

'Falling Slowly' as the couple first sung together in the music shop I unashamedly wept at its beauty and my own poignant memory. It was a jagged reminder that I needed to start writing my own songs again as this was a huge part of what made music vital and special for me.

Gypie Mayo aka John Mayo aka John Cawthra

Having seen a poster of Gypie Mayo in Bath's music shop (the imaginatively named Duck, Son and Pinker's) I met up with Gypie Mayo in his very stale basement flat seven hundred steps up the road from my home in Grosvenor Place Bath. His flat smelt of cats and of dusty books. And it was cold - nowhere was there an ounce of warmth.

He played me a commissioned reggae backing track and he went on to talk about songwriting. He said he was always coming up with riffs and short musical ideas but couldn't find the words or melody. 'Ideal,' I said 'that's my bag.'

Gypie then gave me a cassette and a CD of some eclectic ideas he had recorded over the past 30 years to see what I could make of them. I managed to salvage one his recordings.

I wrote a song on my sixteen track entitled '*Into The Valley Of Hope*' and gradually we started working together more often. He supplied backing tracks and I supplied lyrics and melody. For the first time in my song-writing career I was writing exclusively with a guitarist.

The odyssey of the genius of Gypie Mayo.

Gypie Mayo was born John Cawthra, 24 July 1951. As a guitarist, he played for Dr. Feelgood from 1977 to 1981 and for the re-born Yardbirds with Alan Glen from 1996 to 2004.

When the legendary 'Wilko Johnson' stormed out of the band less than sixth months after the chart topping album '*Stupidity*', Dr Feelgood were in trouble.

Following Johnson's skittering stage footsteps would daunt any player, but in early 1977 the then unknown Mayo did more than that. He powered the band to new peaks with hits such as '*Down at the Doctors*'. Mayo then topped that when he co-wrote Dr Feelgood's gold disc track '*Milk and Alcohol*' with Nick Lowe.

The late great Lee Brilleaux summed up Gypie's style: 'He can play the bass notes and rhythm while his other fingers pluck out the tune... there's a lot going on.'

Brilleaux rated him as the best musician he'd ever worked with and gave him the nickname Gypie because Mayo had suffered several minor ailments and Brilleaux would rag him saying, '*you've always got the gyp.*' The nickname stuck.

Shortly after we met, Mayo's marriage finally dissolved and he moved into the most rock'n'roll house in Bath with a younger lady - Jenny. He was reborn as a person and as an inspired musician. Ideas flowed with ease and energy through his fingers to the fret board. Due to our partnership he now knew where his ideas were going and was working with someone who would be able to take the majority of them on to a musically satisfying conclusion.

Over the past five years we had met often. Each meeting has always been an interesting experience and we have produced over sixty sketches for songs and instrumentals. Whatever he played I tried to catch its spirit and musicality.

We even tried to write a South African song called '*Zamuki*' about the South African football mascot in the 2010 World Cup. Real World Studios nearby in Box felt it wasn't authentic enough, but through a contact we got the song to a famous lady Busi Mhlongo who loved it. I spoke to this lovely Zulu

singer twice but sadly she died of cancer before she could record it.

In order to place this song we also tried Johnny Clegg's management. In desperation I sent it to real long-shots like Jérôme Valcke at FIFA. Yes, once again, you name it, I tried it. It was a great song, it never got a proper airing. The only 'success' I had was getting its name on a mug from a student who spent a small fortune to watch England draw 0 0 with Algeria.

The style of songs we have written are far from his image as Feelgood's rocky blues guitar man. Our material has ranged from the beautiful ballads like *'Why a Bird Sings'*, *'It Is Written'*, *'I Love Living Life With You'* to *'Have I, You, We Got It?'* to Gypie's personal favourite *'Demonize'*.

Gypie has always lived life to the full and that life is coming back to bite him. He is in ailing health and has little short term memory from his many years of substance abuse.

Now when he plays the guitar I just have to record it and give these songs an airing while there is still time. Gypie is an original character and a brilliant raconteur. He is a treasure trove of rock'n'roll stories and has met and played with many of the greats including

Having a grin with Gyp.

