

Ellis biography

Ellis was a raw-energy rock band built around two successful musicians, combining their talents after years in vastly different fields - former Love Affair vocalist Steve Ellis and musician extra-ordinaire Zoot Money. They joined forces in December 1971 to fulfil an idea formed during the Christmas of 1969, Steve had finally left the Love Affair to pursue a solo career - for a twenty year old (as he was then) he possessed incredible vocal maturity allied to a totally original style, Zoot, one of the most experienced contemporary musicians around, was quick to spot his talent and even quicker to realise Steve's voice had never been exploited to its full potential. So, when Steve suggested teaming up, Zoot was obviously attracted by the idea although his numerous commitments prevented him giving a definite 'yes' until two years later. By this time, Steve already knew whom he wanted as a lead guitarist - Andreas Gröber (better known as Andy Gee), a brilliant young German musician he had known and admired for years. Andy joined and Ellis was three-fifths complete. Again with drummer Dave Lutton, Steve knew him from the past as they bumped into each other through various stages of their careers. Steve had liked Dave's work with bands such as Heavy Jelly and The Greaseband and simply called him up and invited him into the band. Dave's first band was the Northern Ireland band Eire Apparent which released an album produced by Jimi Hendrix. All they needed now was a bass guitarist - a problem solved when former Fat Matress and Juicy Lucy man Jim Leverton heard about the vacancy from Mitch Mitchell.

Jim Leverton left the band after the completion of the first album and was replaced by Nick South (of Alexis Korner and Vinegar Joe fame).

Drummer Reg Isidore sat in for Dave Lutton on the first Ellis tour in 1972 after Lutton had been in a car accident. Reg Isidore joined Robert Trower's band later in the year, having been recommended by Zoot Money.

Where are they now?

Jim Leverton's next band after leaving Ellis was Hemlock, led by ex-Keef Hartley guitarist/vocalist Miller Anderson, which recorded an eponymous album for Deram in 1973 and toured Europe and the US for a couple of years. Leverton subsequently worked on a solo album by ex-Grease Band/Wings guitarist Henry McCulloch and gigged with Frankie Miller, before joining Savoy Brown for about a year in 1974, touring the States and recording the album "The Boogie Brothers". A brief stint backing Leo Sayer followed, before he joined Joe Brown and the Bruuvers, teaming up again with Zoot Money on keyboards. In 1978, Leverton began a long working relationship with ex-Small Faces and Humble Pie guitarist/vocalist Steve Marriott, which lasted until Marriott's untimely death in 1991.

Andy Gee joined Thin Lizzy in 1974 for a tour of Germany, replacing Gary Moore. Gee subsequently moved to Canada, and played with Avenir and Fighter, and also worked as a session musician on soundtracks for commercials. Moving back to London in 1983, he formed his own groups, Exit, and later Scandal, the latter with Reg Isidore. Andy is still an independent music publisher, and still records.

Dave Lutton worked briefly with Linda McCartney before he joined T. Rex in 1973 and remained with

the band until autumn 1976. He worked with Wreckless Eric (1978) and Chris Spedding (1979), teaming up again with T. Rex mates Steve Currie and Tony Newman on the latter. After moving to USA he joined Trance Mission in the early 1980's and recorded singles with the bands vocalist Ken Frasure and Billy Cox, former Band of Gypsies bassist.

Zoot Money subsequently worked with Kevin Coyne, and Kevin Ayers, among others, and worked with Alexis Korner on various projects right up to the latter's death in 1984. He has since played with Mick Taylor, Georgie Fame, Alan Price, the re-formed Humble Pie, Spencer Davis, the re-formed Foundations, and Geno Washington's Soul Train. In 1980 he released a solo album, "Mr Money". During the 1970s Zoot Money developed a parallel career as a film actor, which has continued to the present day. The past thirty years have seen him continue to record and perform, both as a featured artist with fellow 1960s stars such as Spencer Davis and Alan Price and in his own right with the Big Roll Band. He formed a new version of the Big Roll Band in the '90s (with drummer Colin Allen as a frequent guest), and has continued to perform with them right into the 21st century. He has also toured England with Ray Dorset (of Mungo Jerry), 1960s' Big Roll Band multi-instrumentalist Paul Williams, and Long John Baldry under the collective name the "British Legends of Rhythm & Blues". Since 2006 Money and drummer Colin Allen have toured and recorded with vocalist Maggie Bell, bassist Colin Hodgkinson and guitarist Miller Anderson, in the British Blues Quintet.

Nick South joined Blue Goose in 1974, playing alongside Eddie Clarke who was later in Motorhead. He also toured with Steve Marriott's All Stars in 1975, and did sessions with Zoot Money, Mike Vernon, Claire Hammill, Yoko Ono and Murray Head. Nick joined the new wave band Neo in 1978 whose line-up was Ian North (ex-Milk 'N' Cookies) on vocals, Steve Wilkin (ex-Wired and Masterwitch) on guitar, and Bryson Graham (ex-Spooky Tooth) on drums. In 1979 he joined Sniff'n'The Tears and stayed with them until autumn 1982, playing on the albums "The Game's Up", "Love/Action" and "Ride Blue Divide". In 1983, Nick joined 'Time U.K.', featuring Rick Buckler (ex-The Jam), Jimmy Edwards and Ray Simone, both formerly of 'MasterSwitch' and Danny Kustow from the Tom Robinson Band. He replaced former Sparks/Radio Stars bassist Martin Gordon. Nick moved to Los Angeles in the 90s and established himself as a successful Hollywood music editor for films. In 2011 he teamed up with Sniff'n'The Tears again to record the album "Downstream".