



## Andy Lewis

"During my ten years at Heathfield and subsequently Rishworth, I immersed myself in the musical side of life. I began with piano lessons when I joined the school at the age of 8 in 1979 then took up the flute as my second instrument a couple of years later. I joined the choir and even the Recorder Group for a time – just anything to be playing or singing music. Having said all this, I did struggle musically for the first couple of years - then – one day it all just fell into place and I spent the rest of my time either playing in Music Competitions or planning for the next one! (I think I do owe a rather belated apology to Mr and Mrs Wood who lived at Heathfield about the time I was practicing 'The Entertainer' for my first Music Competition – four months of the same tune whenever I was near one of the many pianos in the building must have been draining!) I was awarded the Brown Music Prize whilst at Heathfield and the Arthur Sainter Chapel Music Prize in my Second Year Seniors. I also took part in most of the annual musical shows and played Oliver Twist in the first performance at the new Assembly Hall back in 1983, I think!

My 3rd year seniors, in moving up to Ebor at the main school from Heathfield, was a 'character-building' time, with me being a reasonably small thirteen year old – and a musician too..... Let's just say my recent stint as 'Oliver' hadn't really endeared me to many of my house mates as music didn't fit into the rugby-playing culture of that particular house at the time. I moved to Goat House in my 4th Year and remained there until the end of Upper 6th. Goat House was the building next door to the School Chapel and one of my endearing memories of that place was the ice that used to form on the inside of my study window during winter as it was very open to the harsh elements of the Yorkshire hills!

Anyway – after leaving school in 1989, I returned to South Africa where my parents lived. I had done well academically until 'O' Levels, but then had focussed a little too much on music throughout my 'A' Level period and had not earned the grades I needed to go to University in England. Instead, I started work in a music shop in Johannesburg and, as a fairly useful keyboard player and a youngster who could read music, I was something of a novelty in the South African music scene and so started a 6 year stint of 'paying my dues' at night, once my day job in the music shop finished for the day. I threw myself into the work and played keyboards and piano for anyone and everyone just to get experience. I had the privilege of playing with some wonderful musicians – one of my favourites was a duo called 'Toys For Girls' with whom I had such adventures as setting fire to a venue with indoor pyros and getting into trouble with a local church group over a Genesis song resulting in a published apology in the national newspapers! I played with a total of fourteen bands in six years which included everything from playing to no-one in a badly advertised restaurant to having the distinct pleasure of being part of the band at the Miss World pageant at Sun City in 1994. It is probably appropriate at this point that I offer some long overdue thanks to Mr Phil Taylor who was the Music Master during my time at Rishworth – if it were not for him telling me one day in a vocal lesson that I would never amount to anything as a musician as I lacked the discipline, I probably wouldn't have worked as hard as I did – reverse psychology at its very finest!

Upon returning to England in 1995, I thought I should really grow-up a little and get a 'proper job' as my parents were so fond of saying so I started working for a Professional Audio company in London, following which I spent 4 years as a Technical Product Specialist for Korg - the Japanese keyboard manufacturer. I had my own company for a couple of years as a consultant for electronic music and worked with all sorts of musicians from home studios to Phil Collins and Coldplay and also have a credit on a Keith Emerson album (Emerson Plays Emerson, in case anyone's interested!) In amongst all this, I spent two years, in the evenings as a nightclub doorman as I took some time away from actually playing music then onto a career in sales for Professional Audio culminating in my current position as Business Development Manager for the Integrated Systems Division of Sennheiser UK so still maintaining a tenuous link to the music industry..... (As most people have no idea who Sennheiser is or what my job entails, just look at the microphones that presenters and vocal artists use the next time you are watching such a program on TV and, more often than not, you will see 'Sennheiser' branded somewhere on the microphone.) I still play from time-to-time and run a function/wedding band called '5CATFish' who were voted as the Entertainment Supplier of the Year to the Wedding Industry in 2008.

More recently, I was married in 2007 to the very long-suffering, patient and rather wonderful Francesca and, at the age of 40, decided it was time to do my Rishworth education justice – so I enrolled at Warwick Business School and am now at the end of my 2nd year of a Distance Learning MBA.

I have many great memories of Rishworth from the fundamental of any school which was to challenge me academically to the 'River Run', the apparent misery of my 3rd year in Ebor, the school bar (yes – they served us alcohol in the vain hope it would stop us going anywhere else for any:)) the many teachers who influenced my later life, (even though I didn't appreciate it at the time) to random things at school like the Sailing Club and lastly the friends and relationships I was lucky enough to have during my time there. It was, without a doubt the most uncomplicated 10 years of my life....."



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