

"Brad Newman the Island Piano Man"

by Dave Bambrough and John Hannam. Oct. 2005



Charles Melvyn Thomas was born in Yorkshire in the year of 1938. By 1955 he had started his professional career at the Pavilion Theatre in Glasgow. With two others he combined to make a trio called The Kingpins.

Having completed his National Service in the RAF he returned to join the group on the legendary "Six Five Special". More success followed with a pop show on the B.B.C. called Drumbeat, which also starred the likes of Adam Faith, The John Barry Seven, Vince Eager, Roy Young and Billy Fury. The only known recordings by "The Kingpins" are on the LP. Drumbeat from the Television show. The two songs are "Shame on you Miss Johnson" written and recorded by Bobby Freeman on the London label and "Don't Leave me".

After another seasonal theatre show at Weymouth with Morecambe and Wise and a tour with Cliff Richard, the trio broke up. He then had a short spell in the Four Playboys before going solo. Before he launched his own solo career, under the pseudonym Brad Newman he came to the Island in 1961 to play piano in the resident bar at the Sandringham Hotel, Sandown. During this period he and Tommie Connor wrote a song called "Somebody To Love". Recording the song for Fontana records it reached number 47 in the pop charts in February 1962. Judging by the number of copies available in second hand record shops, one week in the charts seems to have misrepresented the true position the record reached. On the back of a small hit record Brad appeared on top rated TV shows like "Thank Your Lucky Stars" and a radio series called "Here we go with the NDO". Follow up singles, "Get a move on" "Stay by me" "Point of no return" and "I'll find you another baby" for Fontana, and his last "Please don't cry" for the Piccadilly label all failed to generate the sales of his debut disc. He also penned theme music for radio and TV and wrote "Secret Agent" in 1962, for the Eagles.

In 1967 Brad opened at The Vancouver Bar on Sandown sea front, with Brad on piano and Bert Reed on drums. Within weeks he had become an Island superstar by virtue of his unparalleled popularity. Holidaymakers and locals fought to get into the cramped bar where the girls all swooned round him and the fellas latched on to his raw and rasping voice, coupled with his infectious piano playing which was ideally suited to all brands of popular music. His repertoire covered the rock and roll music of Chuck Berry and Little Richard to the pop music of the mid 60's, a la Dusty Springfield, The Turtles and Tom Jones. His Island fans gave him the sort of adulation that many national pop performers would have envied. The entertainment went on for three summers 1967-68-69. Leaving the Vancouver, Brad played at Daishes Hotel, The Holliers at Shanklin and Sandown Social Club during the 70s and 80s. If anybody ever wondered why Brad played in public houses and not on the bigger stage it was his own choice. He simply felt more at home at the smaller venues.

He then elected to do a stint in Spain before returning to Oldham in the early 90s. Here he entertained in various public houses for a year or two before returning to Spain in the mid nineties and there he died on January 18th 1999.



No. 47 in 1962.



With the Kingpins in 1959



In Oldham 1993