



# NOT GERMAN, I'M SCOUSE

A LIFELONG RED'S JOURNEY ABROAD

CARSTEN NIPPERT

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Let Me Tell You a Story  
of a Poor Boy  
Who Was Born Far Away  
from His Home

## CHAPTER ONE

# Searching for Heroes

PINK FLOYD are not the kind of band you listen to as an eight-year-old. They were the favourite band of my cousin Hans-Jürgen, who is five years my senior. I was naturally also into music – British music, of course. In the mid-1970s, pop groups from the UK ruled the world. They certainly ruled TV viewing habits in our living room on a regular basis. One Saturday each month, the German TV show *Disco* presented all the latest highlights from the rock and pop charts. It was an age when the technical term ‘video’ hadn’t come into existence. There was nothing like flamboyant ‘video clips’ with visual effects enhancing the programme, but bands actually had to turn up personally to perform in the studio in front of an audience.

The application of the phrase ‘perform’ in this context might be a little exaggeration as bands very much relied on playback. But you never really bothered about that in those 3 minutes and 30 seconds when you were just glued to the TV screen. All you cared about was listening to those men

in tight trousers and with long hair. No, actually, it wasn't to just listen, but rather to see or, to describe it even more appropriately, to absorb all those stars from the UK during those few precious moments. You never even perceived, let alone concerned yourself that their lip-syncing didn't even correspond with the lyrics you were listening to. You never scrutinised the vocal phenomenon of how a chorus could still sound as crystal clear and distinctive, even though the microphone was being swung in the air and was nowhere near the front man's vocal cords. Your complete attention focused solely on the sheer coolness of the guys' countenance, gestures and movements. They certainly left no doubt that they couldn't care less what the entire universe thought of them.

Those moments were the most precious highlights for a whole month and I never missed them. I mean, I did never ever miss them. Frequently I did succumb to a slight sense of envy towards the inhabitants of the UK, who, not knowingly and by birth right, were in an advantageous position to enjoy those highlights on their national TV, certainly on a regular basis. I realised that whingeing wouldn't get me anywhere and I had to come to terms with and get on with my underprivileged, handicapped, deprived, meaningless life.

One of the most important and time-consuming occupations at the time was the preparation for my cassette player's audio recording of new songs from the TV show. There were hits you only wanted to listen to a couple of times, some only once. After a while, you just wanted to get rid of them. Some you just wanted to keep for good. Those were the ones you let be part of your very personal 'best of' tape. It became a nuisance not to be able to listen to your favourite songs in one flow. You were compelled to wind

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forward to skip the ones that you couldn't remember why you had recorded in the first place.

Modern 24/7 technology of unlimited online or mobile download availability was still light years away. The luxury of obtaining the full song in high quality, whenever you felt like it, was completely unknown. If I wanted my 'best of' cassette to be of some sort of quality, I had to take care of that myself. It turned out to be a challenge, which was sometimes influenced by obstacles that weren't to be underestimated. The task I set myself was to develop an expertise to stop the recording of a song at the exact point to cut off the first note of the following song, which was designated to be deleted. Only then was the cassette properly prepared for the recording of a new 'best of' song. While stopping the tape too early may have wasted precious seconds, a split second too late would ruin the perfect transition. I was regularly caught between the devil and the deep blue sea.

Another factor responsible for a successful recording was a kind of profound psychological knowledge and personal estimation of the TV presenter's conduct. It required an enormous amount of instinctive feeling to be able to anticipate the exact timing of the presenter quitting his waffle. This was of fundamental importance for pressing the record button at the right moment in order not to miss the first syllable of the song's lyrics.

The most challenging task, though, was less of a technical one than of human nature. In fact, major obstacles were often detected within my very personal surroundings, such as family members as close as the first degree. Having overcome all sorts of preparatory problems, my own relatives were the most influential make-or-break factors. Every single person

that was going to be in the living room watching the show had to be brainwashed to refrain from even whispering. A lot of charming, persuasive efforts on my part were needed to guarantee sufficient comprehension on the part of the others. Most often I addressed my loved ones with my begging plea 'to keep quiet' sensitively. In one extreme circumstance of inexplicably ignorant disobedience, I might have forgotten my good breeding and exclaimed full-throatedly, 'Oh, please shut up!' In the middle of a song, my mother forgot my beseeching and asked whether I had any intention of finishing my dinner, and thereby ruined my recording. Of course, this led to early bedtime. For me that was, not my mum, as she was, due to her hierarchical status, in a far superior position.

Our big family house organigram consisted of three generations. My grandparents came from Leinefelde and Thorn, both West Prussian towns that are now part of Poland. They were born before and during the First World War. Their childhood and teenage days were characterised by hardship and they had to help out in the fields at an early age. The aftermath of the war and its economic consequences in the 1920s was followed by a currency reform that made their small amount of savings worthless. It was a difficult time, not just for their families, but for the whole country.

People were fed up feeling suppressed and were searching desperately for a hero to take them out of their misery. A less able school drop-out, who had always found it difficult to come to terms with work on a regular basis and who claimed to be a professional artist, even though denied the final admission exam to art college, somehow managed to fascinate the masses of the German population in such an



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unquestioning way that they followed him blindly. When he marched towards Moscow, or to put it more precisely, let the masses march to Moscow, he enjoyed a kind of love and esteem he had previously lacked in life. When German soldiers were at some point bottled up by the Russian army at Stalingrad, the tide turned and the Russians marched towards Berlin. The German population more or less knew about the atrocities used against the Russian civil population. Fear rapidly spread about what the Russian army might get up to with German civilians in retribution once they reached German soil. My grandparents decided to leave their farm in West Prussia and flee westwards.

After the war, they bought a three-storey house to which they and two of their three daughters with their families moved, occupying a floor each. The biological begetter, who shared responsibility for my existence, diminished his personal appearance after a few years. However, financially, he proved to be exceedingly reliable for decades. Considering his economic support, my underdeveloped emotional and personal bond with him may seem, admittedly, extremely ungrateful on my part. I certainly would have given him a chance to impress me and become my hero, but I had to look elsewhere. What I couldn't seek elsewhere was my ancient middle name that I inherited from him and that I'm stuck with for the rest of my life. It's way too embarrassing to mention, but to deprive speculation its breeding ground, no, it's not Adolf!

The youngest generation in the house consisted of four cousins – two boys and two girls – and me. It was never boring as live entertainment was guaranteed in an environment full of youngsters.

'I Only Wanna Be with You' by the Bay City Rollers was the very first single my mother bought me. I kept playing it non-stop. As I considered myself at least as cool as the band members, I couldn't help playing it at full volume to let the entire house know. My grandparents, who had their living room right under my bedroom, constantly knocked with a broom on their ceiling. In my perception, and to my delight, the rhythmic knocking only enhanced the drum and bass sound of the song. A few moments later, a ringing sound that was in no uncertain manner out of harmony with the melody infiltrated my musical enjoyment. But even that stood no chance of gaining my attention. When the song slowly faded, I heard another knocking. This time, a real hard and loud knocking sound on our door startled me. I opened the door and saw my angry-looking granny in front of me.

'Why are you knocking so loud? You nearly gave me a heart attack! Can't you tap on the door normally?' I asked, perplexed.

After a moment of speechlessness, she only yelled at me, 'Keep this noise down!'

'Sorry grandma!' I respectfully obeyed, until next time.

I became my grandmother's personal trainer as she had to walk upstairs on a regular basis. After a few of those incidents, my grandmother instituted proceedings against me. When my mother came home one day, she took me downstairs and pointed towards the ceiling. The pushing of the broom had left some visible marks.

'Carsten, look at that. You can't do this!' my mother told me.

'It wasn't me, Mummy. It was Granny with the broom!' I declared with the most innocent facial expression. My

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mother, who always took time to explain to me explicitly and patiently the difference between right and wrong, failed to keep a serious look on her face. Speechlessness followed.

Bay City Rollers' Scotsmen, Les, Woody, Eric, Derek and Alan, became my first heroes. My personal 'Rollermania' went as far as to beg my mother to adjust my outfit to their main visual characteristics. My ankle-length jeans with a tartan pattern round the hems were my greatest pride. I didn't do anything or go anywhere without them. School, playing field, living room never witnessed me dressed in any other piece of clothing. We became inseparable to the point that I was forced to let them be washed as stains and fragrance left no other option. That fashionable, cool gear turned me into an absolute trendsetter at school. I was hot, I thought. This must be the perfect age to be at. I was good at primary school, could play footie as much as I wanted and was part of a world of my heroes. I led a carefree, wonderful life. Nothing could harm me.

My superior status experienced a gradual phase of decline, or rather an abrupt point of demolition, when Hans-Jürgen called me upstairs. He didn't really break the news in a sensitive way, but rather set up a presentation in the most sensationalist manner. He wouldn't let me know by just telling me. Of course not! No, he wanted to let me hear it, or even better, feel it. Before I could realise what was happening, I heard the first guitar tunes of a song. I felt benumbed!

'It's that other Bay City Rollers song I told you about. It's "Money Honey", a much more rock-like tune than before,' Hans-Jürgen told me.

For any philologist, it was the perfect setting for the invention of a new word. Combining 'flabbergasted',

'speechless' and a facial expression displaying my darkest desires to torture a person would have given birth to the latest contribution to the *DUDEEN*, the German equivalent of the *Oxford Dictionary of the English Language*. Innocent childhood days were over. I had to deal with the fact that he had more pocket money than me. This disadvantage on the monetary front was no cause for concern in itself. The consequences it generated, though, were too much to bear. He made me lag behind in my own heroes' world. It was my band, they were my heroes. It just couldn't be that he possessed more records than me, thereby being closer to my heroes than me!

I pulled myself together as much as a manly eight-year-old could. All energy had to be concentrated in one big effort to refrain from bursting into tears. 'Oh, great, you got the new single then?' I asked in my typical cool manner. Lying on the sofa, he appeared as if he had already listened to it a million times and boredom had already crept in when he replied almost indifferently, 'Yeah, but there are other songs that are quite good as well.'

The combination of the words 'other' and 'songs' indicated that the pain-inflicting scenario hadn't reached its peak yet. I still couldn't grasp the magnitude of the drama and looked at him, confused.

'I got the whole new album,' he said. To describe my state after hearing the letters A ... L ... B ... U ... M would have taken an entire conference of psychologists to get a new definition into that bloody dictionary! This album highlighted the band's heyday with 'Money Honey', 'Rock and Roll Love Letter' and 'Yesterday's Hero'. But unfairness in life is never to last for long and I persuaded,

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no I actually convinced my mother to get me the album *Dedication* too.

‘Mum, you do like them as well, don’t you?!’

The following year, 1977, I was still very much into the Bay City Rollers. At the same time, other cool bands were emerging, which attracted my fascination. It hurt to realise, but Bay City Rollers’ music became a bit girlish, too smooth and not really manly. What might have been the case is that their music had actually always been extremely girlish, but only then I personally realised that fact. I found myself in a situation where I had to part with my first heroes.

Fashion and music styles developing in the UK never passed by without leaving a significant mark on my psyche. The 1970s must have been a nightmare for parents and teachers, who were in charge of bringing up and educating kids. The *Rocky Horror Picture Show* made cross-dressing kind of socially acceptable. The Glam Rock era of David Bowie, Queen, T-Rex and Kiss was the perfect platform for revolutionary teenagers. In retrospect, the long-haired Beatles appeared comparatively model pupils. I never wore the outrageous clothes, make-up, let alone platform shoes, but I took to the long hairstyle and definitely the music.

The Sweet enjoyed their greatest success in Germany, where they were top of the charts eight times! They had six consecutive No. 1 hits in the short space of 1972 to 1974, starting with ‘Little Willy’ to ‘Wig Wam Bam’, ‘Block Buster’, ‘Hell Raiser’, ‘Ballroom Blitz’ and ‘Teenage Rampage’, the song I identified most with. I didn’t understand a single word, of course. The screaming of the singer and the hard rhythm of the sound sufficed to define my new set of heroes in The Sweet. Although they had already passed their prime

and released their hits long before, it was the right time for me to let them enter my world. By their looks they were rebellious, by their music they were very rebellious and by their screaming, even if only lip-syncing, they were very, very rebellious. I became the spitting image of front man Brian Connolly, although only in terms of hair length. I had straight hair and let it grow underneath my ears, like Brian. With my baby-faced cheeks I never managed to look as hard as him, though. It was a physiognomic condition that wouldn't improve over the following decades either.

My mother developed a manner in which she scrutinised everything I started to worship. It wasn't her intention to dispute about issues, but rather to educate me to bring to mind the reasons for my adoration. She wanted me to become a critical thinker rather than somebody who just followed the crowd. She once asked me what it was that made me like The Sweet that much. I casually argued that they were real hard rockers. To me, the phrase combined a mixture of really cool rock 'n' rollers and bikers. To my mother, it solely referred to bikers, and 'bikers' back in the day generally solely referred to criminal biker gangs. She pointed out that they were people who may become a bit aggressive towards other people if they don't get what they want. In the most explicit way, a horror scenario was unfolded to my mind of how brutal these gangsters were to innocent people, even mothers and even little boys like me.

'I'm not saying that all bikers are like that,' my mother said. 'I'm not even suggesting that this band of yours has anything to do with that. But if you say you like them because they are hard rockers, you should be aware what you're talking about.'

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I didn't feel well after that conversation. Actually, it was a monologue as I couldn't speak. I was intimidated by my stream of thought. From that moment, I still liked their music very much, but was also a bit scared of Brian Connolly, Andy Scott, Mick Tucker and Steve Priest. They were still my new heroes, though.

Through these 70s music bands I made my first acquaintance with English lyrics and songs. I was still at primary school and foreign language lessons were a year away. 'Joining in' with the lyrics was reduced to very unconvincing soundless lip movements with the occasional utterance of an enunciation during the chorus with phonetic correctness leaving a lot to be desired. Some of the bands vanished quicker than they had emerged. Many of them wouldn't leave an impact on my further development. A few of them accompanied my life for a considerable time. One of them was to leave a lasting impression on me.

Hans-Jürgen's favourite band at the time was Pink Floyd. Their kind of instrumental music was the complete opposite to the mainstream taste I followed. He kept raving about this band with their ground-breaking, innovative ideas. There was one album, *Meddle*, he kept playing over and over. To be absolutely accurate, it wasn't the whole album, but rather only one song in particular. We always had our favourite songs on long-playing records. Instead of letting the record play through from beginning to the end and then flip over to the other side, we kept lifting the needle back to the start of our favourite song. In the case of *Meddle*, it wasn't even a particular song, but only two parts within the song. A new quality of replay was born. Approximately a million times, we didn't replay the song from the start but only those two parts

over and over again. It was a brief sequence in the middle and an extended one at the very end. The name of that song, 'Fearless', impressed me very much in itself.

'What great, intelligent musicians they are!' Hans-Jürgen enthused once more. 'Never ever has anyone integrated fans singing in their songs!' Actually, two of my former favourite bands had recorded their own fans chanting and let it become a part of their hits. The crowd screaming, 'We want Sweet! We want Sweet!' at the beginning of 'Teenage Rampage', and 'Bay City Rollers!' at the start of 'Yesterday's Heroes' always sent shivers down my spine. Pink Floyd also decided to include singing fans in one of their songs, but in their case they didn't make use of their own followers. They employed a choir that never assembled at a concert. Pink Floyd availed themselves of not just any ordinary chant, but the anthem of that congregation. In the middle of 'Fearless', the music softened a bit without fading entirely. The guitar tune made way for the choir to emerge gradually. From a far distance, you could vaguely hear for a few seconds what sounded like thousands of people singing in a harmonious, spiritual and musical unity with fearless pride, power and invincibility. After only five seconds, these voices faded again and the song resumed properly. When the melody faded out completely at the end, the choir took up again. This time, the voices became louder and louder until they erupted at full volume: 'Walk On, Walk On, with Hope in Your Heart and You'll Never Walk Alone, You'll Never Walk Alone. Walk On, Walk On, with Hope in Your Heart and You'll Never Walk Alone, You'll Never Walk Alone.'

'Oh my god, what a brilliant idea to integrate the best football fans in the world into your music.' Hans-Jürgen



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rhapsodised about the greatness of his favourite band and the greatness of these best fans in the entire world again, again and again. It was an audition I had never ever been confronted with in my life before. My musical world consisted of loud and hard beats, fast guitar tunes and colourful, flashy, screaming men. This was something completely different; this was something utterly new. The sound was calm, the singers were composed, and yet the combined outcome was the most boisterous tune I could ever imagine. The force and intensity that characterised the closeness and unity of the choir wouldn't fade without leaving a lasting impression.

Listening to 'You'll Never Walk Alone' generated a mysterious power in your mind that would grip you and never let you off again. Never ever again! This choir symbolised unconditional support, unity, loyalty, determination, passion, love, addiction. The creators of that fellowship found their heroes for life and would stick with them for good. The foundation of this unique bond was no temporary trend, no superficial fashion, but an innate transcendental spirit. I felt envy as I wanted to be part of that parish. An awestricken admiration for those people, their common spirit and everything that was connected to their collective mission was born. An innocent admiration became a drug. Only a short taste of a contagious teaser turned the willing victim into an addict.

I was looking forward to the beginning of term after the summer holidays. Second class in co-educational primary school awaited me and no longer would I occupy the ignominious status of a first-former. Life was easy and trouble-free. Well, sort of free, if it hadn't been for two new women who, unsolicited, simultaneously entered my life.

One of them was older than my granny, the other one a middle-aged beast. Both of them were occupied with my education and were officially commissioned by the state to do so as teachers in my school.

Our new class teacher, Mrs Zaruba, was a total law and order disciplinarian representing virtues that didn't necessarily suit my personal approach to life. Actually, she insisted on being called 'Miss' Zaruba as she was still an untouched Fräulein despite being well past her best-before date. She impersonated all good old German virtues she must have learned in the League of German Maidens, the female branch of the Nazi Party youth organisation. After my first year at school with a mother figure-like class teacher, Mrs Junge – obviously and most certainly no 'Miss' Junge anymore by her looks – who was caring, lovable, extremely young and even bloody good looking, the second year was hell. Mrs Junge had her ups and downs, too. Sometimes she was even quite a moody bitch if she wanted to be, but she never lacked understanding and humour. Sometimes she did lack a sufficient sense of humour when she threw a bunch of keys at me or incarcerated me in the wardrobe for nattering away endlessly. But all in all she never made me not like going to school.

Now Mrs Junge was no more. Miss Zaruba was in charge of all but two subjects – art classes and physical education. One of the first and most alienating facts of my new life was that I was addressed by my surname! Not that it was necessary to command more respect, but by this measure she made us feel her undisputed authority. I felt like an inmate who wouldn't want to mess with the warden. As a logical consequence, I imposed a decision on myself to keep a low profile and not to make a spectacle of myself.

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My personal teenage rampage had to be temporarily suspended. I had to take it like a man. My inner life was characterised by frustration, fear and a feeling of sickness. I tried to suppress what I felt deep down until one evening my mother asked me what the matter was. I hadn't spoken much that evening and it was quite obvious that I was bottling something up. After my lids fluttered, my chin twitched and my whole body trembled for a while, I burst out in tears and screamed, 'I'm not gonna go back to school anymore, never ever again, neeeeeveeeeer eeeeeveeeeer!' I was virtually on the verge of resigning from school entirely and giving notice to Miss Zaruba.

My mother was very understanding, but also discussed with me the further options if I were to go ahead with my plan. From a purely objective economical point of view, opportunities to earn my own living without a certain certificate proving my presence at some kind of educational institute on a regular basis would have been very much limited. To weigh the pros and cons thoroughly, without taking German legislation on compulsory school attendance into consideration at all, I utilised respite for the following negotiation process. I came to the conclusion that under these terms and conditions: firstly, I had to get on with it; and secondly, I had to get it over and done with in the best possible way. Returning to school next morning was my personal option at least, I convinced myself. I wasn't forced into it and thereby didn't lose face. It was my decision!

I worked out how to cope with Miss Zaruba, and after a while we even got on together. There were certain conditions, though, that I never came to terms with. I was used to singing just being a part of the music lesson and physical

exercise of PE lessons. Not so for Miss Zaruba. Whenever she caught sight of a free slot we had to sing endlessly. Good old traditional German children's songs. In a class of some 32 pupils she couldn't figure out who sang wrongly. This was our chance to get our own back on her. And I in particular got my own back on her big time.

She once complained that we didn't open our mouths as much as those choirboys on TV. 'The more you spread your lips the more distinctly and clearly you sing.' We willingly met her demand by tearing our gobs apart. The funny part was that we only made lip movements and didn't utter a single note. That referred to the ones she was looking at. The others tried to squeak as much as possible and thereby ruin the quality altogether. When she looked puzzled, I looked puzzled in the most unsympathetic way. How on earth can this choir be so bad?

We were tough boys, so we believed, and played footie in any weather condition any time. We usually even enjoyed playing outside in the school yard during our big break when it rained. Fresh air and a little run around were precious to us. Miss Zaruba had other ideas. As soon as a single raindrop was spotted, we had to stay inside. Of course, she wouldn't leave us alone but made us subject to her physical exercises as this would freshen up our minds and give us enough energy for the lessons to follow.

One of the few escapes was art lessons, in which drawing, painting and crafting was going to get the best out of my creativity, or so I thought. Mrs Kastner had other ideas. Actually she should have insisted on being called 'Miss', too, as no normal bloke with eyes in the right places ever went near her, let alone robbed her of her Fräulein status. When I

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reported to my mother what learning material lay ahead of us the following term, even she was a bit dumbfounded. We were going to learn knitting and crocheting for the entire school year.

One of the League of German Maidens' aims was to educate girls within the beliefs of the National Socialist system and to train them for their roles in German society: wife, mother and homemaker. Well, neither was I living in bloody Nazi Germany but in the rebellious 70s, nor was I becoming a wife, mother or homemaker. School was supposed to enable me to make a living economically, not make me stay at home. The content of education was to make me a respected member of society and, from a personal point of view, financially independent so that I could do whatever I wanted when I was a grown-up. After all, this was the bloody reason I voluntarily opted for going back to bloody school in the first bloody place! If that wasn't bad enough, Mrs Kastner had the unfavourable habit of yelling at you at every single opportunity. For a positive, healthy upbringing of a self-confident man it was a kind of unreal reality. One minute you looked up to your rebellious heroes singing about your teenage rampage and the next you were confronted with a middle-aged art teacher living out her personal rampage on you whenever you dropped a stitch! My dislike for her making me do these girly things turned into pure personal hatred.

Having encountered solely amiable members of the opposite gender until then, I had an absolutely healthy relationship with that species. My kindergarten teacher for a start had been kind, understanding and always gave me a smile. My hairdresser took my view on women to a higher

level. I always went to this young, tall lady with short blond hair. She wore a black blouse and her bodily constitution on the upper tier was quite voluptuous. My mum always paid for the haircut, but her service, in my personal perception, went quite beyond that. Washing my hair was exceeded by massaging my head very intensively in a sensual way never experienced in this act of lavation before. While exercising her profession, she pulled my head slowly back until it casually touched her breasts. At the same time she ran her fingers casually above my ears. I couldn't figure out what she was doing, but I liked it. It didn't take me long to come to the conclusion that I liked women and what they can do. They were beautiful and gave you nice feelings. 'Mum, next time can I have my hair cut by her again?'

These rose-coloured glasses were taken off immediately the following morning by Mrs Kastner, who could deter any heterosexual young man from any kind of erotic purposes. For at least twice a week, in between yelling at me from behind, it was knit one, purl one, knit one, purl one, knit one, purl one, knit one, purl one, knit one, purl one.

I never took a particular liking to Smokie or Rod Stewart, but some of their songs even topped the charts, too. 'Lay Back in the Arms of Someone' was at number one in the German charts and 'I Don't Want to Talk About It' in the UK singles charts on 25 May 1977. We were going to watch newly crowned German champions Borussia Mönchengladbach in the European Cup Final on TV that night. They were a strong force in the German Bundesliga as they had been dominating the domestic league for some years, having won the championship in 1970, 1971, 1975 and 1976 previously, and the German Cup in 1973. They enjoyed their only

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European success in the UEFA Cup in 1975. Three years earlier in the same competition, they had forced their way comfortably through to the final after overcoming in the most superior way Aberdeen 9-5, Hvidovre IF 6-1, local rivals Cologne 5-0, Kaiserslautern 9-2 and FC Twente Enschede 5-1 on aggregate. In the final though, they couldn't beat a certain team from England. A 2-0 win in the second leg in Germany wasn't enough after having been beaten 3-0 at Anfield in the first leg. This time, in 1977, the greats of Vogts, Bonhof, Stielike, Simonsen and Heynckes were going to play that English team again. That night, I was going to hear that choir from *Meddle* for real. That night, I was going to see Liverpool Football Club for the first time live on TV!

Most family members gathered around the TV before kick-off in an overcrowded living room. All of them supported Mönchengladbach, simply because it was a German team. My allegiance was very clear in advance, of course. In the Olympic Stadium in Rome, it was obvious that the travelling Liverpoolians were in the majority. Some 27,000 supporters from Liverpool made up around half of the overall attendance that night. The Germans had already succumbed to Liverpool in terms of numbers and atmosphere by their fans. It didn't take long for me to get my first physical, and in particular psychological, goose pimples.

When the players entered the arena and prepared themselves for kick-off, a visual impression immediately made me watch in awe. Borussia played in an all-white kit. The contrast couldn't have been more immense between the Germans' white and the Redmen's colour. Until 1964, the Reds were playing in red jerseys, white shorts and white socks with a red trim. Bill Shankly decided before a European

Cup home tie against Anderlecht to send his team out in all red. Shanks was convinced that the colour scheme would carry psychological impact, red for danger and red for power. Liverpool would be more intimidating. He came into the dressing room and threw a pair of red shorts to his captain Ronnie Yeats. 'Get into those shorts and let's see how you look,' he said. 'Christ, Ronnie, you look awesome, terrifying. You look 7ft tall.' To the press Shanks later confessed, 'He frightens me and he's in my bloody team!'

Shanks wouldn't have anticipated that this would carry some psychological impact on a little boy in a far off foreign land more than a decade later. Not only that the players wore an all-red outfit, but the red seemed to be redder than any other red I had seen before in my life. It was such a pure and glowing red that couldn't be matched by any other colour. It even appeared to be classed above any kind of colour scale. And yet the contrasting white trims and in particular the white numbers on the back didn't disrupt the beauty of the red but only intensified its impact. And if that wasn't enough, right out of the red depth there appeared a beautiful, slim yellow Liver Bird upon the chest. But it wasn't only Shanks who acted unaware of future consequences. Seeds of my life's predestination were sown on a global scale.

Hungarian dramatist and novelist Ferenc Molnár wrote *Liliom* in 1909. Liliom is a carousel barker who falls in love with a young woman. They both lose their jobs, and when the young woman becomes pregnant, Liliom is tempted to carry out a robbery, in which he dies. After some time in purgatory, he's sent back to Earth for one day to try to make amends. If he fails, he'll be eternally damned. On Broadway,



## SEARCHING FOR HEROES

the play was first staged in 1921. Orson Welles directed the radio adaptation for his programme in 1939.

The American songwriting duo of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein created a string of popular Broadway musicals in the 1940s and 1950s. They created the innovative development of the musical play where songs and dances are integrated into a story. Drama and emotions became an important part of the new type of musical. Both initiated what's considered the golden age of musical theatre. They composed and wrote successful shows such as *Oklahoma!*, *South Pacific*, *The King and I* and *The Sound of Music*. They were awarded 35 Tony Awards, 15 Academy Awards, two Pulitzer Prizes, two Grammy Awards and two Emmy Awards. Their second musical *Carousel* was adapted from *Liliom*, the original setting of Budapest transplanted to the north-east of the USA. The show opened at Broadway's Majestic Theatre on 19 April 1945. In one of the songs, the cousin of the female protagonist Julie sings to comfort and encourage her when her husband Billy is killed during a failed robbery. The song is reprised in the final scene at Billy and Julie's daughter Louise's graduation. Billy watches this ceremony during his return to Earth. The song is called 'You'll Never Walk Alone'. The musical ran for 890 performances on Broadway before it premiered in London's West End at the Theatre Royal on 7 June 1950, where it ran for 566 performances.

A decade later, a Scouse band called The Mars Bars had to change their name after the Mars Candy Company refused their approval. The band, which then became known as Gerry and the Pacemakers, was managed by a man who was running a family business in Walton Road called North End Music Stores. Mr Brian Samuel Epstein also managed

a certain group called The Beatles. The bands were part of the Merseybeat, the new pop and rock music genre that developed in Liverpool in the early 1960s.

The Beatles' first single release, 'My Bonnie', with Tony Sheridan, couldn't climb higher than No. 48 in the UK chart in 1961. 'Love Me Do' reached No. 17 the following year, followed by 'Please Please Me', which narrowly missed out on top spot in 1963. They were offered a song called 'How Do You Do It' by producer George Martin, but they declined to release it. One reason behind it was that John Lennon allegedly considered it 'rubbish'. Brian Epstein offered it to Gerry Marsden, who most willingly accepted it and Gerry and the Pacemakers had their first single release. In April 1963, it went to number one and a new star band was born. This was the moment when Gerry Marsden realised that being a musician was his business. Three weeks later it was replaced at the top by 'From Me to You', the Beatles' third single and first number one hit.

Gerry and the Pacemakers' next single, 'I Like It', also reached number one in the UK singles chart, but Gerry Marsden was also keen on ballads. However, he trusted Brian, and if he thought it was right to do rock songs he would do them. As long as this got them into the charts, Gerry didn't mind how they got there. These first two songs were similar beat songs. Now he wanted to do a ballad. Watching the musical *Carousel* in his youth, 'You'll Never Walk Alone' had been one of Gerry's favourite songs. He had a serious intention to make it his third single release. Brian Epstein and George Martin's response was that it was too slow. He would be wasting the one-off opportunity to make his first three singles number one songs as never had anyone done that before.

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Gerry wasn't so much focused on getting another number one hit, but wanted to get a ballad into the charts. If he could succeed, he would be able to go on singing more ballads on records. He won the dispute and in November 1963 achieved a record that wasn't matched for over 20 years. 'You'll Never Walk Alone' hit number one and Gerry and the Pacemakers became the first act to top the charts with their first three consecutive single releases. They nearly achieved an even greater feat, but their fourth single release, 'I'm the One', was kept off the top by another Liverpool band, The Searchers.

The events in Liverpool in 1963 in music and football occurred at exactly the same time. The emergence of Merseybeat and The Beatles' supremacy coincided with Liverpool Football Club's own resurgence. After the dark ages of the 1950s, when the club even had to endure a spell in the Second Division, Bill Shankly hadn't only brought Liverpool back into the top flight, but made them the champions of England in 1963/64! Meanwhile, from April 1963 to May 1964, Liverpool artistes occupied the top of the charts for 51 weeks – 14 number one songs came from Liverpool: 'How Do You Do It', 'I Like It', 'You'll Never Walk Alone'; The Beatles' 'From Me to You', 'She Loves You', 'I Want to Hold Your Hand', 'Can't Buy Me Love'; The Searchers' 'Sweets for My Sweet', 'Needles and Pins', 'Don't Throw Your Love Away'; Billy J. Kramer & The Dakotas' 'Bad to Me', 'Little Children'; and Cilla Black's 'Anyone Who Had a Heart' and 'You're My World' all hit the top.

Football matches at Anfield were attended by capacity crowds. Fans on the Kop had to get in early to guarantee admission and therefore the terrace was packed some time before kick-off on a regular basis. The ground's DJ played

top-ten hits to pass the time and Kopites joined in with the tunes. One Saturday in November 1963, the Kop joined in with Gerry Marsden's third number one hit and created a very unique bond with this song. After it dropped out of the charts and wasn't played any more, the Kop still kept singing it in the matches later on. As this didn't go unnoticed by the DJ, 'You'll Never Walk Alone' was played again and again until the tune, the lyrics and the chant became the hymn of Liverpool Football Club.

Now, over 23 years later, on a night in May in front of a TV screen somewhere in Germany, a unique bond was formed between that all-red kit, that very special hymn, that travelling Kop and me! Quite a few culprits participated in a series of events to exert influence on my personal development over the coming decades. My destiny was sealed long before the goals by Terry McDermott, Tommy Smith and Phil Neal were scored to secure a 3-1 victory against Borussia Mönchengladbach and the club's first-ever European Cup. That night in Rome, Liverpool took hold of me and haven't let go since.