

ROGER LARUE

READY TO ROC

Roger 'Roc' LaRue is back in the UK in May, at Hemsby 44, still grateful for the day his son, Roger Jr decided to 'Google' himself.

It's a common enough pass-time, checking the internet to see if you get a mention anywhere, or even if there are is anyone famous with the same name. What Roger Jr found, to his amazement, was that there was someone famous who shared his name - and it was his dad, Roger Sr!

Roc had made a name for himself in the late 50's, originally as a Country artiste around his hometown of Fall River in Massechusettes, playing six nights a week on TV, and then got invited to join a local rockabilly band, The Three Pals.

Starting off playing summer resorts in the Catskill Mountains, Roc's name got bigger on the billboards until the Three Pals had become simply Roc LaRue and His Pals.

Around this time, Roc and the band cut the song 'Baby Take Me Back', still the song he is most famous for. It was real, authentic rockabilly and Roc's career really took off for a while, with a fan club in operation and gigs with his heroes

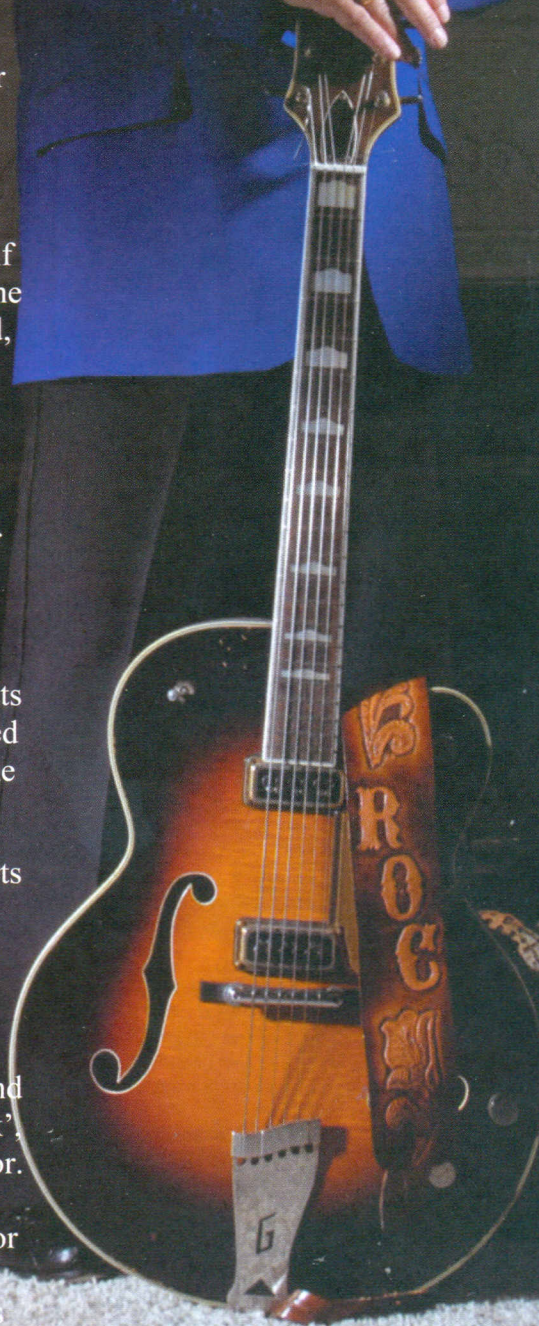
Carl Perkins and Eddie Cochran. Roc also shared a bill with Jackie Wilson at the Apollo in New York's Harlem, and played six nights most weeks at the Wagon Wheel Lounge in New York City. Roc was still only 18.

Then it all fell apart. Roc's manager went AWOL, keener to chase the new pop sounds than persevere with the rockin' path Roc continued down. Roc's band fell apart and he retreated back to Fall River, forming a Country band before joining the Army.

Later, job prospects and the thought of milder winters saw Roc and his family relocate to Jacksonville, Florida in 1978, and Roc LaRue the tear-it-up rockabilly was forgotten, Roc's rare appearances behind his f-hole Gretsch going at church.

Since that day when his on went gongling, Roc decided to dust off his guitars and his repertoire, and has been active throughout the USA and into Europe, including an appearance at Hemsby 34.

Roc LaRue wasn't really rediscovered, he never went missing. It's just that Roc himself didn't realise....



UK Rock columnist Otto Fuchs caught up with Roc. The following interview adds some interesting personal detail to Roc's story:

Otto Fuchs: "Roc - where & when were you born, and who were your early musical influences?"
Roc LaRue: "I was born in Fall River, Massachusetts on May 20, 1939. My earliest influences were Hank Williams, Hank Thompson, Hank Snow (lots of Hanks here), and most of the original hillbilly artists of the 40's and 50's. And of course Elvis in the mid 50's. But it was Bill Haley that really got me excited about the new music sounds.."

Otto Fuchs: "When did you become involved in music - when did you have your first public appearances?"
Roc LaRue: "Probably around 1954 - I was about 15. I did some local contests. Got hooked up with a local hillbilly band and ended up on radio 2 nights a week and TV in Providence, Rhode Island 6 nights a week. Quite a job juggling my school books and playing, but it was fun."

Otto Fuchs: "Your first recording contract was with RAMA a subsidiary of Roulette Records. Did you enjoy the sessions? And do you think that RAMA did a good job promoting your records?"
Roc LaRue: "I enjoyed every minute of it. This was a new experience for this young 18 year old in the heart of Times Square, New York. Hugo and Luigi were my A&R men and they were great. Aaron Schroeder was there (he was writing for Elvis at the time also) as was Skitch Henderson.

Looking back on it, no, they did not promote the record as they should have. They brought me back to record "Teenage Blues" and reissued it and plugged that song instead of "Baby Take Me Back". But Baby Take Me Back took off on its own which ended up with promo tours with Carl Perkins, Eddie Cochran and Johnny Burnette. I feel they dropped the ball - that song could have been a national hit. I had a West Coast promo tour scheduled and a screen test at Universal International - which the cancelled. Needless to say I was one broken-hearted teenager."

Otto Fuchs: "How did you experience "The Golden Age Of Rock & Roll" - what happened for you careerwise in the 1950s?"
Roc LaRue: "We all look back on it now in retrospect and call it "The Golden Age of Rock n Roll". We didn't know it then. All we knew is that we were playing music that we liked and had no idea we were making history."

Otto Fuchs: "In the early 60s you enlisted in the US Army - and landed like Elvis in Germany. How did you enjoy it there? Did you also perform while in the service?"
Roc LaRue: "Yes I performed in Germany. Couldn't resist getting up on stage and swiveling my hips to those cute little German girls."

Otto Fuchs: "You recently recorded a brand new studio album - could you tell us where it was recorded and who participated in it?"
Roc LaRue: "I do all my own recording at my home. I have a digital studio recorder. My sons Roger (drums) and Chris (keyboard) are included on the CD."

Otto Fuchs: "Can we speak of a first and a second career? Did you ever stop playing music - or did it go all through?"
Roc LaRue: "After the Army I went back into country music. That's when I met and did shows with Johnny Dollar, Elton Britt, George Morgan and others. We missed opening for Hank Williams, Jr. by about a week. That was when he was doing his Dad's songs. My favorite country artists during the 60's and 70's were Buck Owens, Johnny Cash, Merle Haggard and Waylon Jennings. I hung up my guitar around 1974 to raise a family and moved from Connecticut to Florida in 1978."



The Three Pals, Roc left

Otto Fuchs: "How did the music business change since the 1950s - and do you find it as thrilling being out on stage - as you did back then?"
Roc LaRue: "I believe the music business, recordings, radio promo's, etc., turned for the worse. It is very hard now for a musician to make his mark these days. I don't like the radio programs as they all play the same song lists. Country music today is not country. All the male singers sound the same as do the female singers. There will never be another time in history as the 40's and 50's when there were so many unique individual entertainers and personalities. So many great artists and song writers came out of that

era. It will never happen again.....
I find it very exciting to be on stage these days - even though I don't move around the stage like I used to. Yes, I did Presleyesque type steps - but I think we all did. But you know - for me it came natural."

Otto Fuchs: "What are your goals for the future - what is left for Roc LaRue to achieve?"
Roc LaRue: "What is left? That's a loaded question. I am enjoying my semi-retirement years which have been made a little more interesting by going back on stage and performing here in America and overseas. As long as my fans want to hear me - I will continue to perform."

Otto Fuchs: "Well, thanks for the interview - and will we see you perform in Europe in the near future?"



Roc rippin' in up in the 50's

Roc LaRue: Yes Otto, I'm pleased to say that I'm playing the Hemsby weekend in May. Our first visit to Hemsby was exciting because it was my first trip to Europe to do a show. Everyone over there was so nice and took really good care of us. Willie Jeffery picked us up at the airport so we had a nice drive to Hemsby and lots to talk about. My good friend Art Adams was on that show as was the wonderful Janis Martin. We had just finished doing Greenbay earlier that year. Ironically, Jack Earls was on that show also. Now I get to do it again with Jack Earls and a new performer that I am looking forward to meeting - Don Woody. The fans at Hemsby really like their Rockabilly and their Rock n Roll. Most of my sets have a couple of rockabilly, several rock n roll, country, new songs I've written and of course my 50's recordings. This trip to Hemsby I am planning on doing a couple of Carl Perkins and Eddie Cochran tunes in remembrance of our shows together back in the mid 50's. Yes, I am looking forward to meeting Willie Jeffries again and my English fans. And I aim to 'Keep Roc'n' for some time to come...