

I was made for music: Chris Walls (Cee Dub)



I arrived with my parents in a small village called Newton near Cambridge from South Africa in 1960, after a period of acceptance by the villagers and school children, I became friends with among others another a young man called Robin from Sawston who convinced me that going to a folk club called 'The Rob Roy' upstairs room and sitting on cushions with the Cambridge Crofters performing was the best way to meet young girls especially foreign ones keen to learn English.

I believe we probably come into this world fully formed and if life allows, we follow our path – though sometimes life gets in the way...I remember as a small kid growing up in Enfield North London, listening to music on the transistor radio I had saved for. We had a tape recorder to send and listen to messages with friends in Australia. I would record songs from the radio and I would record my voice.

My father noodled on guitar, he sucked and blowed a harmonica and he had friends who skiffled with him. He took me to local productions of every musical of the time; Sound of Music, Carousel, South Pacific etc etc. I have ever since loved all the cheesy musicals that have come along there after.

I failed 11 plus and went to a secondary modern. I was bullied and hated the school, but a teacher took me under his wing and gave me a job looking after the stage. I set up mics for assembly, lighting for events. I made scenery.

I was safe on my stage with a few like minded others.

The same teacher married a teacher, who played guitar and taught me how to play. I borrowed a school guitar and I played and sung in groups, sung in choirs and recorded on 3 albums of folk music.

I loved woodwork and in the workshop was a technician who made violins. Everybody else made plant pot stands etc...So did I - but I also made a speaker to enhance my transistor radio and I copied the school guitar. At home I made an electric guitar and I bolted a little 5 watt amp from Tottenham Court Rd onto a speaker in a box. At lunch time with two turntables from jumble sales and old PA equipment bits found on the stage I ran lunch time discos.

I left school to start an engineering apprenticeship, the wages were crap, but I was DJing as much as possible using equipment I designed and made. From 18 I shared a flat with a great guy, who was a much better guitarist than me and had a great record collection. I sold my guitars to fund my DJing. It was the 70s and all I needed was 'Saturday night Fever' to make a profit in those disco days.

I listened to everything and anything, early Peter Green, Reggae, Motown, Funk, Soul, early synth, prog rock, folk rock, singer songwriters, US FM but maybe my greatest loves were Carol King and James Taylor. Then came punk and music polarized.

I found as a DJ I could satisfy births deaths and marriages but I could not find my niche and without a niche and with work opportunities flourishing I buried myself in work for too many years. My DJ equipment sold to buy a nice Hi Fi with too many buttons playing vanilla records. My musically wasted 30s.

The last company I worked for was Soundcraft, a leading sound mixing manufacturer. I was an engineer but musically I had lost my way. The mixing desks were to me just products.

I found the company the building that they now operate from and set up the plan for them to move to it. In return they made me redundant. I set my mind to never work for a company again – I never have. (But I do now use a Soundcraft mixing desk!).

It was the early 90s I did anything that paid more than £5 an hour and I partied. Watching a DJ one night I was amazed as the beats were mixed into one continuous euphoric dance. I was with gay friends and the music scene was rich. I had found my niche. I made scenery, costumes, show tapes for cabaret and I helped promote gay nightclub nights. With rudimentary computer skills learnt from my time working for Amstrad, I started publicity and marketing nightclubs, cabaret artists, drag acts.

My introduction to the internet was very early. I sang. I toured. I did 180 shows in one year. Yes that old love of musicals; Sound of Music, Carousel, South Pacific etc (and all that followed (Cabaret, Rocky Horror, Little shop of Horrors, Hairspray, Grease) sure fed the imagination for material to perform.

In 2005 I lost a very good friend. He was just 40 years old. At the time of his death I had the vague opportunity to design and build our own home near Royston in Hertfordshire. At the same time my promotion and marketing had hit a wall as web sites took over the marketing budgets.

As my friend died he said “follow your dream build your ranch. Life is short don’t wait”. For three years I put all my effort into building our home and when it was finished I expected to drive back and forward to my contacts and interests in London. After twice falling asleep driving home late at night I knew it was time to make a new life near to my new home.

My builder and music hero friend who is my closest neighbor said one day – “I was working in Enfield and mentioned you to my client – they said they knew you and that you sang and played guitar – I didn’t know you played guitar?”

I told him I hadn't played since I was 20. He said "you should start playing again". I asked him what kind of guitar I should get. He said "you will know it when you play it".

It took me a further 3 years to find that guitar and a teacher to get me over many bad habits and inhibitions. The guitar I now play, I made from scratch. During those 3 years I put a PA in my bungalow that had been built to party in and I hosted ill conceived jams.

My guitar teacher one day invited me to the launch of Royston Folk Club by one of his students. I went and was inspired to help. My internet, promotion, booking, marketing and sound engineering skills were soon employed.

Sadly the founder of the club moved away and the guitar teacher got ill. Bloody cancer again. Before he died he encouraged me to keep the Folk Club going and introduced to me to another of his students. He told us both to keep each other going. That teachers name was Tony Buch (pronounced Buck) and Richard and I named our duo 'Pass the Buch' to take forward his name.

I think he would be proud to know we are still together, making steady progress, finding our songs, enjoying practicing and entertaining. Our house has now hosted many parties and concerts. I have made SO many wonderful musician friends through my voluntary work with Royston Folk Club. I have booked acts for our concerts working closely with the rest of the team that I have gathered round me. I can truly say that the things that came naturally to me as a kid are now the foundation of all I hold dear today. My home is a house of music. I make and set up instruments, I share my tools with others that make instruments. I have friends drop in to practice and try things through the PA.

Why do musicians, promoters, technicians, do what we do? It sure as hell ain't the money. NO It's because music is like a faith. It can't be explained. You either have it or you don't. It brings us together. It gives us our community.

We know a secret that can't be shared with others, that don't know music, like we know music. That's why we just have to make music and to share music.

[Check out Chris, Mark and Lesley's great work at the Royston Folk Club](#)

