



Seeing is Believing

by Dr David English MBE



INTRODUCTION



When I was young, some forty years ago, I ran the RSO record label. Twenty-four years of age I would tour the world

with my artists, particularly the Bee Gees and Eric Clapton. It seems like a lifetime ago! I loved the company of musicians, working in the studio or playing live on stage. Songs touch us in a way that no other artform can, and they become the soundtrack of our lives. A great example of this was Stevie Wonder's 'Songs in the Key of Life'. When he made this record, everybody sat up and marvelled at the artistry of his popular music. Stevie's record was a piece of art, like a Van Gogh painting – it was a masterpiece, full of colour, light and shade, rhythm and soul.

I remember meeting him at the Apollo Theatre in Harlem, where old ladies knitted and chewed the fat and kids danced in the aisles to the 'doo-wops' and breathtaking harmonies of The Temptations and Marvin Gaye, Aretha Franklin and Sam and Dave.

Berry Gordy's Tamla Motown artists were compelling showmen, sharp outfits with a smooth demeanor. 'My girl', 'Since I Lost My Baby' The Temps, Smokey Robinson and the Miracles ... they enunciated the songs wistfully, they saw beauty surrounding the gloom. I watched Stevie perform and marvelled at his passion. "This man is blind," I thought, "he can't even see", but he sees many more things that people with sight don't see. He sees things of the soul rather than things of reality.

He told me: "Dave, give me the key in which I am to sing and if it is the key that you feel may you join and sing with me."

Forty years later I met the amazing Blind Dave Heeley with his smashing missus Debbie and their little girls, Dannie, Georgie Lee and Gracie. It was at Blossom Field CC for a benefit game for Nick Knight. On meeting him I could see that like Stevie Wonder, Dave never felt limited in life. He felt he could achieve anything.

In his broad West Bromwich burr, Blind Dave went into his non-stop comedy act, a joke a minute. Next to him, sitting obediently was his faithful guide dog, Carla. Carla yawned and wagged her tail – she had heard Blind Dave's repertoire a thousand times before.

He told me he was going to run 7 marathons in 7 days on 7 continents. He would be the first blind person to achieve it. The only other person to achieve this incredible feat was Sir Ranulph Fiennes. It would be the ultimate in physical endurance.

"Over the years, my guide dogs have transformed my life, returning my independence and freedom." Dave told me, "Every five seconds someone, somewhere in the world loses their sight and in many countries there are little or no services to help them. Through my 'Eyes of the World' marathon challenge, I hope to raise

worldwide awareness of this need and make a global difference to the lives of blind and partially sighted people".

I was glad to help Blind Dave raise the funds to complete his challenge. The Bunburys played matches to help find the vital sponsorship and to raise the awareness of this incredible feat of endurance.

And of course he achieved it. He'll probably row the Atlantic next, naked or climb Everest backwards – like Stevie Wonder, Blind Dave has no limits (read Blind Dave's story later in this brochure). Back in 1976, Tamla Motown boss, Berry Gordy was in a dilemma. Stevie's contract was up for renewal. It would cost him thirty million dollars to resign the star.

"Go for it Berry," I said, "you cannot fail"

Berry Gordy resigned Stevie Wonder for thirty million dollars (a fortune in 1976) and released 'Songs in the Key of Life'. The record went to number one worldwide.

Later that year we released 'Saturday Night Fever' on RSO records, which knocked Stevie's record off the number one spot.

'Saturday Night Fever' became the world's biggest selling soundtrack album.

We then followed up this RSO success with 'Grease', which still to this day is everybody's favourite film and album.

So Stevie and Blind Dave – seeing is believing and hearing is believing too!!

My wholehearted love and respect goes to my Bunbury players and sponsors in this, our 24th year.

May our sun-filled days for all the family be long and full of riches for the vital causes we support, pushing boundaries and living dreams.

May you all go home at the end of a Bunbury afternoon with a big smile on your face having been touched by the magic of our Bunbury family.

My special thanks go to Joe 'Cubes' Cuby, Gavin Thomas (Lord Tenby), Brian Stanley and Lady Jane Cruder for the production of this magnificent magazine.

An Almanac of Loonery! A bible of mirth and a chronicle of love and laughter! Long ... ever after!!

Dr Dave English MBE, Bunbury Founder