

Biography

Cat Stevens

A THEORY TALE

Cat Stevens was born on 21st July 1948 in London. The youngest of three children, he was christened Steven Demetri Georgiou. Together with his brother David and his sister Anita, he lived above his parents' restaurant, "The Moulin Rouge," just around the corner from the British Museum. His mother's Swedish, his father Cypriot. His real dream was to become a famous painter like his Uncle Hugo in Sweden. He spent most of his time drawing cartoons and building little guillotines late into the night.

When he was 10 years old, he first heard Laurie London's version of "He's Got the Whole World In His Hands" and decided (with the help of his brother) that stardom was his destiny. That idea was quite short lived. It took another 4 years before he thought about it again. At that time an African musical, "King Kong," had opened at the Shaftesbury Theatre opposite his father's restaurant. He got to know the cast and was always found hanging around the stage door.

When he was 15, his nights were spent knocking around Soho, roaming between clubs and back-street alley bars. Around that time, his father had given him enough money to buy his first guitar.

Leaving school at 16, he was lucky enough to find a space at Hammersmith Art School. Folk music began to influence him, and he was spending most of his day practicing Leadbelly licks on the stairs. The Art School dismissed him. For a year, he haunted publishing houses and agents, until he managed to bump into Mike Hurst, who had a friend with enough faith and spare cash to back his first single, "I Love My Dog." In the first pop phase of his remarkable career he became rich, a phenomenal success and while still in his teens, he had to face up to the complex pressures experienced as a result.

Then an unexpected tragedy bundled him out of the limelight. He caught tuberculosis and spent a year recuperating from the illness. But enforced lay-off gave him the space he needed to evolve and develop what was to become a unique style. He began to write the songs for *Mona Bone Jakon*. This was followed by the release of *Tea For the Tillerman* and Cat Stevens was established as one of the leading lyrical forces of his time. He epitomized the Gentle Thinking Man who has touched the child in all of us.

Today he talks with the fervour of someone who has been through fire to find his identity.

