



it's
Now or
Never

The Life & Times of a

**ROCK n ROLL
LEGEND**

Stephen Jarvis

IT'S NOW OR NEVER – THE LIFE AND TIMES OF A ROCK 'N' ROLL LEGEND...



Steve Jarvis? What THE Steve Jarvis?” I said, when the call came in. The magazine had been trying to get an interview with him for months. “DON'T BE CRUEL...” I said. “You know he doesn't give interviews.”

He was *ALWAYS ON MY MIND*, since that first time I saw him perform. I'd gone round the back after the show and was babbling on about how I'd been a fan for ever and how I worked for this magazine and would he mind giving me a quick interview...? “Hey,” he said, “*A LITTLE LESS CONVERSATION, man!*”

And with that he handed me a *TEDDY BEAR* of all things. “*A GOOD LUCK CHARM!*” Before I could say anymore, I was ushered out onto the street by the biggest, but the nicest of bodyguards you've ever met. Must have been a *DEVIL IN DISGUISE*. And that was the last of it, I thought. Until that is, I get this call in the middle of the night. “*Just get over there. I got the feeling, IT'S NOW OR NEVER...*”

More *SUSPICIOUS MINDS* than mine would have thought it was a wind-up. But I suppose I was half asleep anyway. And as it turned out, we met up that very evening. I was understandably *ALL SHOOK UP*, but you know what? Turns out, that underneath it all – the dark glasses, Hollywood-star smile and the cool exterior, was just this great guy wanting to share his story.

Much like the rest of us...

“I live in Braunton. Well, just outside... at Wrafton. Right by the pub and the Tarka Trail. I live with my dad, oh, and a few animals.” Turns out there were quite a few animals. Like his idol, Elvis, Steve Jarvis loves animals... First, he told me about his spider.

“A Tarantula. Lives in a glass tank and eats crickets...” “He's called Spider.”

Well, of course!

“I don't hold him!”

Then there's the snake.

“Had him for about two years.”

An Indian Python called... (you've guessed it) Monty. *"He eats rats and is as long as this table."* Again, the grin and chuckle.

"Then there's the budgies. My dad looks after them. About 50. In an aviary... No names. No favourites. But they make me happy. Blues and greens." "Any dogs?" I enquire. Not wanting to stop the flow, but knowing that Elvis was a lover of dogs. That smile again.

"Rocky. A German Shepherd – Alsatian. He's two." "Not a HOUND DOG, then?" I offer up, immediately wishing I hadn't as he ignores the stab at humour. I realise I'm still a little in awe of being in his presence, but he seems oblivious to it. *"We always have Alsatians. And always rescue them. Get them from the Alsatian Club."*

Steve goes on to tell me how he'd always had animals around when he was little.

"We lived in Rock Park then. And I went to Pathfield School. I liked the woodwork. And music...There was me then, my mum and dad and my sister Sharon. Mum died a long time ago..."

I ask whether Sharon is his *LITTLE SISTER*, but no. She's older than him and married and got children. *"I'm Uncle Steve!"* he announces with that great beaming smile. Lucky kids I think.

We talk some more about Barnstaple. I ask if fame has changed him. I suspect somehow it hasn't.

"I've got lots of friends. I play pool with Chris on a Saturday... I like it round here. Feels like home really."

And then we're off again and I take a quick glance at my watch knowing that my time with him must almost be up, but he's more relaxed now and even seems to be enjoying the whole thing. Just as well, as we haven't even got onto talking about his music yet!

"I like to keep fit. I go horse-riding at Mullacott. It's good it is. I ride the same horse... she's called Empress. She's black and big. Has to be quite big for me! I'm up high, with my helmet on. I enjoy it. Every week. And I walk on the Tarka Trail."

For just a moment the legendary 'cool' slips as he speaks about his recent illness.

"I was poorly. Had to have an operation. Spent time in hospital..."

But even then, it's not long before that Rock-'n'-Roll smile is gracing the room again and we get to talking about his musical influences.

“When I first heard Elvis I thought he was good. Made me dance. I've got lots of his records... sing and dance along to them. At Silver Hill and Drama club... He lived at Gracelands. Did he have a tarantula?” I don't know and the question hangs in the air.

“I must have seen films of him too. But mostly I listen to his music.” And as if on cue he slips into a few bars of *ARE YOU LONESOME TONIGHT*. *“I can do the Elvis knees! And I like the way he dressed too.”*

Outside of singing and dancing it seems that Steve likes to keep himself busy. If he's not swimming or bowling, then he's playing Skittles. *“For the Tarka Terrors. The Barnstaple Bombers beat us. We play at The Old Barn in Bickington and travel around playing other teams”*

“And afterwards, a pint of Ribena!” he laughs. I wonder if he has ever tried Elvis's legendary *Peanut Butter and Banana sandwich*, but as if he's read my mind... *“No favourite foods, except Wotsits. Two bags every day in my lunch box... Do you know if Elvis liked Wotsits?”* he asks. I don't. Some music starts up in the next room and as if drawn by a magnet, he gets up and leaves... the question still ringing in my ears.

As I said... just a great guy with a legendary smile and a story to tell. Rock on!