

# PERRY FOSTER - THE MAN WHO LAUNCHED A ZEPPLIN

Picture by Annie Burlinson



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Perry Foster Lafayette St. N.Y.C

## By Paul Brett

***We all have situations throughout our lives when history repeats itself from time to time. When I first started playing professionally in the 1960's, one of my early jobs was with a band called Neil Christian and the Crusaders. Neil had a couple of top ten hits, the biggest being with a song called "That's Nice". I went for an audition with the group after their guitarist left and promptly got the job. The departed guitarist was Jimmy Page the doyen of the strings for many moons with World Superstars Led Zeppelin. After their recent re-formation which again has taken the World by storm, it reminded me of the Crusaders episode.***

I then had an email from someone who was interested in a guitar I own, a Kay 'thin twin' from the 1950's. This is known in collecting circles as the Jimmy Reed model. Named after the famous Bluesman who used to play one. The guy who suggested the exchange was called Perry Foster. He had a 1960's Hofner Committee that he wanted to part with. As I never had a Committee in my collection, I agreed. Upon receiving the guitar, Perry had included his latest CD and a biography of himself. In his biography, I noticed a quote from Led Zep's vocalist Robert Plant saying " I was turned on to the blues by a guy named Perry Foster ".

Everyone has their influences, mine in the early days were Duane Eddy, Hank Marvin and Chet Atkins, the last two being the same who influenced the great acoustic virtuoso Tommy Emmanuel. Duane was also influenced by Chet Atkins but became famous for his low, twangy instrumentals such as 'Peter Gunn', 'Rebel Rouser' and my favorite, 'Hall of the Mountain

Perry Foster playing harp with Robert Plant

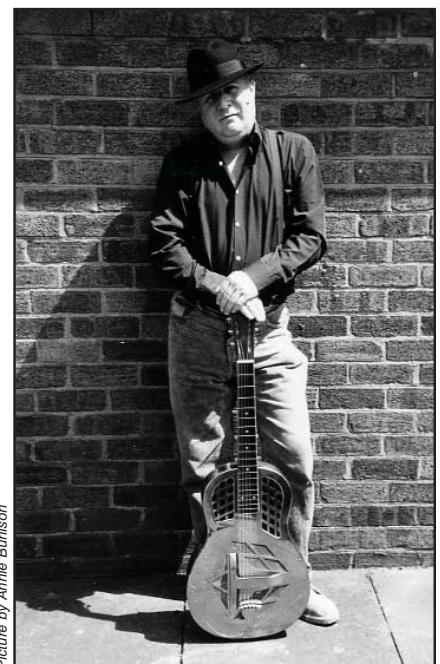
King'. Duane's biggest hit however, was the ballad style " Because they're Young" which was the theme tune from the movie of the same name. Obviously from Robert Plant's comments, it was Perry who turned him onto the Blues. Robert Johnson was Eric Clapton's spirit guide and the same would apply to every musician today whose style had help from the past.

I was intrigued to learn more about Perry's career and discovered that he was associated with the original Yardbirds, seen in the photo

Picture taken by Sue Duncan



with two of the original members Jim McCarty and Chris Dreja. I also had an association with the lead singer of the Yardbirds, Keith Relf, who produced the Bradley's Roadshow LP, " Live at the Marquee" in which I featured as part of the Bradley's Records artiste line up. Sadly, Keith died awhile after that. Perry also played alongside such blues greats as Howling Wolf, Rev.Gary Davis, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGee, Muddy Waters and even acted as 'minder' for the harmonica legend, Sonny Boy



Picture by Annie Burlinson

Perry Foster with 1929 National Tricone

Williamson. Perry still plays the harmonica that Sonny Boy gave him today. Perry's main instruments are 12 string guitar and National Steels, plus he plays a great Blues harmonica. What struck me upon listening to Perry's music is that he also has a great blues voice and you can hear why Robert Plant was influenced by Perry in the formative stages of his career, pretty much as I was influenced by John Joyce's 12 string playing in my early years. It seems Perry has indeed had a long and successful gig through life following his chosen path as a Bluesman. He's appeared on BBC TV, featured in an hour long Granada TV documentary and played all kinds of Radio slots. He has played every major Blues Festival in the UK and is well known in Europe, and the USA. Recently he joined up again with his old Led Zeppelin buddy, Robert Plant to do a College Tour in Robert's band " Priory of Brian ". His fellow musicians call him 'The Big Daddy of the Blues' and he seems to have much respect from many people for what he does. You should check out Perry's CD and i'm sure you'll hear more than a hint of the Zep's frontman in the music.77