

After Keith Emerson disbanded "The Nice" in 1970, I began to recruit members for a new band. The first consideration was to find a strong vocalist. Graham Bell was one of the best singer/songwriters that I had heard, and, thankfully, he was keen to work with me. Graham introduced me to guitarist John Hedley, and Alan Smith, my personal assistant, introduced me to Alan Cartwright, the bassist. I had met saxophonist Jeff Peach from time to time, had always appreciated his playing, and so I invited him to join us.

We enjoyed our short time together as Every Which Way – I think! I also believe that it was a very good band, that would have benefitted from more time in which to develop. Graham and I did not always see eye to eye over our musical direction, and Alan was made an offer he could not refuse; from Procol Harum. I believe John took work on cruise ships, and Jeff – non-committal at the time – I have no idea what he went on to do, or where he is now.

There were also conflicting opinions between the record company and the band over the direction in which our music was progressing; and so the CD you have in your hands is the only recording that Every Which Way made. I hope you enjoyed it!

Brian Davison, January 2004

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For many friends of progressive rock music, Brian Davison's – unfortunately - only album, Every Which Way, is an inside tip. Although Brian Davison was world renowned and received high appraisal for many years as the drummer of The Nice, Every Which Way flourished rather undetected. The album, published on 25.09.1970, was brought on the market in nearly all relevant countries, but the rather disappointing sales figures confirmed the suspicion, that the lustre of The Nice had no effect on the band. This is also true for the projects of the other The Nice members Lee Jackson and David O' List, since success of their publications as Jackson Heights and Jet was denied them. Merely Keith Emerson was successful with Emerson Lake & Palmer. But this is a different story.

Before that, Emerson and Jackson had played with Gary Farr and T. Bones; Emerson had even played with V.I.P. for a little while, before the quartet Keith Emerson, Brian Davison, Lee Jackson and David O' List, backing band of pop singer P.P. Arnold, also got together as The Nice. In concerts they played as The Nice in the supporting programme and at the same time featured as backing band of the pop singer. The record label Immediate became aware of the band and provided them with a record contract in October 1967. The very same year the band's first LP came out, further records followed suit. The band was very successful all over the world. However, in early 1970 the band split. Davison took time off to find out about his aims as a musician. Eventually, in the early summer of 1970, the five members of the Every Which Way got together rather quickly. In an interview published in Melody Maker on 08.08.1970 Brian Davison told how the band had formed:

"Well, the way it formed is that all the time I was with The Nice I was aware of what sounded good to my ear, and I saw these people on my travels and enjoyed what they were doing. There was no question of me consciously picking out these guys for possible future use in a band, but it just so happened that when The Nice split I remembered them.

I always liked Alan. He is one of the most alive bassists I have heard. Then we tried one or two leads,

but they were just not united with the band, so Alan said let's try John, whom he knew. And he has turned out to be really there and alive.

I didn't have any specific band in mind when The Nice split. I just built things slowly, and that's the only way you can really do it. The first thing I did was to think of all the people I knew who were good. I think Graham Bell and Geoffrey Peach were the first two; I knew Graham had a good voice and I had heard Geoffrey play in several places. The biggest problem was finding the guitarist.

In the last five months we've put an album together, and got the core of the band together; but from the gig point of view it's been very disappointing. If you're only doing one gig here and one gig there you've got no time to get a set balance, although all the gigs we've done so far with the exception of the Marquee have worked out fine.

At the time we did the album that was all I wanted to do. If we can get a steady run of work, I can see it's going to be really nice. We're doing all stuff from the album on stage with the addition of Bob Dylan's "Days of 49".

Remarkably, the band was able to record a tremendous and very unique album. An LP that comes close to the sound of the Every Which Way is unlikely to be found.

The way he selected his co-musicians Brian created a sound with many agreeable small nuances and insinuations, characterized by excellent singing and guitar and wind instruments solos, driven by a powerful rhythm department. From the musical point of view they had found the perfect balance between entertainment and engagement, while the first hearing merely serves as an appetizer and does not reveal its full value. The band gave Graham Bell, who had formerly played with Skip Bifferty, the opportunity to show his underrated talent in singing and composing. It was actually Graham Bell who composed most of the songs:

"I just tell the band that if they've got something to write then they should write it; it shouldn't just come from one source.

Over the years we've built up one hell of a lot of ideas, and now we have a positive direction to release them in."

Davison has an amiable and engaging personality, but is totally uncompromising in his views and statements. On the dissolution of The Nice he was adamant: he was saying nothing about the reasons or his feelings on the aftermath. "It would be a stupid waste of time to talk about it. That band was something that was, and this one is something that is." Would he care to comment on the musical approach of his present group? "It's just music. If you listen to it as a whole, you will know what it is. It doesn't have to be defined. It just is, and speaks for itself."

In his interview in Melody Maker on 31.10.1970 Brian Davison appears to have already had the suspicion that the band was going to be short-lived. In particular, he complained of the lack of opportunity for gigs.

A date sheet showing four gigs in five months would make the smallest band cringe. But when you happen to be Brian Davison and you've just pulled a new band together with the aim of firing them straight into action, then the whole situation is exacerbated. The musician's lot is not always a happy one, and it's the band leader's job to try and keep the hang-ups down to a minimum – avoiding irritating little things like album labels pressed on the wrong sides, a fate which has already befallen Brian Davison.

“We’ve a lot of agency hang-ups, and only today we changed over to NEMS,” Brian explained. “All we want to do is play to the right people in the right places, but it’s a case of not being handled properly. Sure, I missed the money for a while when The Nice broke up, but the kind of security we need is to get a positive throwback from audiences and find out our good points and bad points. It wouldn’t worry me to the extent of breaking up the band after ten gigs, if things didn’t go well. There’s so much there, and obviously we want to get it out. When we get into the work pattern where we can analyse it three times a week instead of four times in five months then things will come on in leaps and bounds.

As for the future we’ll tell the agency how we figure things should be, and work it out from there. We won’t be subtracting anyone from the group and I doubt whether we’ll be adding anything for a while. I think London is a bad scene for us at the moment, and it’ll be much better to play everywhere else first.

I just want to see us work now, and maybe after Christmas we’ll go back into the studios.”

This did not work out, as Brian Davison let us know in his personal liner notes, since the band fell out with each other due to controversies with the record company and split up in early 1971.

After the band had split up, vocalist Graham Bell went to Arc, who later became Bell & Arc and published an album on Charisma as early as 1971. In this band Graham Bell met his former colleagues of Skip Bifferty. Bell and Arc split up in 1972 and Bell continued his career as a soloist. Brian Davison took his time with new band projects and it was only in August 1973 that he formed the band Refugee that was very reminiscent of The Nice, together with his former Nice-companion Lee Jackson and keyboarder Patrick Moraz. However, this band was to split up very soon as well, since in August 1974 Patrick Moraz replaced Rick Wakeman with Yes. Afterwards, Brian Davison worked as a session musician. In spring 2006 he toured with the reformed The Nice.

Manfred Steinheuer, June 2006

Special thanks to Brian Davison for his help.

The trouble with supergroups is that they’re so damned super. Few psyches can survive that open return on the great ego trip. Thus it has become the unfortunate modus operandi of so many superstars to fall back and regroup with as super an assemblage of confederates as possible. Each superego gets nursed back to health – or is it wealth? The luster from the cluster of great and near-great sells like hell but the music almost invariably suffers from the shuffle.

Luckily, there are exceptions to this condition. And the music in this album is just about the best example around. After The Nice broke up and two of the protagonists got themselves new groups, Brian Davison did the best thing possible. That is, he didn’t do anything. He just sat back and thought a bit. About what he wanted to do. And where he wanted to go. Little by little he got together some friends. And where they went was Every Which Way. It turned out to be exactly the right way. You can relax. There isn’t a hit song on this album. That wasn’t intended to be. This is just five guys getting it together in the very best way possible. Since Brian’s the leader, he would have had the right to turn Every Which Way into a vehicle for his drumming. But that’s not Brian’s way. He’s too disciplined as a musician for that. Graham Bell wrote most of the songs on the album, so he could have hogged it. But he doesn’t. Jeff Peach plays formidable saxophone and flute: this easily could

have become his album. But it didn't. Nor is it Alan Cartwright's album. Or John Hedley's. What it turns out to be is your album. Yours because they're not playing for you. Or for your buck. They're playing for themselves. There isn't a bulging ego in sight.

This is quiet music. An exciting kind of quiet that outshouts all the watts and King Kong speaker systems going. Bringing the levels down to acoustic guitar, voice and soprano saxophone blending, shaping, complementing. Rhythm and inflection rather than a statement. Everybody taking. Everyone giving back. The ending to Bell's Castle Sand is so marvellous it should be perceived in absolutely silent concentration. And even then you'll miss half the beauty and structure of it the first time. You miss a lot of the beauty of the music the first time that you listen. Again, it's that kind of an album. Brian? To my mind, he's never played better on a recording. He plays with a constant ear to the other members to the group. And make no mistake, this is a group. Listen to the music in this album and you can feel the exploration: you can almost pick the direction of their next album. Almost. But not quite. Even though you know better, you get the feeling that the music is just happening, that it's thoroughly spontaneous.

Every Which Way isn't a supergroup. This album isn't a super album. There are no superstars here. In many ways the music here is so much more intense – yet at the same time more relaxed – than so much of the product issuing forth from the superpeople. This isn't easy music to listen to with half an ear. But come back to it once and you'll wear out the album long before some of the superproduct. Come back to it once. Make all the wonderful little discoveries in this album by yourself. Feel the discoveries grow into directions. Every Which Way is one helluva way to go.

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