



CHRIS WHITE

Chris has accumulated 30 years of music industry experience and can be found stage-managing the incredible performers at The War & Peace Revival, The Military World Show, and most recently, the Liberty Stage at Twinwood Festival. Over the coming months Chris will bring you the best music in the current UK vintage scene.

## Carradine's Cockney Singalong

# TOM CARRADINE

AS I HAVE COVERED TWO FEMALE ACTS IN MY LAST TWO ARTICLES, I WANTED TO INTRODUCE YOU TO A MALE PERFORMER ON THE VINTAGE SCENE. I THOUGHT OF TOM CARRADINE STRAIGHT AWAY AS THE EPITOME OF DAPPER VINTAGE STYLE AND ALL ROUND LOVELY GENT.

I first met Tom at Twinwood in 2013. My wife Charlotte and I stumbled into The Nags Head pub after watching the evening cabaret featuring Dusty Limits, accompanied by Tom on piano. The pub was very quiet as we all sat down for a few drinks to relax and chat after the show. Tom and Dusty spied an old piano and with some encouragement the boys and Charlotte (in full WAAF WW2 uniform) started singing. By the end of the evening a crowded pub full of people were all singing along. Since that night, Carradine's Cockney Sing-a-long has become a popular feature of events such as the Festival of Vintage and Twinwood to name but a few. If you are ever at an event and spy Tom anywhere near a piano, get ready to sing at the top of your voice – it's so much fun and you will leave with a smile on your face.

### TO THOSE NOT FAMILIAR WITH YOU, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF?

As an art deco loving, moustachioed gent living a retrospective life, with a fascination for the popular songs from the first half of the 20th century, single handedly trying to keep them alive.

### FOR ANY GENTLEMEN WHO WANT TO DRESS VINTAGE AND GET INTO THE SCENE, CAN YOU GIVE SOME POINTERS ON WHERE TO BEGIN?

There are some great online vintage and reproduction companies out there, but make sure you know your measurements. eBay is great for finding bargains and having a good alterations tailor is important but be aware what can be tweaked. Trousers can easily be altered but the shoulders of a jacket can't. Find the best fit you can to start with.

Also, don't be a slave to the scene. Wear what you want and what you are most comfortable in. It took me until I was 30 to really find my 'style' and feel confident about my appearance. My day-to-day wear is usually 1940s and performance wear more Victorian / Edwardian but I love mixing and matching styles and pieces from across eras, whether vintage or reproduction, to create a style which is right for me. We're all unique. Enjoy experimenting to find what works for you.

### WHAT IS YOUR PERFORMING BACKGROUND AND WHAT INSPIRED YOU?

Although not a "proper" Cockney (I was born and

raised in Coventry) I've been singing these songs for years and leading sing-a-longs ever since I could play the piano. I cut my performing teeth in the Scout Gang Shows in Coventry but always thought that music and performing would just be a hobby.

After graduating from Imperial College with a degree in Biochemistry in 2004, I fell in to playing for rehearsals and auditions for Fringe shows in London. This then led to me working as a keyboard player and musical director on UK tours of musicals such as *Joseph, Cabaret, Scrooge* and *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*. A complete career change! I did this for about eight years until my wife and I had our son, Andrew, and I decided I wanted to focus on work closer to home rather than being on the road for six months at a time.

During this time I'd also started playing for Champagne Charlie and the Bubbly Boys and discovering the vintage music scene, accompanying Dusty Limits at the Twinwood Festival in 2013. After the show we ended up in the Nag's Head pub there and I started playing the battered old piano. People joined in singing and we had a great time. The next night when we got to the Nag's Head we found people had been waiting for me to come in for the sing-a-long. The rest, as they say, is history.

I returned the next year and the atmosphere at the sing-a-long made me wonder if I could put together a sing-a-long act to take elsewhere. I was booked for a session in the bar at Wilton's Music Hall in London in October 2014 and since then have gone from strength to strength, now playing to sell out crowds in the main auditorium at Wilton's, a weekly residency in London and at vintage events up and down the country.

### WHAT ASPECTS OF THE VINTAGE SCENE INFLUENCE YOU THE MOST?

Probably the wealth of dapper gents on Instagram. They're always style inspiration for me, particularly @dandywellington, @haethaenstat and @bunnysvintage wardrobe.

### HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR LIVE PERFORMANCES?

It's a good old-fashioned knees-up. Whether I'm playing to 50 people in a pub or 300 at one of my larger shows at Wilton's Music Hall, my audiences always leave on a high. My performances bring back so many memories for people: of family parties or parents and grandparents singing them songs as children. It's all about that warm feeling of nostalgia that comes from singing these songs. I hope that the audiences leave having been uplifted by the music and that by singing these songs we're keeping them alive and passing them on to a younger generation.

### THE LAST TIME I SPOKE TO YOU, YOU WERE GOING TO RECORD AN ALBUM. HAS THAT HAPPENED, AND IF SO, CAN YOU TELL VL READERS ABOUT IT?

My debut album *Live at the Bull & Gate* was recorded in September 2015 and released in February 2016. It features an hour of my most popular sing-a-long medleys, recorded with a live audience, and really captures the atmosphere of one of my knees-ups. It's available from my website, at my gigs and can be downloaded from iTunes and all major digital outlets.

### IS THERE A SONG YOU ENJOY PLAYING THE MOST AND WHY?

This is a tough choice, as I love so many of these old time songs. If I had to choose, it would probably be *The Beer Barrel Polka* (aka *Roll Out The Barrel*), which normally forms the end of the first set. It's a great sing-a-long classic and always has people up on their feet dancing.

### WHAT ARE YOUR MUSICAL ICONS / INFLUENCES?

Mrs Mills and her honky tonk piano party albums of the 1970s heavily influence my piano playing style. They really capture a special, old time, party atmosphere that I try to recreate at my gigs.

### WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST MEMORABLE VENUE / PERFORMANCE SO FAR?

Probably my album launch at Wilton's Music Hall in February 2016. It's such a special venue and you really do feel the presence of all of the stars of the Victorian Music Hall who've performed on that stage. It's great that I always play to sell out crowds there and raise the roof in exactly the same way that the Victorians would have done at the turn of the 20th century.

### DO YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION REGARDING ANY UPCOMING SHOWS THAT YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE AND WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR 2017?

I play every Thursday at Mr Fogg's Tavern, 58 St Martin's Lane, London (8.30-10.30pm) and regular dates at Cahoots, off Carnaby Street. I'll be back at Twinwood this year and at Wilton's Music Hall in July, and there will be more festival appearances announced soon.

### WHERE CAN READERS FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOU?

All of my gig dates are on my website ([www.carradinescockneysingalong.co.uk](http://www.carradinescockneysingalong.co.uk)) or readers can follow me on Facebook ([facebook.com/cockneysingalong](https://www.facebook.com/cockneysingalong)), Twitter and Instagram (@tomcarradine).

