

**The Casuals** were a British pop group from Lincoln, Lincolnshire, England. They are best known for their 1968 #2 UK hit, "Jesamine".

## Career

Originally formed in 1960 by John Tebb (piano and vocals) and Howard Newcombe (guitar), they added Don Fortune (drums) and Zenon Kowalski (bass), and became The Casuals in 1961. After turning professional, they moved to Italy and recorded a number of covers of well-known UK material. Fortune and Kowalski left, and were followed by a series of replacements, culminating in Mick Bray (drums) and Ian Good (bass), from other well-known Lincoln groups, The Avengers and The Sultans.

In 1965 they won the TV talent show *Opportunity Knocks* three times, leading to a recording contract with Fontana Records who issued their debut single "If You Walk Out", which was unsuccessful. In 1966 Alan "Plug" Taylor (bass) joined, and the band moved to Italy, where they signed with CBS in Milan to record Italian language covers of British hit singles. These included a #1 Italian single covering the Bee Gees' "Massachusetts". Good left in mid 1967, and was not replaced, but when Brey left later that year, Bob O'Brien joined on drums (ex-Glasgow group The Riot Squad).

In 1968, whilst still in Italy, The Casuals switched to Decca Records, who released the single "Jesamine" in May which - following extensive airplay on Radio One - eventually charted, so the band came back from Italy to promote the record, which reached #2 on the UK Singles Chart late in 1968. "Jesamine" was a cover version of The Bystanders' "When Jesamine Goes" issued in February 1968, and was co-written by Marty Wilde and Ronnie Scott (the Bystanders' manager, not the famous jazz musician), under the pseudonym Frere Manston and Jack Gellar. The follow-up single, "Toy" (written by Chris Andrews) also made the Top 40, peaking at #30 They were also successful in Germany, where "Jesamine" hit #9, and "Toy" went to #27, but their first and only album, *Hour World*, was issued too late to capitalise on these successful singles. Chris Evans stood in for Newcombe when he was ill, and when Taylor and O'Brien left in 1970, Evans became a permanent member, along with Lloyd Courtney. None of the following four singles managed to chart, and the group was dropped by Decca in 1971.

They signed to Parlophone in 1972 and released "Tara Tiger Girl", but the single went nowhere, nor did a single "American Jam" for which the band was renamed 'American Jam Band', although, as both singles had the same B-side, the link was obvious. They left Parlophone for Dawn Records in 1974, but after their final single, "Good Times", flopped, they disbanded in 1976.

## Key members

- **Howard Newcombe** - guitar, trumpet, vocals - (born 25 November 1945, Lincoln, Lincolnshire, England)
- **Alan Taylor** - bass - (born 2 February 1947, Halifax, West Yorkshire, England - died 27 November 2011)
- **Johnny Tebb** - keyboards - (born **John Roy Tebb**, 1 October 1945, Lincoln, Lincolnshire, England)
- **Bob O'Brien** - drums - (born **Robert O'Brien**, 26 September 1944, Bridge of Allan, Stirlingshire, Scotland)