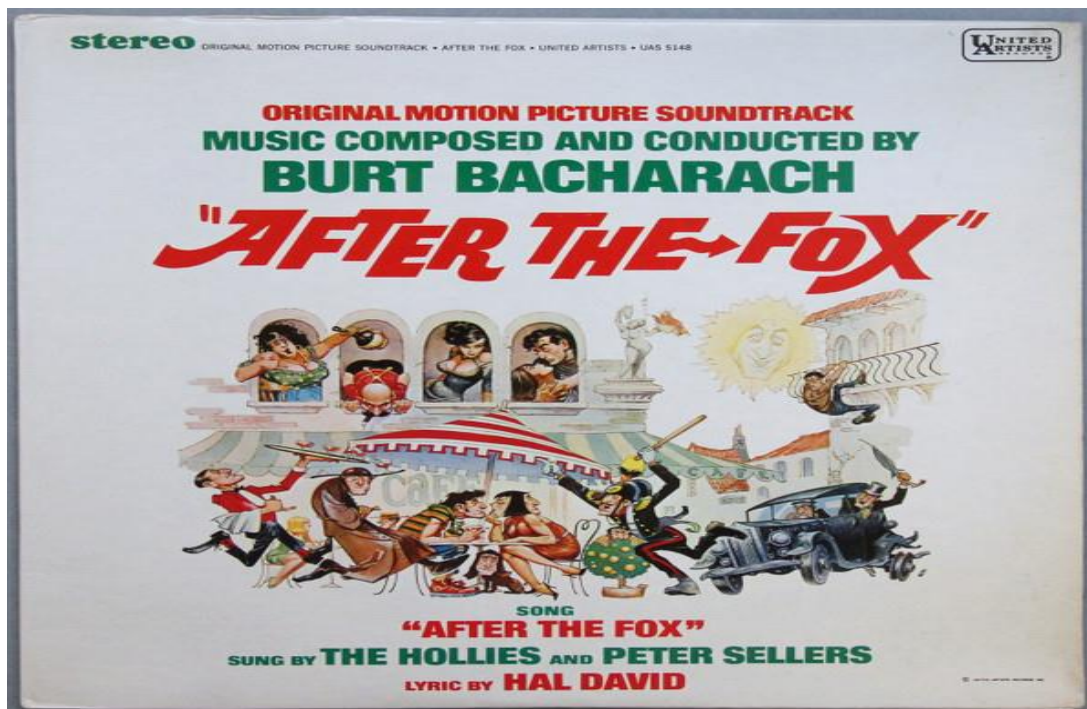


One day at Abbey Road – five legends got together...

Written by Andy Owen



It was Tuesday May 10th 1966.

Studio Two - Abbey Road Studios, London.

On this day, a number of exceptionally talented people were to find themselves in the same studio at the same time, all brought together for the recording of one track.

It was a surprising mix of legends...

They were, in no order of importance – Peter Sellers, Burt Bacharach, George Martin, Jack Bruce and The Hollies.

For a lot of people, this has since become a rather famous session, although what was produced on the day, didn't shake the world anywhere near as much, as some of the other music produced in that same iconic studio over the years.

The reason for all these legends to be at Abbey Road on this Tuesday, was a simple one.

The Hollies had been asked to record the title track for a forthcoming film - *After the Fox*.



The film was a comedy heist starring Peter Sellers.

It had a strong supporting cast of Victor Mature, Britt Ekland, Martin Balsam and Akim Tamiroff.

The screenplay was written by Neil Simon and Cesare Zavattini – and it was directed by Vittoria De Sica.

With names like these involved, it was confidently predicted to be a very popular film, but when it was released, it was poorly received.

However, it has since become a bit of a cult classic.

Burt Bacharach composed the score and, together with his lyricist Hal David, they wrote the title song for the film.

When the date was arranged to record the title song, Burt was flown over to produce the session.

The song has the Hollies singing verses that became questions, with Sellers giving answers in the form of accent-heavy voice-overs.

Here's the first verse and opening chorus, to give you the idea.

First Verse

'Who is the fox? (I am the fox)'

'Who are you? (I am me)'

'Who is me? (Me is a thief)'

'You'll bring your poor, poor mother grief, so'

Chorus

'After the fox, after the fox, off to the hunt with chains and locks

So, after the fox, after the fox, someone is always chasing after the fox'

The scene in the studio on the day, was quite different to a normal session.

Firstly, you had The Hollies and the EMI Orchestra who were being produced by Burt.

The song needed a piano player and the band were short of one.

So, Burt played keyboards on the track.

(Not a bad session guy, huh?)



The band also were short of a bass player on the day, as Eric Haydock had contracted a virus and was home in bed.

So, someone made a couple of calls and after about an hour, Jack Bruce strolled in to fill the gap.



Jack had recently played on Manfred Mann's '*Pretty Flamingo*', after just leaving the Graham Bond Organisation.

He told the band in the studio, that he had left The GBO, as he was going to be a part of a new band.

That was to be Cream - with Ginger Baker and Eric Clapton.

George Martin was also in the studio, acting as producer for Peter Sellers.



They had worked together from the 1950's to the mid-60's - and this period, of course, was the time that Sellers was fast becoming a global star.

Martin produced his '*Goon Show*' records, and then many other comedy recordings, including '*Goodness Gracious Me*' with Sophia Loren - and spoken versions of The Beatles' '*Hard Day's Night*' and '*Help*'.

Incidentally, Sellers was the first male to appear on the cover of Playboy Magazine in April 1964.

He arrived at Abbey Road in his usual style, sliding down a banister into Studio Two and delivering a karate chop to the grand piano.

Over the years, there has been much debate over who was the overall producer of the track.

Abbey Road, after all, was George Martin's second home. It is unlikely that he would have relinquished overall production control in his own living room.

But, Burt was Burt.

A true legend already.

He was used to being in control. And, of course, it was his song. Well, his and Hal David's anyway.

So, who knows who was the captain? It's anyone's guess. Pay your money, take your choice.

It doesn't really matter in the whole scheme of things.

One thing's for sure, I would have loved to have been there...

Abbey Road Studios in the sixties, was the centre of the musical universe. It was both a meeting place and a spiritual home for creative people.



(I went there in the 80's, as it was a shrine to me, because of the Fabs.

I saw John's Mellotron and I actually sat behind Ringo's Ludwig drumkit. There's a picture on this website to prove it!)

Graham Nash spoke about the place in later years, when he was asked if bands and artists felt it was a 'holy' place...

"Holy is not really the right word, but it's almost the right word. It was revered. It was church-like. You knew you were going into a very special place, when you walked up those steps at Abbey Road, you knew that something incredible was happening here.

And it was. And we were so thrilled to be there."

The film's budget was \$3 million and was to be mainly filmed at Cinecitta - the large studio in Rome that covers almost 100 acres.



As part of the production, a replica of Rome's most famous street -The Via Veneto - was constructed.

Location filming was done on the island of Ischia in the Bay of Naples.

Peter Sellers plays a petty criminal called Aldo Vanucci, (The Fox). During the film, he changed character to masquerade as 'Fredrico Fabrizi' the great neo-realist.

And, as we all saw in his later films, Sellers' inventive genius was unrivalled when playing very different characters in the same film.



Neil Simon's script was excellent and Sellers was in his element.

Victor Mature was coaxed out of retirement for the film and was brilliant. Britt Ekland provided the glamour.



Sellers with Victor Mature

"Do you know how many good kissers are starving in Italy?" is just one of the many excellent lines from this underrated and comparatively little-known movie.

When I talk about 'After the Fox' to friends and colleagues, very few have any recollection of it - and many admit never even seeing it.

I recommend to them, as I'm doing to you now, to try and dig it out and watch it. It is well worth the effort - I can assure you of that.

United Artists released the title track single by the Hollies in September 1966.



It pretty much disappeared without trace.

But, that's pretty understandable, as the Hollies were contracted to EMI and both they and the group, felt the track was just a one-off and neither of them promoted it at all.

They released '*Stop, Stop, Stop*' a month later, which was a more typical Hollies song - and it enjoyed massive success worldwide.

I've always loved the '*After The Fox*' track, to be honest.

The way it is structured and delivered - and Bacharach's musical genius is evident, especially in the chorus, with a couple of striking and unexpected chord changes.

Graham Nash said later, that he was very dissatisfied with the recording.

But, of course, Graham had become more than a bit unsettled with the Hollies music anyway - and life in general - including his wife.

So, he just upped sticks, left it all behind, jumped on a plane to the States, where he almost immediately teamed up with David Crosby and Stephen Stills in LA, to form the legendary Crosby, Stills and Nash.

Anyway, here's the results of all their efforts.

The title track.

[After The Fox](#)

I hope you enjoy it. And don't forget to dig out the movie.

You'll enjoy that, too.

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