

During May 2008 it was my privilege to have several long and enlightening telephone conversations with **Alan Bailey** — a name which may not be familiar to many but who in fact was one of the original sound engineers who worked on Cliff Richard's 'Me And My Shadows' series for Radio Luxembourg during the early 1960's.

As this classic chapter in Cliff and the Shadows career has so often been overlooked due to the paucity of any surviving evidence (written, audio or otherwise) I thought this would be a good opportunity to ask those incisive, long unanswered questions so often asked at meeting houses by seasoned Shadows fans whenever the 'Luxembourg' word is mooted.

Cliff and The Drifters/Shadows produced a total of seven series for Radio Luxembourg between June 1959 and March 1963. Five of these are labelled under the title of 'Me and My Shadows' (alternately referred to as 'The Cliff Richard Show' in both the weekly listings of the 'New Musical Express' and 'Titbits' magazine.)

'CLIFF RICHARD AND THE DRIFTERS' (TWO SERIES 1959)

1st Series 11 Shows Recorded June 1959
Broadcast: 9.00pm–9.15pm, Friday 26th June–4th September 1959

2nd Series 8 Shows Recorded Sept/Oct. 1959
Broadcast: 7.00pm–7.15pm, Saturday 3rd October–21st November 1959

'THE CLIFF RICHARD SHOW' (ALTERNATE TITLE 'ME AND MY SHADOWS') FIVE SERIES 1960-1963

1st Series 13 Shows Recorded Spring 1960
Broadcast: 9.45pm–10.pm, Thursday 7th July 1960–29th September 1960

2nd Series 13 Shows Recorded late 1960
Broadcast: 9.45pm–10.pm, Thursday 5th January 1961–30th March 1961

3rd Series 14 Shows Recorded May 1961
Broadcast: 9.45pm–10.pm, Thursday 6th July 1961–5th October 1961

4th Series 13 Shows Recorded late 1961
Broadcast: 9.45pm–10.pm, Sunday 7th January 1962–1st April 1962

5th Series 20 Shows Recorded Autumn 1962
Broadcast: 9.45pm–10.pm, Sunday 18th November 1962–31st March 1963

Alan, now 73 and living in Nottingham, recorded Cliff and the Shadows over an 18-20 month period. Although he cannot accurately recall the dates, it would appear from my calculations that his involvement with the group lasted from early Summer 1961 to late 1962, therefore working on the 3rd, 4th and final 5th series.

The following is a transcript of our conversations by telephone supplemented by additional information he sent to me later by email. Not being a musician or technician, I didn't understand some of the convoluted terminology. Nevertheless I persisted in trying to get as detailed answers as possible regarding the 'modus operandi' in the Lux studios at that time, my desire to do so prompted by the ultimate driving question on the lips of every Shadows fan — 'Do any of the original tapes survive?' Read on to hear the answer!

PAUL RUMBOL
IN CONVERSATION WITH ALAN BAILEY
MAY 2008

PAUL RUMBOL: Hi Alan, can you tell me initially how you first became involved with the Lux Cliff shows?

ALAN BAILEY: I began working for Radio Luxembourg as a sound engineer in 1958. There was a team of several sound engineers and of course we were all assigned to different projects at different times. One of those projects was 'The Cliff Richard Show'...better known under the series title 'Me And My Shadows'. I was the sound engineer who recorded those live sessions. I worked alongside Roger Pusey who produced the series.

I first met Cliff in 1958. I had just started at Luxy and Cliff was about to chart with 'Move it.' Cliff was always popping in for interviews. My very first impression of him was in a black outfit with a red shirt, big quiff in his hair and looking very moody. With hindsight, he was obviously coached to give the mean look and create that image for himself at that time. I also noticed he was quite spotty, facially, and I remembered thinking were they adolescent spots or caused by stage make-up? I remember Cliff telling me he didn't realize that Luxembourg was a country. He said to me: "I thought it was just a couple of rooms with DJs in it."

PAUL RUMBOL: Can you tell me more about the 'Me And My Shadows' shows?

ALAN BAILEY: It was inevitable that Cliff would get his own show on Luxy and it was down to me to record a couple of the series. In those early days there was Bruce Welch, Hank Marvin, Jet Harris and Tony Meehan. Later, Tony Meehan was replaced by Brian Bennett. These programmes were usually recorded on Sundays because of Cliff and The Shadows heavy weekday commitments. Cliff would then call in by himself during the week to add the linking narrative between the songs.

I must point out at this stage that my younger brother who was not interested in pop music nor had much knowledge of it came with me one Sunday to watch. We were standing on the front doorstep of Luxy waiting for Cliff. When Cliff arrived we had a good chat and laugh. My brother pulled me to one side and whispered, "Who's this bloke?" I told him it was Cliff Richard and he whispered back, "What's he do then?"

My brother to this day dines out on that story in Melbourne, Australia, where he now lives.

PAUL RUMBOL: It seems to me as a station you were quite innovative in the number of live recordings you made.

ALAN BAILEY: Well that was thanks to the strength of the musicians union of course, with their strict limits on needle-time (that is, gramophone records) that could be played each week. Therefore live recordings became essential to fill air-time. We often used to do OBs (outside broadcasts) and travelled in a van recording stars like Anne Shelton and Ted Heath and his Orchestra at live concert venues around the country!

All the big stars had their own series on Luxembourg — probably many with a 13-week tenure like Cliff's. I worked on similar series with Helen Shapiro, Ronnie Carroll, Lonnie Donegan, Marty Wilde and Billy Fury.

PAUL RUMBOL: I suppose it was the strength of the musicians union that ultimately sealed the fate of all these recordings. The agreement was they could be broadcast once and once only, and then destroyed.

ALAN BAILEY: Yes the agreement was to erase the tapes after transmission.

PAUL RUMBOL: Did you ever record Cliff and the Drifters /Shadows live anywhere for broadcast on Lux?

ALAN BAILEY: Not that I recall.

PAUL RUMBOL: Finding any paperwork relating to these Luxembourg shows, let alone the audios, has proved a real nightmare. Cliff and the Drifters did record 2 series in 1959, in June and October, but the series proper as I call it — with the familiar 'Me and My Shadows' signature tune — didn't begin until summer 1960.

ALAN BAILEY: Unfortunately I cannot recall the exact dates!

PAUL RUMBOL: I have a motley collection of these Luxembourg tracks, recorded off-air, which considering their age have a superb atmospheric quality. They had a 'great breadth of sound' that could fill a room even at low -volume levels. It's quite unique. It's such a shame they all suffered from the infamous Lux interference because in better quality they would make a superb CD release.

ALAN BAILEY: At Luxy, we were experimenting with a new box of recording tricks made by 'Rivlin.' This was basically a limiter/compressor, which did very strange things to the sound dynamics. In simple terms anything of high volume it brought down to one particular level and anything of a low volume was brought up to that level - hence a solid wall of sound. With Cliff we played a couple of his tracks through the box and set it to maximum for a laugh and the sound that came out was quite amazing. We all had a good laugh and Cliff asked for a copy to play to his recording company boss, Norrie Paramor. During breaks for coffee, Bruce would be working on new compositions with his guitar, occasionally asking me what I thought. More than often I was tongue-tied — fancy someone like Bruce asking me what I

thought, but God that made me feel good! My lasting memory of Cliff is what a real gentleman he is, so well mannered, so kind. In all that time I never saw him lose his temper or say an unkind word to or about anyone.

PAUL RUMBOL: Can you say a few words on the studio set up at Hertford Road?

ALAN BAILEY: We had a very small recording studio, called Studio A, where we recorded live sessions. The groups had separate microphones for each instrument, usually they were S.T.C (Standard Telephone and Cable) with different polarising patterns which stopped the sounds of one instrument leaking over to another, and also baffle board screens were used for the same purpose. For some of the 'Presley type' numbers we used tape repeat echo and for others we used a Danish reverberation unit called Wifos. In later years we used Neumann mics but everything was in mono. We tried to keep the groups as close together as possible so they could achieve a tightness of sound but had to bear in mind always the 'audio overspill'.

PAUL RUMBOL: You say you did a couple of series with Cliff and the Shadows. Do you remember which year you started?

ALAN BAILEY: The Shadows were definitely the original line-up (Hank, Bruce, Jet Harris and Tony Meehan). When I did the Marty Wilde session about the same time he had Brian Bennett and Licorice Locking still with him so they obviously hadn't joined Cliff at that stage. At one session I remember having a long discussion with Cliff during a break about his diction in the song 'What Do You Know (We've Got A Show)' and he invited me to the Finsbury Park Empire theatre where they filmed that scene.

PAUL RUMBOL: That would have been during the filming of 'The Young Ones' around June/July 1961. I suspect your association started in early summer 1961 when you were recording for the forthcoming 3rd series of 'Me And My Shadows' which aired Thursday 6th July–5th October 1961.

In fact it would have been the original Shadows recording with you at that time. Cliff was busy filming in June and July. Drummer Tony Meehan left in September to be replaced by Brian Bennett, followed by bass guitarist Jet Harris who was ousted and replaced by Brian 'Licorice' Locking in April 1962.

So it looks likely you began working with Cliff just prior to all these changes in the Shadows line up?

ALAN BAILEY: You could be right, it's hard to remember after all these years (laughs). I do remember Cliff giving me a signed demonstration record of 'The Young Ones' LP (then unreleased) which I still have to this day.

PAUL RUMBOL: That would have been late '61 then. More evidence to suggest you began with the 1961 series.

I imagine with Cliff and Shadows hectic work schedules, their visits to your studios were fairly irregular?

ALAN BAILEY: My memory after all this time is not so good but purely guessing I'd say that we probably recorded a series two Sundays running and months later they'd come in to work on a second series.

PAUL RUMBOL: How many tracks would you say Cliff and the Shadows recorded on a typical Sunday session? I'm assuming it's quite a large number to give you enough new material to compile new shows?

ALAN BAILEY: I think it probably was. At least 15- 20 i would say. They were often at the studios a full day because they knew they'd be unable to commit themselves any other time.

PAUL RUMBOL: There's some unique songs in their Lux catalogue not recorded in any other studio. Did you give them total 'carte blanche' in their choice of material?

ALAN BAILEY: Oh yes! They were a very seasoned and professional band by that time and quickly got through their numbers. Sometimes they would perform obscure songs from their live set and others you wouldn't expect, for example ballads with a cha-cha beat, like 'Tea For Two' and 'My Blue Heaven'.

PAUL RUMBOL: They both featured on Cliff's album '21 Today' released later that year (1961). I've also got some really ropey copies of 'Unchained Melody' and Pat Boone's 'Friendly Persuasion' recorded at Lux that same year. This slow-down in tempo is what I call 'The Tito Burns Effect', he was very keen for Cliff to dispense with his rock 'n' roll image at this time!

The 1960 series is far rockier than later series, when ballads and scores from their hit films made up a bigger part of their repertoire. For that reason it's more revered by fans I think.

ALAN BAILEY: As I said I think the Lux sound was quite unique. I was invited along to a few BBC 'Saturday Club' sessions around this time and their recording methods were totally different. They were aiming for a very clean and clinical sound. There were no limiter/compressors and the mikes were kept a fair distance from the instruments. But our technique was quite different. We went for a big sound. The mikes would be hard up against the Vox speakers and the volumes would be turned up to max! If you think of the Joe Meek and Phil Spector Wall of Sound, well what we achieved was something similar to that. Cliff loved it, and Marty Wilde raved about it too. Cliff even asked for a copy to take away and play to Norrie Paramor.

PAUL RUMBOL: It would certainly be wonderful to hear master copies of these rock 'n' roll covers Cliff performed with the Shadows: 'Blue Suede Shoes', 'Boney Maronie', 'Down The Line', 'Good Golly Miss Molly', 'Rock 'n' Roll Shoes', 'Let The Good Times Roll', 'Whole Lotta Shakin' ... they all have superb production values... and the list goes on and on!

ALAN BAILEY: Yes. Had I known we were making history at the time I would have copied everything!

PAUL RUMBOL: And I think Cliff and the Shads were genuinely inspired by their Luxembourg series. On their first ATV television spectacular in March 1960 they even opened their set with a short burst of the 'Me And My Shadows' theme tune before launching into a gutsy version of another Lux favourite - 'Kansas City'.

The good quality Lux audios I've acquired are not taken from any master tape, but probably recorded off-air by a fan on one of those rare days with a good reception. That's only my opinion and I'm no expert. Would you like to listen to a sample?

PAUL RUMBOL PLAYS CLIFF & SHADOWS VERSION OF THE RITCHIE VALENS/MARTY WILDE TRACK 'DONNA' (TRACK FROM THE 1960 LUXEMBOURG SESSIONS)

ALAN BAILEY: Listening to the 'Donna' track although very good quality I feel it's taken 'off air'. I have kept four recordings taken from the master reels and they are 'You Don't know' – 'Do you Want To Dance'– 'Reelin' and a Rockin'" – "Tea for two. I'll play part of one to give you an idea of how different 208 tracks sounded in the studio.

ALAN BAILEY PLAYS A SECTION OF 'YOU DON'T KNOW' (TAKEN FROM LUXEMBOURG MASTER COPY Late 1961–1962) Originally recorded Abbey Road Studios 18th December 1961 and released on the '32 Minutes and 17 Seconds with Cliff Richard' album 1962.

PAUL RUMBOL: Wow that's very clear. This sounds as good if not better than the official Columbia version! And a very different interpretation of the song too!

I must say at this point that I think Cliff and Shadows fans have had something of a raw deal when it comes to the release of archive radio material. The catalogue is potentially enormous but here 50 years on it still remains untapped! I see Billy Fury has already had two great CD volumes recently released. One featuring his BBC 'Saturday Club' appearances and the other his 'Luxembourg Sessions'.

ALAN BAILEY: Yes I heard they'd released some Billy Fury at Luxembourg material recently.

PAUL RUMBOL: Although I think these too are off-air recordings and not the studio masters. In fact from memory I can't think of a single case where a Lux studio master is known to survive. But I'd love to hear to the contrary. The inner sleeve notes amused me. I'll read you a few lines because I think it creates just the right ambience in which these tracks should be played..... "To recreate the optimum Radio Luxembourg listening conditions, we recommend donning a pair of winceyette pyjamas, secreting a CD player under your pillow (with carefully concealed earpiece) and allowing the magic of yesteryear's airwaves to soothe your troubles away."

ALAN BAILEY: (Laughs)

PAUL RUMBOL: I must admit when I play my Cliff and Shadows Lux tracks, I turn the volume right up, the lighting way down, and imagine it's one balmy summer's night in 1959 and I'm cruising down the newly-opened M1 motorway in a Morris Minor to a blazing chorus of Strats blaring from the open window.

ALAN BAILEY: Yes the sound we produced was quite amazing. Cliff and the Shadows recorded many live sessions at Lux until around 1963 I think. After the

advent of the beat groups they did visit the studios occasionally but it was mainly just for interviews and spinning their discs.

PAUL RUMBOL: So Alan, on what format were all these tracks recorded?

ALAN BAILEY: Tracks were recorded in quarter-inch tape format, on single sided spools recorded at 15 inches per second.

PAUL RUMBOL: Can you give some additional info on how you would use these spools?

ALAN BAILEY: Each spool would have a running time of about 30 minutes but that would include duff takes to be edited out later. It's hard to say how many tracks were recorded per spool, as I say there were bits of takes as well. Needless to say in a full day they would fill quite a few spools. Once Cliff and the Shads had left the studios it was my job to edit all the successful takes from the various spools for easy access later.

PAUL RUMBOL: So how did you edit the spools?

ALAN BAILEY: Using a good old fashioned yellow Chinagraph pencil, sticky adhesive quarter inch tape, and a razor blade!

I would edit out those parts not required (i.e. duff takes etc) and these would be discarded, thrown away. All the good complete takes would then be joined back together on that spool. During a recording, if the Shadows sometimes made a slip-up during an instrumental break, I would stop them and ask them to play that section again. Then later I would edit that small section back into the original so anyone listening would think it was all done in just that one take.

PAUL RUMBOL: So in effect you could end up with say 8 -10 complete songs on each 30 minute spool, which could then be kept in your library for re-use in future shows. Was that how it was done?

ALAN BAILEY: Yes that's right.

PAUL RUMBOL: So each of the weekly shows would then be compiled on a completely brand new spool?

ALAN BAILEY: Yes. The choice of tracks and their full running order with linking narrative would be decided by the producer Roger Pusey. Once completed these tapes were sent to The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg by plane twice a week via North East Airlines.

PAUL RUMBOL: That's interesting because it reveals the 'masters' were kept safe in your archive. It was only the new tapes containing the edited shows for transmission that were erased afterwards.

ALAN BAILEY: Yes that's right.

PAUL RUMBOL: It also explains why Lux tracks recorded back in 1960 still featured alongside more recent recordings made during the 1962–1963 series. Of course the Shadows’ sound was totally different by then, so hearing them edited together in the same show may sound a little incongruous to the average Shadows fan!

ALAN BAILEY: Ahh, but when the band members changed we did make fresh recordings of some of these favourites. We were well aware that fans weren't easily duped. Many could quickly pick out and identify an old recording masquerading as a new one.

PAUL RUMBOL: That would explain why there are two different versions to some of the songs. Usually a 1960 version and then a later version from '61 or '62 with 'Licorice' or Brian Bennett. Songs like 'Apache', 'Forty Days', 'Rock 'n' Roll Shoes', 'My Babe', 'Please Don't Tease', 'Twenty Flight Rock' and the 'Me And My Shadows' signature tune stand out in this respect. Each has two, and in some cases three or four versions.

ALAN BAILEY: It's well known that tracks were repeated time and time again. A 13–week series in itself demanded a lot of material as you can imagine, so it was necessary to repeat songs in this way. We would just get Cliff to come in and record a different intro (narrative).

PAUL RUMBOL: Alan, so far we've established that the ever-growing catalogue of songs was reused time and time again and the master tapes were retained in your 'archive' for future use. I suppose when compiling each new show you could simply lift songs arbitrarily from the various spools in this library as and when required. Is that correct?

ALAN BAILEY: Yes

PAUL RUMBOL: You mention Roger Pusey produced the shows. Is he still alive?

ALAN BAILEY: Yes, Roger Pusey is still alive (he's younger than me) and I met him only a few weeks ago. After he left Luxy he went to the BBC as producer and also married singer Lois Lane. All I know is he lives in Surrey.

PAUL RUMBOL: I've been compiling an A-Z of Cliff and the Shadows Lux tracks for some years now and most of them from various off-air sources are dire quality! Several nice quality tracks have recently come into my possession and it's got me wondering whether any of the original master tapes have survived?

ALAN BAILEY: I remember the master tapes being kept in the producer's large cupboard in the control room next to Studio A where we both worked. I think it unlikely any have survived after all this time. I don't know what happened to the master tapes. I assume once the final series came to an end (in March 1963) the tapes were no longer required and were bulk erased like all the others.

PAUL RUMBOL: Am I right in thinking the 'tape masters' couldn't be recycled for using again? I'm assuming there wouldn't be any purpose if they were intensively spliced and covered in sticky tape as a result of intensive editing?

ALAN BAILEY: Yes, but they could still be wiped of course!

PAUL RUMBOL: And what happened to the tapes of the individual shows flown out to Luxembourg?

ALAN BAILEY: Once broadcast the tapes were returned from the Villa Louvigny in Luxembourg back to London's Hertford Street and bulk erased by agreement. If there are any remaining studio quality recordings they would have been copied by either the tape checkers or engineers out in Luxembourg for their own purposes.

PAUL RUMBOL: How were the tapes erased?

ALAN BAILEY: Tape erasing was generally done by the tape checkers in a small office downstairs. The spools would be loaded onto a bulk eraser - which was a shoe-sized metal box containing a large electronic magnet . When switched on the tapes were wiped clean within 10 seconds ready to be reused again.

PAUL RUMBOL: Who were the tape-checkers?

ALAN BAILEY: The tape-checkers were part of a small team who checked the spools before embarking on their outward journey to Luxembourg, and who also took delivery on their return after transmission. They would work in three small listening rooms, checking a show's content, labelling the tapes with programme duration and vital intro/outro information used as cues by announcers and DJs. They also erased the tapes on their return.

PAUL RUMBOL: Do you think they had the opportunity to make private copies for themselves?

ALAN BAILEY: It's unlikely any of them made copies for themselves. The three small listening rooms each had one single tape player. They didn't have the facilities to record onto another machine. I only managed to make my copies because I worked in the control room next to the studio, which had the apparatus to record from the masters.

PAUL RUMBOL: Wouldn't there have been a similar opportunity for engineers at Luxembourg to do the same?

ALAN BAILEY: That I don't know. It's possible but I don't know.

PAUL RUMBOL: To your knowledge, was there anyone else at the London studios that harboured an interest in collecting this material?

ALAN BAILEY: No, not to my knowledge. We were all working sound engineers. We were employed to do a job and we just got on with it. As I said before had I known at the time we were creating history I would have recorded everything.

PAUL RUMBOL: It makes me weep to think that so many vintage Cliff and Shadows recordings might have been wiped. I'm sure someone in Luxembourg, where Cliff and The Shadows following was especially large and loyal, would have squirreled a few copies away, by hook or by crook.

ALAN BAILEY: Well Paul it's been 50 years now, and nothing to my knowledge has ever surfaced in all that time!

Alan's final words abruptly ended my wishful and self-indulgent 'meanderings', bringing me crashing back to reality with a jolt! It occurred to me that perhaps I really was clutching at straws in my hope of finding this long-lost treasure-trove. Those vagrant thoughts of doin' dodgy deals with some East-end wide-boy selling spools that had supposedly fallen off the back of an airplane, or discovering some dusty old tapes on the shelf of a secluded Sussex curiosity shop — they really are just pipe dreams.

Even if the Lux archive is discovered residing in some deceased collector's estate 10–15 years from now, how many die-hard Cliff & Shads fans will still be with us to truly appreciate this material? And with the demographic make-up of Britain and Europe poised to change more rapidly than anybody could envisage, who will really care anyway? That's quite a sobering thought, and one that I find a little more than depressing!