism in the UK as well. It's not like that now but it was very immediately apparent then."

"I was surprised by the amount of racism in the UK as well. It's not like that now but it was very immediately apparent then."

"I mean if you are looking for an apartment and you see signs saying 'no Irish, no blacks, no dogs?'"

Gradually growing accustomed to his new surroundings, the pop trick paid off.

Manfred Mann had their first hit in 1964 with *5-4-3-2-1*, the theme song to *Ready Steady Go*.

A follow-up single – *Hubble Bubble Toil And Trouble* – was a failure according to Manfred ("we weren't good enough songwriters"), so they turned to a cover version of the Exciters' *Doh-Way-Diddy-Diddy* which hit number one.

Respect

In fact throughout the life of both his major bands, Manfred has been involved in realising new versions of songs by some of music's greats, particularly Bob Dylan (*Just Like A Woman*, *With God On Our Side*, the aforementioned *Mighty Quinn*).

Later, the Earth Band's reworking of Bruce Springsteen's *Blinded By The Light* was another number one in the States, a feat the Boss

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■ Still making music, Manfred in his studio at home



■ Manfred Mann in their heyday



■ The band were number one in the charts

himself has never achieved.

It wasn't all a ruthlessly cynical money-making exercise though as Manfred explains.

"In the process we made some nice records, they were good hits.

"After a number of years, I got to like doing pop music. The Beach Boys, The Beatles, were all great musicians and I had a great respect for them."

Being instantly recognisable on the streets during the height of Manfred Mann's fame in the '60s was less enjoyable and he consciously steered clear of the temptations some succumbed to.

He holds issue with the assertion that if you remember the '60s, you weren't there.

"So you were supposed to be stoned all the time?"

"I was more interested in my children and my family. And I can't drink anyway - if I have one glass of wine, I feel sick so I was in no danger of going off the rails. It makes me boring on the face of it to the public, but my friends, my life is infinitely more interesting to me."

Manfred Mann split in 1969 ("we weren't making great records. Some things come to a natural end") and he straight away launched into an experimental jazz band with another former member Mike Hugg.

"We went to do the complete opposite of pop music. We probably over-reacted. It felt quite good. We weren't looking for what people

could listen to on their way to the shops."

After releasing music with the Earth Band since the early 1970s, he has also now found time to produce his first solo album in seven years, *Rational Anthers*.

It includes a single, released last month, called (*Lick Your Boots*) which samples the Queen herself and her 1957 Christmas message.

Thumbs-up

Manfred said: "She says 'I cannot lead you into battle but... I can give you my heart and my devotion'.

"I liked the idea of that."

With a striking view of Canary Wharf from his garden, his mind isn't solely on music 24 hours a day though.

He admits to a fasci-

nation with "the psychology of investment" for example, which must have been piqued during the recent crash and offers the broad tip of investing to keep money, not to make it.

Of the Wharf, he says: "I think it looks fantastic. If you take it out, the London skyline would look crap. It's a bold statement."

And luckily Greenwich itself gets a similar thumbs-up.

"I'm so used to it that it's hard to be objective. I like that it's changed, in terms of the kind of shops you have now.

"I prefer to have a boutique bakery than lots of estate agents."

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