

# BEHIND THE ALBUM

## King Biscuit Boys: All In A Day's Work

Back in the early part of 2014 Gwyn Ashton offered, via his Facebook page, the opportunity for him to record anyone who was interested. As we had a number of songs ready to go we made contact and discussed what we were after and what Gwyn could provide.

Craig, the King Biscuit Boys harmonica player, and I feel as though the dynamics and energy can be lost through over dubbing and trying to make it too slick. We wanted to show people what we were like if they came to see The King Biscuit Boys playing live. Gwyn thought it would not be a problem.

Gwyn is one of the hardest working musicians, so it was some time before we could get together. Craig had tonsillitis on one date and Gwyn had problems with getting his visa for his tour of Brazil on another, so it was August before we finally got together at a suitable venue to get the work done.

As we wanted to record 'as live', we intended to play each song a few times and then take the best version. We rarely play a song exactly the same each time, but they were songs that we had been playing for more than a year so we did not think we would have too many problems. As a guitarist I had nervous anticipation playing before such a well renowned player; much more than I would if I were playing live in front of a few hundred people. Gwyn drove down from his base in Worcestershire and set about identifying the best location to get a recording. We assumed that acoustically the church hall would be fine, but other rooms were considered by Gwyn. We didn't go as far as the toilets but did seriously consider the entrance/lobby.

Amongst all his recording equipment Gwyn brought with him a Prototype stereo ribbon mic handmade by Stephen Sank in Arizona, An AEA RPQ ribbon mic preamp and a Roger Mayer Stereo 456 2" tape emulator into Logic Pro into MacBook Pro 17" and a RME Fireface 800 and it was this setup that we went with in the end. A couple of tracks were recorded with the mic plugged directly into Mac via Apogee Duet FireWire.

To get the best sound we settled for facing the wall in the main hall (so that's the reason Robert Johnson was facing the wall), but then Gwyn had a few problems with his equipment. After checking cables, switching things off and on again etc. the problem was resolved and we set about recording the first song.

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We had a couple of runs through and went onto the second song. Gwyn thought we were still getting too much ambience and we would be better in a side room, so we decanted without unplugging too much and moved on to the next song. After a couple of songs Gwyn thought that the recording would be even better on the rack which thankfully was working too (perhaps the church was not the best place to record 'the devil's music').

We were into the swing, and continued to record tracks, some first take, some on the second. Gwyn and Craig thought the latter recordings sounded better, so we re-recorded the ones we had done in the main hall. Gwyn was happy with the output and there were no obvious errors. After three hours of recording we were getting weary. "One last track?" Came the call. We went for the one that usually finishes our set, 'How Come My Dog Don't Bark?' One take and we were done.

Afterwards Gwyn said "I had a great day recording. The band were well-rehearsed, did everything in one or two takes so it was really quick getting the ten tracks down within a couple of hours, despite a few initial technical hiccups with the sound gear". Craig said "I really liked the clear clean sound Gwyn got from the recording especially when he used the rack". He also liked the way we recorded in a room with both of us just playing into one mic. "The fact that it was an analogue mic was pretty cool. I like all that retro stuff. I didn't know what to expect but really enjoyed the process".

Gwyn finished off the songs using Eddie Kramer tape emulation software and mastering it on that and a couple of other programmes and then just over a week later we received the final mix and decided on the final track listing for the CD.

There are ten tracks including some covers which are: 'Cocaine Blues' (Rev Gary Davis), 'Stealin' Stealin' (Memphis Jug Band) and 'How Come My Dog Don't Bark?' (Trad.) which often raises a smile as we end our shows.

The original tracks are: 'Live Life And Take The Consequences' (a high tempo number suggesting you reap what you sow), 'All You Need', 'Lies Travel Faster Than The Truth', 'Cold In The Morning' (is this about a car or something else?) 'If You Want Loyalty' (our audience participation song), 'Bye Bye Baby So Long' (written specifically to show off Craig's skills on the chromatic harp) and finally 'Tell By Her Look'.

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### Forthcoming Gigs

14 Nov: The Wharf, Fenny Compton

7th Dec: The Crown, Stony Stratford