

I was visiting Bristol Zoo once with an old girlfriend. Well I say “old” she was 22, the same age as me and this was 30 plus years ago so I’m using old in the temporal sense.

She said “You see that guy over there in the chimpanzee pen?” “You mean the guy with the long arms and protruding chin?”

She ignored me. “Well he used to drum for someone famous called Stevie”. I was aghast. “You mean Stevie Wonder, the boy prodigy musician?”

“No this Stevie was white”.

“You don’t mean Stevie Marriott, child actor in Oliver and lead singer of the mod band The Small Faces who went on the form Humble Pie with Pete Frampton – the face that launched a thousand records.”

“No, taller than that.”

“Well how tall?” I asked. “I mean was he more than say 5 foot six?”.

She became exasperated with me. “I don’t know how tall he was – he was called Stevie and famous”.

“Ahh, could we be talking about Stevie Winwood, multi talented musician with Traffic?”

“Yes that’s him. Well that guy down there used to drum for him”

I was no longer aghast, I was staggered. “To think Jim Capaldi cleans out the monkey house at Bristol Zoo”. I said.

“He’s not called Jim, he’s called Glenn”.

Now I got the drift. “You mean he drummed for Traffic after Jim Capaldi left?”. “Yes, that’s exactly what I mean, and I’m regretting ever telling you”

Well there was an interesting piece of information to be filed away. About two years later, still struggling in a local band Brian (flatmate) and I decided to dispense with everyone else and start afresh. So we needed a drummer singer and rhythm guitarist fast and preferably in two people. I trudged up and down Black Boy Hill knocking on doors and saying to whoever answered “Don’t mind me asking, but do you work at Bristol Zoo and used to drum for Traffic”. Yes I had a lot more bottle in those days.

Amazingly I did track him down and in true soap story fashion he still had his drums in the loft. And we recruited him.

To think that Stevie Winwood and I are just a drummer apart. Two degrees of freedom!

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