

issue three

# TIME WAS

March 1985

**Steve Winwood**

**Gene Clark**

**The  
Kinks**

**REM**

**Cream**

**Alarm**

**Laurel  
and  
Hardy**

**Hawkwind**

**John Fogerty**

50p





# Gene Clark

## After The Byrds Had Flown. 3.

FLYING ON THE GROUND IS RIGHT...



The world of Rock'n'roll feeds on rumour like an avaricious beast. Rumours in many cases eventually ascend thru the passage of time to the realm of legend, so try these for size.

Forget the previous attempts to deify Gene Clark as a master of Yen, sorry Zen. (Those guys still have my money, as well).

Gene's life had almost continually skirted the borders of disaster, mentally and physically. At the age of 12 he witnessed a DC6 plane crash at Kansas city Airport. Having tasted the riches of success with the Byrds, and the excesses of the lifestyle, he was cast aside by his 'friends' in the band. He has a backlog of recorded material sufficient to fill at least 3 albums, and seems to lack the stamina to follow projects to a fruitful conclusion. None of the record companies who signed him up, ever fully promoted his albums, despite the quality of the material (on occasions).

Born Harold Eugene Clark in Tipton, Missouri on 17th November 1941 his musical learnings came from the paternal side of his family. Picking up a guitar at the age of 11, he was in The Sharks, a Kansas City band 3 years later, (they even cut a single called Blue Ribbons) The Rum runners, his next band were followed by the folk trio who traded under the unlikely moniker of the Surf Riders.

In 1961, Gene joined the New Christy Minstrels, stayed with them for 18 months, was featured on their "Green Green" chart single, and also played on their "Ramblin" and "Merry Xmas" albums. Touring with the Christy's took him from the plains of Missouri and Kansas, and saw Gene settle in Los Angeles in late 1963. Early the following year, he met Jim and started The Byrds.

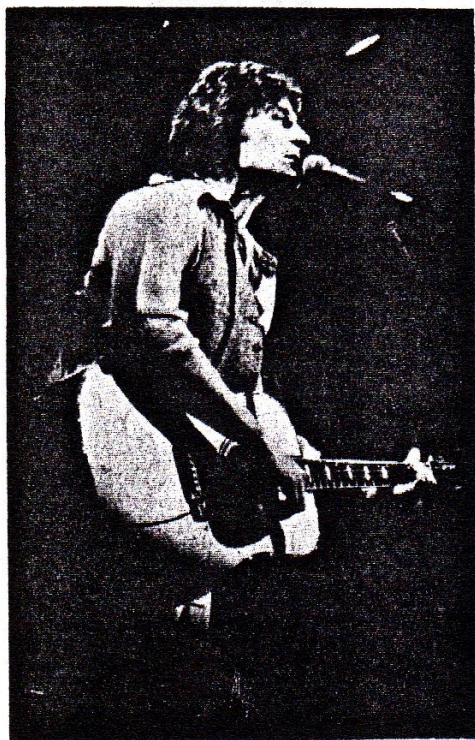
The first three Byrds singles had non group composed A sides but did feature B sides written by Gene Clark - hence he was the richest Byrd. Gene was also the major group based songwriter as far as the first 2 CBS albums were concerned - Further riches therefore came his way. The net result being that Gene was ostracised by the other Byrds because of his greater wealth. Crosby fed on Gene's fear of flying, which further eroded group solidarity. (the choice of Jet Set and Byrds as group names seems ironical in Gene's case, because of the crash he witnessed and the fear of flying that it instilled in him).

The fourth Byrds single featured Gene's "Set you free this time" on the A side, but within a week, CBS switched promotion to its flip and in the ensuing confusion, the single failed to chart. Our hero's confidence must have been dealt a blow by the latter, as his songwriting skills always outweighed showbusiness considerations, in Gene's case.

Some people can handle fame and the pressure that it brings, but I don't think Gene is one of those. From a position of total obscurity he had joined the merry-go-round of sex and drugs and (PTO)



Rock'n'roll, and by the late spring of 1966 he wanted off. Although he played on the "Eight Miles High" single which he co-wrote with Crosby and McGuinn, Gene had departed by the time the song peaked at No.14 on the US charts in April 1966.



Cast adrift to chart his own career, Gene teamed up with Rex and Vern Gosdin, two musicians who had been in the bluegrass influenced Hillmen with Chris Hillman in the early sixties. Their only album, with Gene receiving major billing, was released by CBS in February 1967 and included 11 new Clark compositions. I can remember sitting in a record shop listening booth (remember those?) at the time of its release, wondering where Gene had gone wrong. Over the years I've come to the conclusion that it is an excellent folk/country rock artefact, which paved the way for the plethora of singer/songwriter albums that followed in the late sixties and early seventies.

Needless to say saleswise the LP was a turkey and CBS dropped Gene. He did, however, continue gigging in the S. California area with the Gosdins till Oct of that year, when he rejoined the Byrds after Crosby was thrown out of the group.

Gene's second sojourn with the band only lasted 3 weeks, fear of flying again being cited as the reason for his departure.

While he was without a recording deal, Gene laid down some tracks with Laramie Smith and Leon Russell in late '67 and early '68. These have never seen the light of day. Leon had played and scored some of the song arrangements on Gene's CBS solo debut; Doug Dillard had also played on that album, but more of him in a moment.

When the Byrds British born press agent, Derek Taylor through a party at his hollywood apartment prior to his return to the UK in March 1968, Gene joined the Byrds in singing some songs as a farewell tribute to 'the limey myth merchant'. In some ways, the circle seemed to remain unbroken.

By the middle of 1968, Gene had signed a deal with A&M, but he had also decided to form a performing alliance with Doug Dillard and so his solo career was temporarily shelved. Their first album "The fantastic expedition of Dillard and Clark" appeared in October and the backing band featured Bernie Leadon and David Jackson, both latterly with the Mythical Hearts and Flowers. Although not credited on the album liner, ex-Byrd Michael Clarke was the group drummer. Don Beck provided the pedal steel power, and enjoyed a chequered history with the band, by joining and leaving on a number of occasions. The band gigged on a regular basis mainly around South California, trying electric instruments for a period before reverting to their original bluegrass/country acoustic presentation.

September 1969 saw the second D&C LP "Through the morning, through the night" appear, and it made the same impact as the first, which was in terms of minimal sales. A&M dropped the band and Gene



departed and reopened his solo career, while Doug persevered with the Expedition, which later mutated into Country Gazette, after Mr.D also took up a solo career.

The second A&M album had only featured 3 new Clark originals, while the first had contained 9 tracks, 8 of which Gene had a hand in composing (some with Leadon and Dillard). Maybe this was indicative that the spirit of sharing in the bands material, had deserted the group members, as lack of success and internal friction developed.

Although the band never re-entered a recording studio, 2 albums appeared with the D&C logo, during the mid seventies, care of our country rock crazy Dutch cousins. "C&D" was a compilation of the two official A&M releases, while "Kansas City Southern" drew from the same sources but also included the "Lying down the middle"/"Don't be cruel" single which the band had recorded early in '69. The latter album also featured "Spanish Guitar" which I suspect is the later solo recording, while the track "Why not your baby" had been yet another Expedition A side.

Gene was still signed to A&M (as a solo act), but his next recordings appeared on the 1970 Mediarts soundtrack album "The American Dreamer", a movie which starred Dennis 'Easy Rider' Hopper. Of course it depends on how you feel about 2mins.56 secs of music because thats the total playing time of Gene's two contributions "American Dreamer" and "Outlaw song".

During that year he recorded a single for A&M, "Shes the kind of girl"/"1 in a 100" which included separately recorded contributions by all the original Byrds, but due to contractual problems it never saw the light of day in its proposed 7 inch form.

During the latter half of 1970, Gene performed with the Flying Burrito Brothers on a regular basis and he even considered becoming a fully fledged member. While he was with them, they recorded his song "Tried so hard" which featured Gene on lead vocals, but the track of that name on their third album was a re-recorded version. While the Burrito's were working on the aforementioned album, Gene also sung lead on his song "Here Tonight" and unlike many of his clandestine recordings, that version finally appeared on vinyl when A&M released the double Burritos retrospective "Close up the Honky Tonks" in 1974.

"White Light" was the title of Gene's second solo album which surfaced in the fall of 1971 on A&M once more. While Gene had maintained a partnership with producer Larry Marks on the majority of his post Byrds recordings, Jesse Davis was recruited to supervise the new album. 8 of the 9 tracks were composed by Gene including one with his producer. At least Gene had broken his links with the past, as none of his Byrdsy 'friends' had contributed to the recordings, this time around. Maybe he was capable of exorcising some of his ghosts. It was'nt a bad album either!

During 1971, Gene also broke some other ties with the past, when he moved out of the city and settled in Mendocino, north of San Francisco, where he wrote many of the songs which finally appeared on "White Light". He also got married, a union which produced a son by the years close.

Early in 1972, he was back in a LA recording studio working on what should have become his third solo album. His life certainly seemed to have new calm but appearances can be deceptive. (PTO)



Part way through the sessions, Gene abandoned the project, further adding to his backlog of unreleased work. The "White Light" album had'nt sold in great quantities, and Gene seemed to be going through another period of self induced paranoia, so predictably A&M dropped him.

And so it was left to the country rockers paradise, Holland, to come to the rescue once more. In 1973 A&M/Ariola released a Gene Clark solo album titled "Roadmaster" which consisted of 8 tracks from the abandoned 1972 sessions, as well as the single (featuring the original Byrds) recorded in 1970, and the aforementioned "Here Tonight" recorded with the Burritos.

In 1972, someone at CBS came up with the idea of reissuing the five year old solo album. Together with Byrds mentor Jim Dickson Gene remixed the tracks and re-recorded some of the vocals. The resulting LP, "Early LA Sessions" contained only 10 tracks, "Elevator Operator" having been dropped. Not a clever move in my opinion.

The following year, the original Byrds finally got together for their reunion album, care of Asylum boss David Geffen. The association with Geffen resulted in Gene signing a solo deal with Asylum. Gene's one album on that label, produced by Thomas Jefferson Kaye, took 6 months to record and was released in September 1974. Its the 20s innmage of decadence featured on the album liner which through a bender into the marketplace. Here was the seminal country rocker bedecked in silk pants, shirt open to the waist - medallion man rock! Having moved back to Mendicino, Gene had taken over a year to compose the 8 songs on the "No Other" album, including one co-written with his old partner Doug Dillard. Much has been made of this album, (and the symbolism contained in the lyrics) in previous fanzine articles; Suffice to say it bears listening to, although personally I remain sceptical about its quality. Some copies of the album contained a poster of Gene and his fancy new duds. (neat, huh!).

Anyone waiting for a new Gene Clark album had to hang around for another 3 years. Asylum, with its top heavy artist roster soon cast him aside when the record buying public did'nt react favourably to "No Other". Gene hawked around for a deal with a smaller label, and landed at RSO, via his friendship with label president Al Coury. Kaye remained in the producers role, even played in Gene's backing band which played six dates in Britain in April/May to promote the LP entitled "Two sides to every Story". Of course 1977 was the year that McGuinn's Thunderbyrds,





and Chris Hillman's band also made it across the water to join Gene for a 'harmonious' British tour.

Despite the conflagration of that tour, and after having withdrawn from public view the following year, Gene was back in a musical partnership with Roger and Chris by early 1979. The trio signed a deal with Capitol and Gene stayed around long enough to be featured on the first album and part of the second. Gene's contributions varied from excellent in the case of "Backstage pass" to mediocre with reference to "Little Mama". His departure was probably due to the opening up of some old wounds by his pals.

It is reckoned that Gene spent quite a period of time in the recording studios during 1982, with Thomas.J. at the controls, and at one stage it appeared that CBS were interested in resigning him, but nothing came of Gene's efforts. The tracks were shelved, adding even further to the backlog of unreleased Gene Clark songs.

In 1983, the LA band Three O'Clock recorded Gene's "Feel a whole lot better" for their "Baroque Hoedown" album, and during May of that year, Gene joined them on stage at the Country Club for what turned out to be a lacklustre rendition of the classic. In the twilight of their performing lives, many artists become a parody of their former selves. It seemed as if Gene could never quite grasp his life by the scruff of the neck and get some direction (straight ahead) into his career.

And so we come to Orwell's year of doom and gloom, so recently passed. The trend now is for all the (faded) old country rockers to go for deals with the minor labels, since the majors never seemed capable of shifting their product (for reasons infinite on both sides, really). Anyway, Takoma signed Gene up and the "Firebyrd" album was released halfway through last year. Almost 20 years on rehashed versions of "Mr. Tambourine man" and "Feel a whole lot better" seem indicative of a stagnant pen, and a mind focused on old glories, particularly on a 9 cut album. Gene did supply 5 new songs, some written with producer Andy Kandanes. The rest of the LP was made up with the old Gordon Lightfoot chestnut "If you could read my mind" plus old pal Thomas Jefferson Kaye's (and album associate producers) "Vanessa". Hardly a new beginning, but at least he was still trying.

Strange to relate, that Gene had played around LA in late 1983 with a band called Fyrebyrd. The line up consisted of brothers Matt and Mark Andes, the latter having been a member of Firefall, while Michael Clarke was the drummer. None of them contributed to the "Firebyrd" album, but oh, those memories of glories past! See my friends how they come and go.

Arthur Wood (OHSOLONG PRODUCTIONS)

Sorry, there's not room for Michael Clarke this issue, but his story will definitely appear in issue 4...

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STOP PRESS GENE CLARK NEWS:- Gene will be the special guest with Lindisfarne at Pussycats in Wakefield on Tuesday the 26th of March 1985.