

# C'MON LET'S GO... TO THE UGLY BOY DANCE!

## Todd meets Stewkey... The beginning of Nazz, Part 2

### MODS BECOME PUBLIC NUISANCE

Although The Mods started out playing cover versions of well-known hits, songs by the Dave Clark 5, Stones, Animals, Beatles, etc, things began to change when Stewkey went to the Newport Folk Festival in July 1965.

Newport was then a vacation play-ground for conservative New Englanders who resented the invasion of beatniks and folkies who visited their town every summer. Stewkey had witnessed first hand the transformation of folk to folk rock when Bob Dylan came out to sing his new single "Like A Rolling Stone". When Dylan appeared with his electric guitar, the sight of this dreaded instrument sent the college and Village folk purists into a rage. Dylan was met with a host of boos and yells until he walked off the stage.

Stewkey had seen the dividing line between the uptight college liberal folkies and electric 12 string folk rock which took over in the summer and fall of 1965. The Mods were heavily influenced by this new sound and it soon became apparent in their musical direction.

By the autumn of 1965 The Mods were playing regularly at the MK Hotel. With this experience under their collective belts, they began writing their own songs and recorded an eight song demo tape at the MK. This tape is currently lost but I'm told it was very 12- string sounding with Stewkey on lead vocals! (Bill Dwyer had dropped out by this time as his parents didn't want him associating with the sort of degenerates that hang out in bars and clubs, so the group was down to a five piece.)

They may have used this tape to make a one of a kind acetate of two originals so they could make a TV appearance on the local *Wing Ding* TV show in Providence although they never did get to play on the show.

In April 1966 Stewkey and 12 string guitar player Ronnie San Filippo sent lyrics of two songs to the copywrite office in Washington, DC. The two



*The Mods on stage at the MK Hotel.*

original Mods songs were "My Faded Friend" and "Lonely Fool".

The Mods played continually during the school year of 1965-66, including many gigs with the Cowsills (before they added their mother to the group, while they were still folk rock – like their first single on Joda "All I Really Want To Be Is Me"). The last ever gig was on 6 September, as band members went away to college and moved on with their lives.

Stewkey then formed a new group called Public Nuisance, with Steve Bruno on bass, Preston Bowen on guitar, Ed (whose last name is forgotten) on drums and Stewkey on organ /vocals. This group performed mainly top 40 covers and a few originals whilst engaged on playing three sets a night at bars in Newport. They even played a few times with pre-Vanilla Fudge group The Pigeons.

This group lasted from September '66 until February '67 when Steve Bruno and Stewkey decided to leave Newport and drive to Florida so they could join a band in time for spring break 1967. Stewkey wanted to stop off on their journey to visit a girl he knew in Philadelphia. When they arrived in Philly in early February 1967, the van broke down and they were stuck in Philly waiting for the engine to get repaired. While they waited, they went to Rittenhouse Square in Philly where all the hippies and rock musicians hung out.

Steve Kenin managed the Guitar Workshop where Linda Cohen taught classical guitar. Steve had the idea to manage a band and have them practice at the Guitar Workshop, which is still located near the same site on 22nd and Sansom streets in Philly. He knew that Stewkey and Bruno were looking for a band now that they were stuck in Philly, so he got them together with guitarists Hank Ransome and Steve Weingarten and got Linda to play drums, since she had been a percussionist in her school orchestra. Everything was very organised, with a schedule posted informing them of the times the new group was supposed to rehearse...

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