

AN EARLY HISTORY OF 'THE TECHNIQUES'

by Rio King

When I came from Dallas to Texas Tech, in Lubbock, for Freshman Orientation during the Fall of 1960, I remember being blown away at an open concert in the Quad by the gods of local band-dom, "Brownie Higgs and The Four Teens". Unfortunately, Buddy Holly had just died 18 months earlier but Waylon Jennings was DJing at KDAV radio and every fraternity was throwing parties with bands on weekends. Life was great. My grades were not.

By the following fall, I had talked the dorm advisor into letting us clean out a cramped little storage room, where an old upright piano was stored. He let us jam in there after chow until quiet hour at 7:00 p.m. There was only room enough for the musicians. Everyone else stood in the hallway outside to listen. We were playing Buddy, Chuck Berry, Jerry Lee Lewis, Ernie K-Doe's "Mother-in-Law", Maurice Williams' "Stay" and trying to get Freddie King's licks worked out.



In the spring of 1963, a couple of freshmen, Ross Morris and Jerry Jones, walked into my dorm room at Texas Tech looking for a lead guitar player and singer to start up a band. I guess they had seen me one of these jams, because I wasn't playing anywhere else. We started practicing once a week in Ross's garage apartment and by the end of the year we had worked up a 40-song playlist. We even threw in that new Beatle song "I Want To Hold Your Hand". With new Beatle boots and pegged-legged pants, we could look the part of professionals.

Ross was the drummer while Jerry and I traded off learning simple leads on guitar. We picked up Ron Gaston on the bass and headed for stardom. In the early days we rehearsed for Jimmie Torres of the Stringalongs and Jerry Allison of the Crickets, to get their advice on sound, repertoire, stage presence, etc. I'm sure they had difficulty in seeing our huge potential, but they didn't let on.

During the first half of 1964, we worked wherever we could, getting established in the Lubbock area-- mostly high school dances and a few frat parties. Ross arranged for a seamstress to make a wheat-colored tux jacket with a removable red velvet lapel for each of us. We continued our sub-meteoric rise. We even won the Muleshoe Fair Talent Show. (The next year we lost our title to a 12-year-old baton twirler).

By the fall of that year we decided we wanted to cut a record and started playing around with material ideas. I had just celebrated my first wedding anniversary with Penny and my grades were back on track. I can still remember coming home from a physics class, picking up my guitar and noodling out the first four bars to "Dream Theme". The melody and chords just kept on flowing. I had about an hour before picking up my wife from work and I had the song worked out before leaving. I showed it to the guys at practice that week (we just "practiced", not having gained "rehearsal" status yet), and quickly worked out our parts. I wanted to keep the sound clean and simple, but with some pop.



Also, during this period, we had a friend, Danny Uzzle, over to play and he had the basic bass, rhythm and chords to a song that we later turned into "Autumn Rain". I added a picking lead and a pizzicato rain-like bridge. We used to start the song by banging, or slightly dropping, the reverb unit to get a cool thunder clap sound out of the amp. Yeah, well, we stopped that pretty quickly. We couldn't afford to destroy our equipment for artistic appeal (though we did see that concept later catch on).

We pooled some of our gig money for a recording session, Ross scheduled us, and in November we were in Norman Petty's Studio, in Clovis, New Mexico. It was so exciting to be standing where Norman recorded Buddy Holly. My hands trembled and sweated so much I had to hold the pick in a white-knuckle grip. Norman listened to us run through our two songs. We laid down two takes of "Dream Theme", listened to them at the end of each, then figured that was the best we were going to do. It was the same with "Autumn Rain", and we were through.

Well, not quite through. Norman asked me if I'd like to have the songs published and I asked, "What do you mean, like printed and put into music stores?" So I sold him the right to print my song for the music stores. Yeah, right. For the price of one dollar. Not too bright for a college kid! Naturally, I ruefully learned later what I had done.



But we had our records pressed and a month later had them in our hands. Step two to stardom.

[Note: For you discographers out there, the first pressings came out on the "Venus" label, but we soon found out that that was already an existing label, so we changed the name to "Teen" records on the next run of pressings. I can't imagine that that label wasn't taken also, but if it was, they never found us to sue.]

David Patty, another Tech student, lived behind my garage apartment and was a DJ at a local Top 40 radio station in the afternoons (going by the radio name of "The Weird Beard"). I took "Dream Theme" over to him to see if we could get some air play and he liked it so much he used it as his shows theme music.



After that, record sales skyrocketed. We were making a couple of deliveries a week to the local record stores, selling 12 to 15 records per week! We were topping the charts over the Beatles in Lubbock! Even

played promotions and signed autographs!

Truth is, we never made any money, directly, on record sales. We traveled to other radio stations throughout West Texas and down to Dallas to try and get a foothold, but nothing much came of it. I went to a distributor in Dallas that would send copies to stations throughout the country, but they wanted a thousand free copies just to start. That was too rich for our blood, so we gave that up. But our overall mission was accomplished. We suddenly tripled our bookings and tripled our rates!

Shortly after that, our other guitar player, Jerry, left the band and we picked up a young, very talented lead guitar player, Alan Searsy. Alan picked up our repertoire quickly and we were able to cover a lot more of the British Invasion. We played throughout West Texas, Eastern New Mexico and the Panhandle.

We quickly started working on a follow-up record to "Dream Theme" and this time we wanted vocals. Ron and I wrote the lyrics to a song called "It's A Fast Ride" with me double-picking a boogie rhythm. It dealt with a rather shallow relationship. The flip side was a typical teen ballad that Ross and I wrote called "It Can't Be Wrong To Be In Love".

Although we had a modest hit with Norman Petty's sound, we decided to try Ruffin's Studio in Amarillo for our next recording. Ray was well known up and down the plains states for his band "Ray Ruff and the Checkmates" and his studio was twice the size of Norman's. Unfortunately, this time size didn't matter. The recordings were not nearly as sharp, clean and bright as we got from the Petty Studio, and we never released those songs.

Graduation took our bass player, Ron, at the end of 1965 and we started auditions for a replacement. As it happened, a hot, show-guitar player, fresh from playing lead on a Lou Rawls tour, moved to town and needed work. Since Alan was already our

lead guitar and I didn't know the first thing about playing bass, Bill Fry agreed to play bass for us. When we played shows after that, Bill would take a short segment of his best stuff, Alan would switch to bass, and then they would switch back. They worked it out fine and we continued our successful bookings into the summer of 1966.

Since I was graduating in August of that year, I had to make a tough decision: Go with the band on tour and live on the road for long periods, or take the corporate path. With a new baby, Holly, I was already working full time and decided that graduate school and industry offered my family a better future than my music. So the Techniques slipped into history, footnoted as having recorded at Norman Petty's and charting number one in record sales in Lubbock, Texas for three full weeks in 1965.

THE TECHNIQUES TODAY

Jerry Jones went on to get his agricultural degree at Texas Tech and took over the tough job of heading the family farming enterprise in Earth, Texas. Sadly, Jerry passed away in 2019.

Ron Gaston graduated and became Chief Financial Officer for several national clothing chains. He became the CFO of Eddie Bauer in 2003 and sat in occasionally with jazz groups in the Seattle area until his retirement to Montana. Also sadly, Ron passed away in 2011 after an extended illness.

Alan Searsy retired after being a bank examiner and then a manager in the FDIC and creates and performs music for his wife P.J. Searsy's theater productions at the Waxahachie Community Theater.

Bill Fry opened a music store in Phoenix in the late 60's, eventually expanding to a string of store serving local and touring bands throughout Arizona.

Ross Morris became a comptroller for Dresser Industries, eventually opening his own securities, insurance and financial planning company. He now enjoys full retirement, creating national award winning Show Cars at his Lake Palestine home, near Tyler, Texas.

Rio King (BMI) earned his Masters degree in Math before completing a 25 year career in software development and management with Texas Instruments. After retiring from TI, Rio continued his singing and songwriting with his debut CD of award winning original Texas music in 2009 ("I'd Love To See Texas Again") and has followed that with his second, equally acclaimed album ("Window Into Texas") in 2020 (see www.rioking.com). He still gets a huge kick out of playing his Texas Music for songwriter appearances at festivals, bars, restaurants and parties. And he really lights it up when he can sit in with his talented friends in bands throughout Austin and North Texas and again play a few of the huge hits that came out of the Sun Studio in Memphis and the Petty Studio in Clovis.

The Techniques got together again in 2008 and began to jam a bit. They had so much fun that Rio, Ross and Alan picked up experienced and talented bassist/backup vocalist, Bob Landis and began playing the 50s and 60s rock and roll favorites for auto shows, festivals, parties and special events. They performed all over Texas, from Lubbock into deep East Texas, until finally retiring the band in 2015.