

The Story:

Where to begin? First, The Beatles. Then Hayne and I met while attending an oppressively conservative prep school in the late 60's, shortly before he was kicked out for being a "ne'er-do-well". I had a band that played at the school occasionally, and Hayne suggested I jam with him and one of his classmates, Tim Hunter. We cranked out tunes by Led Zeppelin and Cream, and played for hours at Tim's house. Hayne could play solos and power chords like a pro instead of a 16 year-old kid. Tim was a Keith Moon-like drummer. I had been a big Paul McCartney fan as a kid, and later listened religiously to Jack Casady and Phil Lesh as the San Francisco scene was booming, so I felt no compunction in playing all over the neck. I was such a fan I sold a nice Gibson EB-2 bass and bought a Guild Starfire II like Phil and Jack played. Would I ever love to have those basses now!

At college I was, shall we say, easily distracted, and found myself hitch-hiking down the Northeast extension with my bass to visit my girlfriend and play in a band with Jim Pabarue called Dingo. I may have first met him in the summer of '71. Dingo was a Haverford College party band that had an intense drummer named Jim Helmer, who was also playing with Whole Oats, a precursor to Hall and Oates. An associate of his, Chris Bond, was our insanely talented guitar player from a Philly band called Thunder and Roses, who later produced H&O's Abandoned Luncheonette album. That was one hot band and I learned a lot. School was out.

In the Summer of '72 I found Hayne and other musical reprobates hanging out at a cool book and record store in Bryn Mawr called the Lampost, run by Richard and Dottie Grossman. They were older than us, and cooler than anybody I knew, with their Beat vibe and experience in the jazz world. I played a couple of gigs with an early version of Duck Soup (I'm not sure they had a name yet), Richard moving to his main instrument, piano. As far as I remember, Hayne and Bill K were already playing with the band, and Dave Mason was singing and playing guitar. Eventually Dave left and we needed a singer.

Enter Jimmy Pabarue!

The band quickly jelled and Richard began cranking out original songs to augment our cover tunes. The songs have often been described as "quirky", but it was just robust and intelligent rock and roll to me. The chord changes were interesting but logical, the lyrics wry and playful. I've never asked her, but I'm sure Dottie had a hand in helping write the songs.

We did some recording at Frank Virtue's on North Broad Street in late '72, but the results were thin. However, it was the first professional recordings of the band and, combined with playing Philly club gigs and getting reviewed favorably in local newspapers, it made us feel like we had a shot. Listening to the live recordings from '74, I feel we were really giving it our all, with intense but concise jams, choirboy harmonies, and great singing from Pabarue. Richard's jazz background would reveal itself in his virtuosic soloing, and Jimmy Hayne continued to play with skill beyond his years. Bill the K was the perfect drummer for the band, propelling the music, playing crisp and tasty fills on his Rogers (I think it was) drum kit. I just tried to keep up, playing a rolling counterpoint to what I was hearing, the old cosmic San Fran jam thing always the touchstone. Altogether, the band served as a vehicle for its players to rock out and stretch musically. Richard was the undisputed bandleader, but he gave us all the room we needed to put our riffs out there. New songs appeared weekly, and we quickly gave them life and personality.

More gigs and recordings followed through '73 and '74, but after two and a half years of little success, the joy of playing had faded. Pabs departed, and I lost faith in the direction of the band, which was moving into funk and r&b. Funk was not my thing and I knew my time was up (you can't fire me, I quit). I found some of the jam band energy in Café Olé later on, and perfect pop songs with the Bigs.

I was, and still am today, lucky enough to play with immensely talented players and songwriters, but Duck Soup was absolutely one of a kind. Listen long and hard to the songs, from the innocent beginnings to the bitter end, and you'll hear.

Bill Hayward, Summer 2011