



TiN PAN ALLEY CAT

From touring with Primal Scream to jamming with blues legend Hubert Sumlin, Barrie Cadogan has packed a lot into the decade since he left Nottinghamshire for the London rock scene. Now his own band, Little Barrie, look set to rule the waves

Words Jamie Dickson Portraits Rob Monk

Barrie Cadogan is examining a custom-built valve combo that's just been delivered to him by JPF Amplification on Denmark Street in London as we sit down to chat. The amplifier has just three controls on it: bass, treble and master volume: "The less wire your sound's going through the better," explains the guitarist of its simplicity. "Sometimes, if we're doing a gig and we've got a borrowed amp with a million knobs on it, I spend half the time trying to switch them off."

A veteran of London's session scene, Barrie has played with everybody from Morrissey to the Chemical Brothers, and can count blues legend Hubert Sumlin as jamming partner. But he's clearly not a friend to anything that stands between his battered red Gibson ES-330 and a nice glowing valve.

"I sometimes think that soul and feeling can be compromised by technicality," he remarks. "So pickup noise doesn't necessarily bother me, or even being slightly out of tune."

It's this hunger for unvarnished tone that's made his own band, Little Barrie, a backstairs sensation in London venues over the past few years. Fronted by

Cadogan, its classic power-trio line-up is completed by Lewis Wharton on bass and Virgil Howe – son of Yes and Asia guitarist Steve – on drums. Little Barrie already enjoy hero status in Japan, where Rolling Stone ran an eight-page photo feature on the group, but in Britain they remain something of a hidden gem.

Now, with the release of their third album, *King Of The Waves*, that may be about to change. Carved, splinters and all, from the woodiest of vintage valve tones, the album is both a tribute to its classic influences – which range from The MC5 to Dick Dale – and a bone-rattling departure from garage-rock formulas.

"Sometimes if you're going for a slightly raw sound you get branded as retro," Barrie explains. "But it wasn't our intention to make records that sounded old; we just wanted to make records that we thought sounded good."

London Calling

Barrie and original drummer Wayne Fullwood arrived in London to kick off the band's career 11 years ago. Fresh from their home county of Nottinghamshire, they came looking to build on the success of their home-grown debut single, *Shrug Off Love*.

"When we got down here we met Lewis [Wharton], and then what started off as a solo project became a proper band," Cadogan recalls.

Relentless rounds of recording and touring followed, but eventually the pressures of life on the road led Wayne Fullwood to leave the band, and for the past three years the drummer's stool has been occupied by Virgil Howe.

"Virgil gelled with the band really quickly," says Barrie. "He had a rock 'n' roll feel, but he could still swing it." He adds that Howe senior has since been to watch Little Barrie in action.

"He came to see us support Paul Weller at the Albert Hall," says Barrie. "We found a clip of him on YouTube in a band called the Syndicats from 1964 doing like a Bo Diddley tune – he's still using the same guitar [Howe's familiar Gibson ES-175]. But yeah, he's a lovely guy. He came to the gig and seemed to like it."

Another well-known champion of Little Barrie is Edwyn Collins. The former frontman of 1980s pop outfit Orange Juice, who penned *A Girl Like You*, produced much of *King Of The Waves* at his West Heath studio in London. Barrie is frank in his admiration for the support Collins has given the band and what he has achieved during a long recovery from two major strokes suffered in 2005, which seriously impaired his speech and mobility.

"It's taken him five years to get back to the position where he can work again," says Barrie. "Although he's unable to play the guitar, he's still been able to finish an album [a solo record, *Home Again*,"



Sneakin' Barrie down the alley: Cadogan at Regent Sounds on Denmark Street in London

"All the guitars were done either with Edwyn's Vibrolux, which I think he's had since Orange Juice days, or my Bassman. I've got one of the last white, piggyback models from late 1963 or early 1964"

recorded before his illness]. But he's had to learn how to speak again."

This has had some unexpected side-effects, says Barrie, who adds that because speech still requires careful effort by Collins, he's become more succinct in his production style.

"He still knows exactly what he wants to say, but it makes him more direct – and occasionally quite blunt. Sometimes if he doesn't think something's right, you'll ask him what he thinks and he'll just say, No. He's great to work with because he likes breaking rules and doing things differently. It's thanks to Edwyn and Seb, his engineer, that the record sounds pretty much how we wanted it to."

Dynamic Duo Jet

Aside from the benefits of Collins' production skills, there were also piles of delectable kit on hand at West Heath,

including original Neumann U67 mics and a formidable collection of vintage guitars.

"One of the main guitars I used was Edwyn's 1961 Gretsch Duo Jet, which is really beaten up," says Barrie. "He bought it on Ebay when we were doing the first album for a thousand quid. It's black and it's amazing – it sounds fantastic."

Aside from the Gretsch, the majority of the album was recorded with Barrie's workhorse Gibson ES-330 running through classic Fender amplification.

"All the guitars were done either with Edwyn's Vibrolux, which I think he's had since his Orange Juice days, or my Bassman." He notes. "I've got one of the last white, piggyback models – it's from late 1963 or early 1964. It's got the black panel, but with white knobs and white Tolex. I've had it for the last five years."

He also has one other instrument with him that helped shaped the tone of King

Of The Waves. At first glance it looks a little like a forgotten prototype from the Fullerton workshops, but its history is far more recent, as Barrie explains.

"I had this made by Philippe Dubreuille, who is based across the road [in Denmark Street]. I used it on the album, too. It's sort of a lightweight take on a Fender Jazzmaster but loaded with Seymour Duncan Antiquity P-90s. It's only two-and-a-half years old, but it looks more beaten up, because I've used it every night with Little Barrie and every night with Primal Scream."

The last remark draws attention to the other side of Barrie's career, which has



Barrie gets primal on guitar with the Scream

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Cherry on top

"This is my favourite guitar in the world," Barrie says, cradling his cherry-red 1962 ES-330. "It's pretty worn now, because I've done loads of gigs with it. I don't know if the Bigsby is factory: it's not the one that was on it when I got it, which was off a Gretsch. This bridge isn't original, either, but I've got the original at home. Apart from that it's all straight. They stopped using the black plastic pickup covers in 1962, so it's one of the last ones with those. I got it from Vintage And Rare Guitars. I swapped it for a '64 I had that was in much better condition, but I thought this was a better guitar. So I stuck mine on the wall and when they sold it, I took this home."

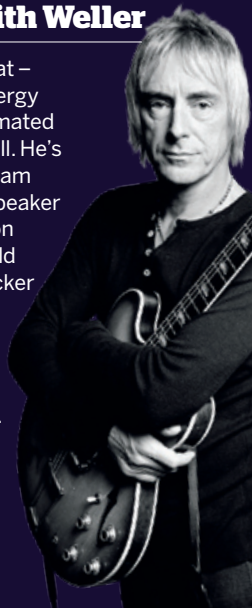
Whiter shade of Mayall

As he praises the qualities of his much-loved Gibson, Barrie is perched on another piece of hardware with serious tonal mojo: a hand-wired, 25-watt combo made by JPF Amplification to his own spec, newly delivered that morning. "I was looking for something a little less powerful than my Bassman, but I still wanted 12-inch speakers and something near 25 watts, so we came up with this."

"It's got KT66 tubes in like the early Marshalls did," Barrie explains. "I prefer their sound to EL34s – they're a bit more like that 1965 or 1966 sound rather than Led Zeppelin. It's a little clearer and not as grunty."

Working with Weller

"Paul Weller's great – he's got a lot of energy and he's quite animated in the studio as well. He's still got all his old Jam gear, like the old speaker cabs with the Union Jacks on and his old pop-art Rickenbacker was there too. His place is a bit of a treasure trove, as well as being a really good studio. He likes to work really fast and he seems to be on an amazingly prolific streak at the moment."



seen him play as a first-call backing guitarist with artists such as Paul Weller, Johnny Marr and – for the past five years – as a regular member of Primal Scream's touring band. Barrie explains that the Scream gig came about after an impromptu jam at Bobby Gillespie's house.

"I moved to Highbury, near to where Bobby was living at the time, and we just kept bumping into each other. One day he said to me, I've just bought a beautiful Gibson Hummingbird, do you want to come round? So I went round and we messed about with guitars in his kitchen, singing Velvet Underground songs and stuff like that.

"A few months later he rang up and said, We're looking for a guitarist for a few gigs, are you interested? He said he'd left a CD under his bin for me, because he was away that weekend. So I picked it up, worked all the songs out and it went from there. I'd been a fan of the band for a long time, so it was great."

An invitation to back Paul Weller on the track 22 Dreams, from his 2008 album of the same name, also came about partly through chance meetings on the street.

"We first got in touch with Paul Weller through a friend of Lewis, our bass player. Paul liked a CD of our stuff that we gave him and I also bumped into him around Denmark Street as well. We kept in touch with him and he offered us some support gigs over the years. Then he eventually asked us to go into the studio to back him on 22 Dreams.

"It doesn't matter how technically proficient you are or how cool your guitars are if you haven't got anything to say that touches people. Guitar playing isn't a race"



Surf and girth: Barrie with his fat-toned custom electric built by Philippe Dubreuille

"When we got there they'd already made a [partly completed] backing track. It's kind of hard playing to a track that's already done and it was actually Tony, our tour manager, who said, Why don't you just cut one live? I'm really glad he said something because we were all thinking it, but we didn't know if we should say it, because it wasn't our session. So Paul went in the vocal booth while we cut the track live. The vibe was really exciting – he was on one side of the glass and we were on the other, but basically all playing together in the same small room."

Sumlin Special

A devoted fan of blues music, Barrie felt honoured when he got the chance to play with Hubert Sumlin, the legendary guitarist who played in Howlin' Wolf's band in the mid-fifties. He describes how an encounter at an American record label they were both signed to led to a slot supporting Sumlin's band in New York:

"It is probably the greatest musical privilege I've ever had," Barry says. "He was incredibly funny, kind and humble. We talked about guitars and he told us

about being on tours in Germany in the 1960s where there's him, Muddy Waters, Sonny Boy Williamson, Willy Dixon, all these guys flying round Germany on this rickety Dakota plane touring, and they're having to put Willy Dixon's bass in the middle of the aisle so it doesn't unbalance the plane."

Barrie has immense respect for Sumlin and says his trademark sound comes direct from the man, not the hardware.

"It didn't matter how new a guitar was, or even if he wasn't using a very good amp. He just had that tone," Barrie says.

He even has a special request to make through Guitarist, concerning a vintage Silvertone Silhouette guitar with DeArmond pickups that Sumlin admired when they played together in Manhattan.

"If I can get in touch with him, I want to give it to him," Barrie says. "It's in my house and I'd gladly send it to him. I should have given it to him then."

Having so much top-level gigging experience makes Barrie a mine of information on all things relating to tone. But despite all that, his attitude to playing remains refreshingly unpretentious. What does he think makes a good guitarist?

"Feel. First and foremost, feel," Barrie says without hesitation. "The technicalities are irrelevant. It doesn't matter how technically proficient you are or how cool your guitars are if you haven't got anything to say that touches people. Guitar playing isn't a race." 