

**Multi-talented Neil Burman (Crawfurd 1961-66) sadly passed away this year. Here is an article about his band, The Blue Diamonds, which appeared in the 2009 OE magazine**

## And the band played on...

The Blue Diamonds brought out their first EP in 1965. Another album came out this year. Band member Neil Burman (Crawfurd 1961-66) on a rock 'n' roll legend

**M**ost Sixties bands comprised three musicians and a drummer. The Blue Diamonds had three musicians and a guy who'd purchased a bass guitar because it had only four strings. David Jackson (Crawfurd 1962-67, lead guitar) and John Woolley (percussion) teamed up as 11-year-olds at Homefield Prep School doing covers of anything by The Shadows.

The two boys separated when they went to secondary school where John persuaded a fellow King's College, Wimbledon student, Iain Eggeling (rhythm guitar and lead vocals), to join the fledgling band in October 1963. David then asked another Epsom student to complete the band in April 1964. Neil Burman (Crawfurd 1961-66) added bass guitar and Van Gogh's ear for music.

They underwent a name change from The Avengers to The Blue Diamonds and wore uniforms of black cardigans with silver fronts, thin blue ties, white shirts and grey school trousers. Although they didn't look exactly like four Val Doonicans, they came dangerously close. They played at dances, clubs and private parties for two years, including a gig attended by the French Ambassador. Their musical style became



**The band in 2008 (left to right) Neil Burman, John Woolley, Iain Eggeling, and David Jackson**



**The Blue Diamonds in 1964 (left to right) Neil Burman, David Jackson, John Woolley and Iain Eggeling**

known as The Cheam Sound – a style occasionally mentioned in the same sentence as The Mersey Sound, The Motown Sound and The West Coast Sound, but not all that occasionally.

The Blue Diamonds recorded an EP of three covers and an original instrumental in January 1965, selling several copies to each other. The band broke up just over a year later. Most blamed Yoko, but there were rumours about drug taking as someone had seen David sucking on a cough lozenge prior to one of their final gigs. No hotel rooms were trashed, but Neil did leave his bedroom in a mess once, deciding at the last minute to clean it up before his mother came home.

Despite their rock 'n' roll lifestyle, the four survived (although David and Iain now wear obvious hairpieces) and met up in London on March 10, 2008 for the first time in 42 years. In the interim they'd all taken the advice of their parents to get a haircut and a real job, with the exception of John who'd played with Geno Washington's Ram Jam Band and Bram Stoker for a few years after graduating from university. John and Neil took the haircut advice too literally.

Of the Epsom contingent, David became a lawyer and now runs his own financial consultancy. Neil is a dentist in general practice in Western Australia, where he's been living under an assumed identity as part of the bass guitarists' relocation programme.

For the March reunion, Neil flew from Perth and the other three arrived by train at concessional fare rates. Over some anti-cholesterol tablets and a few glasses of cranberry juice, it was decided that being part of The Blue Diamonds was the most fun any of them had experienced whilst wearing cardigans.

So, on September 16, 2008, the boys

reunited in Tin Pan Alley Studios, Denmark Street, London. It was the first time in nearly 43 years that the four of them had played together and, in a little over a day and a half, recorded the eight tracks on the album *Rough Diamonds* while seated on commodes. This probably constitutes a world record for time between gigs.

Another album, *Cut and Polished*, was released in August 2009. The music was recorded in Perth and Neil returned to Tin Pan Alley in June so that Iain could add his lead vocals and David could provide some slide guitar on *High Heel Sneakers*. The Perth musicians included the former drummer from Manfred Mann's Earth Band.

A final album is planned for 2010. At this stage it is expected to comprise 11 rock 'n' roll classics from the early Sixties and late Fifties recorded in Perth and some blues songs recorded by David, Iain and Neil in London.

■ **Copies of *Rough Diamonds* can be obtained via David Jackson:**  
**[dcjackson@consultant.com](mailto:dcjackson@consultant.com)**