**Zoot Money**

**Quite simply the biggest character on the British rhythm and blues scene since the early 1960s, Zoot Money was born George Bruno Money on 17 July 1942 in Bournemouth, Dorset, England.**

Part of a large and noisy family, both his parents were Italian immigrants, although his father’s family (really called Money) were originally English. At school Zoot played the French horn and sang in the choir, but it wasn’t long before he heard the call from the pied pipers of rock and roll (aka Jerry Lee Lewis and Ray Charles – what a combination!) and found himself transformed into a leading light on Bournemouth’s vibrant music scene.

In 1961 Zoot formed the first incarnation of the Big Roll band; over the next two years the line-up settled into Andy Summers (guitar), Nick Newall (saxophone)and Colin Allen (drums), with Zoot on piano and Hammond organ. This dramatis personae continued for a few years with various interruptions. The first was when Zoot, spotted by ‘British Blues Godfather’ Alexis Korner’s then manager, was invited to play with Korner’s seminal Blues Incorporated for a temporary spell. Zoot decided to stay in London, and the other Big Rollers soon joined him.

Before long The Big Roll Band, alongside those other luminaries of the Soho blues scene of the time, Georgie Fame & The Blue Flames and The Animals, had become permanent fixtures at the Flamingo Club in Wardour Street – the epicentre of the Swinging Sixties. Zoot’s shows were famed far and wide for his combination of outrageous antics (including ‘shocking’ trouser activity that predated PJ Proby by several years), tight musicianship and passionate vocal delivery. Two new members, Paul Williams (bass/vocals) and Clive Burrows (saxophone), were added, and things really began to take off.

In the late 1960s, after scoring a hit with ‘Big Time Operator’, the Big Roll Band metamorphosed for a while into the prototype psychedelia outfit Dantalian’s Chariot. Sharing bills with the likes of Pink Floyd (Syd Barrett vintage), Soft Machine and The Crazy World of Arthur Brown, there were a lot of goings-on with white khaftans, lava lamps and sweet-smelling incense at the most underground of clubs, but despite all this and an inspired crop of songs, for various reasons no more than a single, ‘Madman Running Through The Fields’, saw the light of day until the fabled ‘Chariot Rising’ albumwas released thirty years on in 1997.

A brief stint with Eric Burdon’s American-based New Animals followed, and Zoot decided to stay in the USA for a bit. At this point he began picking up acting roles, starting a parallel career which has continued ever since with character appearances in many high profile film and TV dramas.

On the musical side Zoot featured with (amongst others) the Grimms, Ellis, Centipede, Kevin Coyne and Kevin Ayers before signing up in 1980 to Paul McCartney’s label, MPL, to record the Jim Diamond-produced Mr. Money. In addition to his live music and acting talents Zoot is no mean songwriter – his song ‘It Never Rains But It Pours’ was recorded by Jimmy Witherspoon, for example, and he has also written for such artists as Lulu, Maggie Bell and Long John Baldry. His prodigious musical knowledge is also called on from time to time as a radio programming consultant, and a few years ago Zoot turned producer for two very different artists: soul diva Ruby Turner (‘Call Me By My Name’ – Indigo Records, 1999) and indie singer-songwriter Woodstock Taylor (‘Road Movie’ – Cuppa Records private release, 2002).

Since the 1980s, during which he notably acted as musical director for &quot;Tutti Frutti&quot;, the BBC TV drama which first catapulted Hollywood favourites Emma Thompson and Robbie Coltrane to fame, Zoot has continued to appear regularly worldwide, both as a featured artist with groups such as (among others) the Spencer Davis Band, Georgie Fame & The Blue Flames, Mick Taylor, Alan Price’s Electric Blues Band, Humble Pie, The Blues Band, The Foundations, Geno Washington’s Soul Train and The Animals (again) to name but a few.

In 2005 Zoot teamed up with Pete Goodall, former touring guitarist with Thunderclap Newman, to record a CD of new songs by Goodall and Pete Brown plus a reworking of the original single Something In The Air. Featuring the last ever recorded performance by Dick Heckstall Smith on sax, the band went on to tour the UK under the name GoodMoney. 2006 saw the birth of the British Blues Quintet – an allstar lineup featuring Zoot (keyboards and vocals), Colin Allen (drums), Colin Hodgkinson (bass), Miller Anderson (guitar) and Maggie Bell (vocals). This unique cocktail of premium vintage blues proved absolutely electric, playing to packed and enthusiastic houses wherever they went for the next eight years.

These days Zoot is still to be found performing with many different artists: a regular spot with Alan Price’s West London residency and touring appearances with the latest incarnation of The Animals, as well as guest spots at blues festivals and with a wide range of blues bands both in the UK and internationally. Of course Zoot is still delivering the goods with the Big Roll Band too. The line-up varies, but as often as not includes at least one other original member. You can catch them on the final Thursday of most months at the Bull’s Head in Barnes and at various locations around the UK and beyond.

Bringing things full circle, many of Zoot and the Big Roll Band’s early records have been re-issued on CD in the past few years – expect more recorded gems to be made available as the years go by and maybe one or two surprises too.