

The Eliffant Story

When the Welsh language “super group” Injaroc split in the autumn of 1977 Geraint was band-less for the first time in four years. A knock on the door by John Davies put this right. John was a member of CHWYS, a four-piece rock band with John on lead guitar, Clive Richards on bass and Colin Owen on drums. The vocalist, Sulwyn Rees had just quit the band so they were looking for a replacement. Chwys were based in Haverfordwest in Pembrokeshire, so Geraint, John, Clive and Colin got together in Johnston, just outside town for a bit of a jam. Chwys were in to heavy rock, in the style of Deep Purple and Led Zeppelin, Geraint wasn't! That night they messed around with all kinds of musical styles, even country! It became obvious, at least to Geraint, that there was a huge hole where the keyboards should be. He was influenced by the likes of The Band, Orleans and Crosby, Stills and Nash, all of which used piano and especially Hammond organ in the line up. The resourceful John Davies said he knew just the man, although the man in question had never been in a band before, nor had the required gear. Still, on a cold evening in February '78 Euros Lewis turned up with a Fender Rhodes piano at the Half Way, Nantgaredig, and joined the other four to form ELIFFANT.

From the beginning Eliffant did original material. Geraint wrote all the songs. This was the time of Punk and New Wave, Eliffant fell in to the latter category. They sang about motorcycles, outer space, extra terrestrial visitors, love, loss, hope and Egypt! At this time they were still rehearsing at Theatr Felin Fach, near Lampeter. Euros had managed to borrow, on permanent loan, a Mini Korg synth to add to the Rhodes. With the keyboards, two electric guitars, multi-vocals, and a very authoritative bass and drum foundation, the band was developing a big sound.

The first gig was at the Memorial Hall, Pontyberem on Friday the 19th of May 1978. The pop music reporter Hefin Wyn reviewed it in *Y CYMRO*. He wrote, “Eliffant is a musical heavy rock band that can set dance halls aflame with skilful playing.” The second gig was in Talybont, north of Aberystwyth, on the next night. The third was a week later on Saturday the 27th of May at the Llanelwedd Agricultural Showground during the Urdd Eisteddfod week; they played the less than prestigious 6pm spot. Hefin Wyn, having turned up late, writes in *Y Cymro*, “I arrived to face herds (of people) hot footing it from the barn.....Eliffant had finished performing.....I heard them praised without exception.” The first two gigs were organised by Tegid Dafis for the Welsh Language Society as money raising events. The Llanelwedd gig was arranged by Geraint Davies for the Urdd. Other gigs followed, Aberystwyth on June 16th, Porthmadog on July 1st, Llanybydder on July 29th, and twice at the Sophia Gardens in Cardiff during the National Eisteddfod week on Saturday August 5th and Friday August the 11th. The Friday gig was organised by Safari, a P.A. hire and would-be record company. Safari was run by ex-Injaroc member Endaf Emlyn, and ex-Budgie guitarist Myfyr Isaac. It was a very professional outfit, the P.A. and lighting rig impressed the band greatly; it was the best sound the band had produced of all of their gigs. Geraint comments, “It was a worthwhile performance. Endaf and Myfyr did the sound and it was brilliant, in spite of a huge natural echo in the hall”. Eliffant headlined and were supported by BRÂN and TRWYNAU CÔCH.

The band was now gigging a lot. On many weekends they performed on both Friday and Saturday nights. They all maintained day jobs. Euros was a lecturer at Theatre Felin Fach, John worked for Barclays Bank, Colin was an electronics engineer for what was then the General Post Office, Clive was a librarian, and Geraint was a charge nurse in the operating theatres in Carmarthen. This was the golden era of the Welsh language music scene. There were venues all over Wales, and enough bands to put on a dance or a concert on most weekends. Eliffant played them all. September 3rd at Theatre Clwyd in Wrexham, the 29th at Trinity College in Carmarthen, the 30th at Drefach Felindre. October 6th at the Dixieland in Rhyl, the 7th in Swansea, the 14th in Felin Fach. November 17th in Bangor, the 22nd at the Halfway in Nantgaredig. December 1st at the Dixieland in Rhyl, the 22nd at the Tan Y Bont club in Caernarfon. They were also recording television and radio spots for HTV and the BBC. The first sound recording for a record was made at Stacey Road in Cardiff. This was Saffari's first and only recording venture. It was engineered by the BBC's Des Bennett, and produced by Richard Manwaring, who went on to be a world-class producer, and worked with the likes of Van Morrison. At this particular session he had plenty of help from Endaf Emlyn and Myfyr Isaac and the never-shy-in-coming-forward members of the band! The songs were 'Nol Ar Y Stryd' and 'W Capten', but they were never released.

The "sound" was all-important to the band. Rehearsal played a key part in this. With the exception of Colin who didn't sing, they met around the piano at Geraint's house in Carmarthen for vocal practice, and once a week they met for a full band practice. Initially this was at the theatre in Felin Fach, but it soon became obvious that a more central location was needed. This is when the band began its long association with the Crymych area in Pembrokeshire, and especially the Crymych Arms. They met at this pub for a few pints of Guinness before going on to rehearse in the village hall at Crosswell, or the school at Bryn Berian. These meetings were as much of a social event as anything, sometimes the Guinness would take precedence, and the band would remain at the Crymych Arms, and the equipment would remain in the cars! Speaking of equipment, this played a big part in the production of Eliffant's sound. At about this time, in an inter view with Clive Jones for the magazine *Aspri*, the band lists it's instruments as follows:

Geraint:	Gibson SG with a Di Marzio pickup.	Fender Twin Reverb.
John:	Fender Stratocaster.	Fender Twin Reverb.
Clive:	Rickenbacker Stereo bass,	Marshall 200w 4 x 15" cab
		Marshall 100w 4 x 12" cab
Colin:	Hayman drum kit.	Zildjan and Paiste cymbals.
Euros:	Fender Rhodes piano, Mini Korg synthesizer.	H&H 100w combo.

Geraint would later add a Fender Telecaster Deluxe, John would change to a Gibson 335, and Clive would change to a Musicman bass through his Marshall 200w and the 4 x 12" cabinet. For the time this was an exceptionally well-appointed band, with a very professional line-up of kit.

Gigs at this time were paying about £150 to £200n a night. Good money in 1978! It was all ploughed back in to the bands evolving P.A. system. This initially was made up of:

An M&M 16-channel mixer.

A pair of JBL horns.

A pair of JBL 2 x 15" speaker cabs.

A pair of JBL 2 x 15" speakers in Martin bass bins.

Driven by an H&H 500watt stereo amplifier.

Shure SM58 and SM 57 microphones, and a Shure D12 bass drum mic.

The massive Martin bins were bought from Safari when they gave up the P.A. business. They also sold the band four large floor fold back wedges.

The P.A. eventually had 2000 watts of power going out, and 1000watts of power coming back through the fold back speaker wedges on stage. Colin welded a steel rack together to hold all the H&H amps. It weighed a ton! Like the Great Wall of China, it was probably visible from Space! This was the biggest and best P.A. in the Welsh language music scene. The band had three engineers that worked with them regularly, Tudor Ellis, Jeremy Gleave, and Emyr Bowen. Tudor went on to become a television sound engineer at HTV in Cardiff, eventually becoming a news cameraman. Jeremy went on to become a British Telecom engineer, and Emyr became a television sound engineer with Barcud, the Caernarfon based Television Company.

By the end of 1978 Eliffant could look back over a first year that had brought them considerable success. They had made a name for themselves as an exciting live band, with a tight professional sound, that liked to play LOUD! They were gathering a following, and had won the respect of their fellow musicians in the Welsh scene. The band members prided themselves in being Welsh country boys from West Wales, who had set out to make the best music they could, with no compromise. They were still semi-professional of course, which can be the same as semi-amateur, but their approach was anything but amateur, and their commitment unquestionable. Yes, they felt good, so off they went on the 9th of December to the Harbourmaster Restaurant on the quayside at Aberaeron. This was to be the first of many legendary Christmas parties that Eliffant had in darkest Cardiganshire. But this was the first, and possibly the best. They had things to celebrate, but also things to discuss. It was time to plan the making of an album.

The new year of 1979 started with the band in the television studio. On Tuesday the 9th of January they were at the BBC studios in Cardiff to record an insert for the music show 'Twndish'. This programme had been running for some time, and it was a prestigious show to play. The programme was transmitted the following Sunday. Also on the show that day was Geraint Watkins and the Dominators, and The Nicotinos. So the show can't have been exclusively Welsh language in its content, at least Geraint Watkins wasn't known for his Welsh work, I'm not sure about The Nicotinos. The presenter was Iestyn Garlick, Pete Edwards directed it. He went on to direct the early 'Eastenders'. The producer was the legendary Ruth Price. Saturday the 20th saw them play the village hall in Llangadog, in the shadow of the Black Mountains. This gig is still remembered by many in Carmarthen, as a bus was arranged to take people from the town to Llangadog. At the time, Welsh language gigs were supported by Welsh and English speakers alike. A good night out is a good night out, no matter what the language, as long as the music is good! On Saturday the 27th of January the place to be was Tal y Bont, near Aberystwyth. It was the last performance of Hergest, the electro-acoustic band that had played the stages of Wales 1971. Geraint had recorded with them on their L.P. *Glanceri*, and intended playing guitar in the final show. Snowfall that evening put an end to his plans and he never made it. Such is the way of it on country roads.

On the night of Thursday the 15th of February the roads of north and west Wales were again thick with snow. It was a determined Eliffant that crawled its way along the west coast from Carmarthen, the long way round, via Borth, Y Bermo, and Harlech, avoiding the four foot drifts, and rolling in to Llandwrog in Caernarfonshire at midnight. The next morning they would start recording their first album at the Sain studio in Gwernafalau, located in a converted cowshed, good enough! The plan was to record the stage set in a way that made it possible to reproduce it faithfully on stage, avoiding any over production. In fact, the only effects used during the recording process were reverb, and overdrive on the Fender twins of course. It was produced by Geraint's old friend Hefin Elis, the in-house producer, and the band. It was engineered by Bryn Jones. All the songs were already written except for 'Seren I Seren', which was written in the studio. The track list was as follows:

Nol ar y Stryd.
Breuddwyd.
Lisa Lân.
Nôl I Gairo.
Seren I Seren.
Serena.
Ŵ Capten.
Ble 'Rwyd Ti?
Teulu Mawr y Byd.

All the songs were written by Geraint except for 'Serena', which was written, by Geraint and his friend and ex-Injaroc partner Endaf Emlyn. The album was recorded over six days, on February 16, 17, 18, and March 23, 24, 25. Its title, M.O.M. an acronym for 'mas o ma', is a common saying in Carmarthenshire, Cardiganshire and North Pembrokeshire meaning "Let's Get Out of Here" or "Let's Split", literally it means 'outside here', very suitable for songs about outer space.

Side one is a collection of rock numbers with diverse topics, all up-tempo dance tracks. Side two is the outer space, "concept-album" side. Interest in space travel and extraterrestrials was intense at the time, especially in West Wales. Books like 'The Dyfed Enigma' by R.J Pugh and F.W.Holiday, published in 1979, spoke of sightings throughout the area. Indeed, even the 'Carmarthen Journal' gave credence to the phenomenon. It reported a sighting by a local woman of an U.F.O. in the village of Idole, near Carmarthen town. This inspired Geraint to write 'Capten Idole' released on the Injaroc album *Halen Y Ddaear*. It's a song about a space traveller from a distant and dying planet, on finding planet Earth, and in particular West Wales, contacts his home planet to tell them what he's found: "A small country, good land, a home between sea and mountain." M.O.M. takes up the story and develops it, giving us a little more background to the old Capten. Wyn ap Gwilym of O'r Niwl did the artwork for the LP. Appropriately it shows an astronaut on a space walk. The album was well received, and Caryl Parry Jones, reviewing it in the Welsh weekly paper *Y Faner*, described it as "a masterpiece"! Denver Morgan in the magazine *Sgrech* urges the reader to "dance to side one and listen to side two". He describes the album as "exciting", "tight", and "professional". Hefin Wyn in *Y Cymro* is just as enthusiastic describing it as a "particularly special record".

The next few months saw the band promoting the album at their gigs. In Pontyberem on Friday February 23rd, Bangor on Friday March 9th, and in Llangadog the following night. On Saturday June 1st the band played Maesteg during Eisteddfod week. On the same bill that night was Geraint Jarman a'r Cynghaneddwyr. Jarman headlined. There was always friendly rivalry between Welsh bands at the time, especially between Eliffant and Jarman. The scene was growing, and Eliffant and Jarman seemed to be competing for the same audience. The Welsh audience were tribal even in their support of bands; if you supported Eliffant then you couldn't support Jarman, and vice versa. Maesteg was the first and the last time for them to be on the same bill! On Thursday June 21st Eliffant played the Great Hall at Aberystwyth University, it was a high point for the band. Nic Parry reported the gig for *Sgrech*. "The floor was full to overflowing when the band exploded in to 'Nôl Ar Y Stryd', 'Lisa Lân' and 'Nôl I Gairo' 'W Capten' (and) 'Teulu Mawr Y Byd' are fast becoming anthems, with the crowd singing enthusiastically in the choruses. ...Eliffant have already proven themselves on vinyl, and tonight in Aberystwyth, they have proven themselves on stage"!

On Friday June 9th they played Felin Fach, on Tuesday August 7th they played the Majestic in Caernarfon, and on Thursday August 9th they played the Eisteddfod field. Both the last gigs were during the National Eisteddfod at Caernarfon. There were six more gigs in '79, Saturday August 25th in Pontyberem, Friday September 21st in Llangefni, Friday October 5th in Tan Y Bont, Caernarfon, Wednesday October 24th in Blaendyffryn, Friday November 9th in The Great Hall, Aberystwyth and finally Trinity College, Carmarthen on Wednesday November 14th. They were still meeting almost weekly to rehearse, usually on Wednesday nights in Crymych. It should be noted that a single was released at this time, including 'Seren I Seren' and 'Lisa Lân'. It was taken from the LP and released by MACYM, the Anglesey entertainment organisation. The record found its way on to jukeboxes in pubs and cafes throughout Wales, and was instrumental in popularising the band. The high point of the year came when Eliffant was nominated Best Rock Band 1979 by the readers of *Sgrech* magazine.

Nineteen eighty started well for Eliffant. On Saturday January 19th they were up in Caernarfon to collect the Sgrech prize for the best rock band of 1979. The results of the readers poll was as follows:

Best Rock Band: Eliffant.

Best Folk Group: Plethyn.

Best Male Vocalist: Tecwyn Ifan.

Best Female Vocalist: Rhiannon Tomos.

Most Promising Group: Chwarter I Un.

Best Instrumentalist: Tich Gwilym.

The *Sgrech* Special Award: Geraint Jarman a'r Cynganeddwyr.

A quote from the *Sgrech* report of the evening reads: "There's little that's un-said about Eliffant by now. The deserving winners of the main award at the Sgrech Award Ceremony, and possibly our most musical group!"

The year continued with gigs around the circuit, and television work:

Wednesday January 13 at the 123 Studios in Bute Street, Cardiff.

Tuesday January 29th at HTV in Pontcana, Cardiff.

Saturday March 1st at the Trawsfynydd power station social club.

Friday March 7th at Blaendyffryn.

Saturday April 5th at Tan y Bont, Caernarfon.

Friday April 25th at Plas Coch, Anglesey.

Tuesday April 29th at the HTV studios in Pontcana.

Friday May 9th at Llandysul.

During the spring of nineteen eighty the band had already started thinking about a second album. The first had been well received and, by the standards of the day, had sold well. Well enough for Sain to consider another LP. Sain had by now moved out of the converted cowshed at Gwernafalau farm and had relocated in a purpose built recording complex a few miles down the road. The new studio was designed as a state of the art studio and office facility, which was to be the new Sain Record Company headquarters. The songs were already written, and the plan was to record in the summer. Hefin Elis and Eliffant would produce, but the band wanted to use an engineer from outside of the Welsh music scene. Phil Ault, a Liverpoolian with experience of working with up and coming English bands was booked. On the night of Thursday June 19th, Eliffant and their growing 'entourage' booked in to the Tan Dinas Hotel near the beach at Dinas Dinlle. With them were the current roadies, Tudor Ellis, Jeremy Gleave and Bernard 'Bun' Davies. Over the next four days, the 20th, 21st, 23rd and 24th of June, the backing tracks for *Gwin y Gwan* were recorded. Phil Ault and the band worked well together, and by the end of the weekend Eliffant headed back to the South with cassette copies of the rough mixes to consider over dubs, lead breaks and vocals.

There were still gigs to play, on Friday June 27th at Tal y Bont, Aberystwyth, and Saturday July 26th at Corwen. The band had also started to hire out the PA to other bands, especially Edward H. Dafis, and sometimes Eliffant would do a support spot just for the fun of playing! On Thursday July 31st it was time to head back to the studio and complete the album. This was done over the weekend of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd of August. As a little diversion, the band played a gig at Tan y Bont, Caernarfon on the Saturday night, just to show Phil Ault what they could do outside the constraints of the studio. Sustenance during all the recording sessions came from the band's favourite tippie, Guinness. Photographs taken at the time invariably show an open can of the black stuff somewhere in the frame. It could be said that the band was fans of 'Uncle Arthur', all except Colin who was a committed Mormon at the time. One of the songs on the album is 'Gwin y Gwan', which is what the Welsh call Guinness. In fact, old adverts for the brew were specifically produced for the Welsh market, and the term Gwin y Gwan was used as promotion. It was decided to contact Guinness in Dublin and ask for permission to use a copy of the circular bottle label on the album sleeve.

Sadly Guinness declined. Not to be out done, the band, in conjunction with the graphic artist Charli Britton, designed the eventual sleeve to 'echo' the six pack that they were so familiar with. Without infringing any copyright, Eliffant had succeeded in producing art work that still stands today as a classic, but I would say that wouldn't I?

The album was released to coincide with the National Eisteddfod at the beginning of August. Again it was a semi concept album, and three of the ten tracks were set in the last century, this was a folk-rock band after all, although at the time this was not recognised. The tracks were:

Gwin y Gwan.

Gole Gwyn.

Merthyr.

Cân y Mynydd Du.

Ffair Caerdydd.

Y Falen Fawr.

Llosgi'r Pontydd.

Ffŵl Ebrill.

Waun Uchaf.

Mâs O'r Coed.

The album had a mixed reception. There was some criticism that it sounded too much like Eliffant! The band's philosophy had always been to produce their stage sound on record, and they felt it was important to faithfully reproduce the record in live performances, so the aim was not to over produce the songs. Critics only reflect their personal opinions, which are based on personal taste, so reviews were often contradictory. The tracks that received the most praise were:

Gwin y Gwan: "This track would make a superb single." (Carmarthen Times)

"A striking song with an especially memorable chorus." (Sgrech)

Ffair Caerdydd: "Very successful...lyrics that are beautifully innocent." (Y Cymro)

Llosgi'r Pontydd: "It's the intense and mythological atmosphere that impressed me." (Sgrech)

Ffŵl Ebrill: "The best track on the album...an effective presentation." (Y Faner)

On listening to *Gwin y Gwan* now, I'm struck by the power of Eliffant's sound. This album had hardly any effects processing, and like *M.O.M.* before it, had only reverb and a little Eventide chorusing added to the vocals. It still has that kick to it that belongs to the seventies, real instruments, played through valve amplifiers. I also think that the writing was on the wall. The band depended on Geraint for its material, and this naturally was limiting. Eliffant was essentially a rock band, but Geraint's roots were eclectic. His main musical interests were folk, country rock, pop and funk! His songs tended to be just as diverse. In the subject matter maybe, but not their treatment. Most of the critics complained about the lack of diversity, which therefore is ironic.

True to the Celtic way, Eliffant was allowed its glory days, but they had to come to an end, which would happen slowly. The gigs for the rest of the year were as follows:

Monday August 4th at the Twrw Tanllyd gig for the Eisteddfod.

Tuesday August 5th at the Glen in Llanelli.

Saturday September 20th at Tan y Bont, Caernarfon.

Friday November 7th at Dixie Land, Rhyl.

Saturday November 8th again at Tan y Bont, Caernarfon.

Saturday November 22nd in Corwen.

Friday November 28th in Plâs Côch, Anglesey.

The band got together on Saturday December 20th for the Eliffant Christmas Party; this was to be the last one for the band's original line-up.

Rehearsals became more difficult to arrange, not all the members were able to commit themselves due to various other interests. Colin in particular found it hard to give up an evening a week due to work and family responsibilities. He and Clive travelled together to the practices, but even so, it became more and more difficult for him to get to Crymych of an evening. Colin had a huge basement in his house in Broad Haven, so it was agreed that rehearsals would take place there. These were arranged for the weekend so as not to interfere with evening activities during the week. Eliffant played only eight gigs in nineteen eighty one, they were:

Friday February 20th at the Top Rank, Cardiff.

Saturday February 28th at Trinity College, Carmarthen.

Friday March 20th at The Pier, Aberystwyth.

Friday April 10th at Plâs Côch, Anglesey.

Monday April 20th at Blaendyffryn.

Saturday June 13th at Tan y Bont, Caernarfon.

Friday July 3rd at Plâs Côch, Anglesey.

Thursday August 6th at Twrw Tanllyd, at the Eisteddfod.

On Monday August 17th the band played a whole gig set for the cameras at the HTV Studios in Pontcanna, Cardiff. The programme was one of a series, Roc Ser. It was directed by Endaf Emlyn, and was a great success. The hour-long programme was televised twice over the next year, and showed that Eliffant was at its best on stage playing live.

There was little else in 1981 for the band to celebrate. Eliffant was beginning to run out of steam, some members were losing the enthusiasm, and gigs were almost becoming a chore. The road to North Wales, where most of the gigs seem to be, was getting longer and harder. Rehearsals were getting fewer, and even the ones that were arranged were often cancelled. The final straw came when, in spite of rehearsing in Collin's home, he still managed to turn up late! Eliffant was allowed to peter out quietly. There was no final bust up, no ultimatums, no tantrums, it was decided simply to let it die. The boys were still good friends, and this was as important to them as anything. Eliffant was as much a social group as a band, and they all went their separate ways still friends. There was no Christmas Party that year, but it would not be long before one would be arranged, and it would not be long before another Eliffant would be heard "making a noise" in the depths of Cardiganshire.

The Eliffant Story. Part Two.

During the weeks after the demise of Eliffant Geraint had been in discussion with Euros, John and Clive. It was obvious to them that the patient had not passed away, but was only in a comma, and there was hope for a recovery. The enthusiasm was still there, albeit, somewhat weaker. It was decided to re-invent Eliffant, with a new drummer! It could be argued that this was a mere slight of hand on the part of four of the members to get rid of the fifth, but that would be an over simplification of a situation that was far more complicated. During the autumn of '81 drummers were being considered and auditioned. A young man from the Lampeter area whom Euros had known, came along to the memorial hall in Felin Fach whilst on holiday from London, his name was Gordon Jones. His drumming style was very different from Colin Owen. Colin was a rock drummer who hit the skins hard, Gordon had a lighter touch, more in keeping with the musical direction that Geraint's songs were taking the band. Gordon agreed to join, and immediately made plans to move back to Wales. At rehearsals in Felin Fach the band sound was changing. Clive was now playing a Musicman bass instead of the Rickenbacker, John was playing a Gibson 335 instead of the Strat, and Geraint not only had changed the Gibson SG for a Fender Telecaster Deluxe but also had started playing a Wurlitzer electric piano on some songs. It was going well, so well in fact that an Eliffant Christmas Party was arranged for the 30th of January, and breaking with tradition, this one was held in Pembrokeshire. Although the new Eliffant had never played a gig the BBC invited them to record some new material for the *Sosban* program that went out on Saturday mornings. They recorded a total of four songs in Dafydd Pierce's Studio 1-2-3 in Bute Street, Cardiff. The songs were:

Gwyllo Arna' i.
Protea.
Diwedd Y Gaeaf.
Esger.

The BBC released 'Gwyllo Arna' i' on the *Sesiwn Sosban* LP, which included tracks by Angylion Stanli, Derec Brown A'r Racaracwyr, Maffia Mr. Huws, Rocyn and Y Newyddion. The band was pleased with the results and planned to use the songs as demos to negotiate a third album on the Sain label. But first the boys had to start gigging again.

Although the band had practiced a little in the Crymych area over the winter, Felin Fach became the centre of their activities in the spring, mostly at the theatre there on Sundays. The social aspect of the band was still important, if Eliffant was going to last it had to be fun. If it wasn't Theatr Felin Fach then it was the village hall in Llanpumpsaint, this probably was the most central of all. The first live gig with Gordon was on Monday April 12th at Blaendyffryn. It's difficult to imagine as I write in 2000, the organising of gigs on Monday nights with Welsh language bands in the heart of Carmarthenshire, but in those days gigs could be arranged on any night of the week and people would come to have a good time. The second gig was also on a Monday, on July 19th at Ysgol Rhydfelen, Pontypridd. The others for '82 were:

Thursday August 5th at the Leisure Centre, Swansea for the Eisteddfod.

Saturday September 18th at Blaendyffryn. An all day gig with many bands recorded for the radio by the BBC.

Friday September 24th for an HTV programme.

Tuesday October 5th for a BBC programme.

Monday October 11th for a HTV programme.

Thursday October 21st for a HTV programme.

Wednesday October 27th a gig at Aberystwyth.

Wednesday December 22nd at the Star Motel in Geirwen, Anglesey.

Nineteen eighty-three started with Eliffant moving in to uncharted waters. HTV wanted to make a video of the band, not a conventional video of the band performing one of their songs but a dramatic interpretation of 'Gwin Y Gwan'! This involved Geraint, Gordon and John acting the part of down and outs in the back streets of Cardiff. John and Gordon threw themselves enthusiastically in to their rolls, John did so literarily. They were portrayed as alcoholics, sitting around an open fire on a deserted building site near Cardiff docks. The video shows John menacingly brandishing a knife, and also falling in to the flames of the fire, he managed several 'takes' before accepting the advice of those around him that it was getting dangerous. Geraint did his best to look soulful, and Gordon came across as a harmless character, down on his luck. It was fun to make, but did little for the image of the band. Euros and Clive perhaps wisely stayed away from the shoot! This was the band's only forage in to this kind of venture, thankfully. On Saturday the 26th of February they played a gig at the Tan y Bont club in Caernarfon, which was to be the last time that they played there. Like so many other places that once were popular for Welsh gigs in the eighties, it no longer exists as a venue. On April 18th they were back at the HTV studios in Cardiff to record three new numbers for television, they were 'Emyn Y Tâd', 'Cân Y Crwydryn', and 'Gole Gwyn'. Only 'Gole Gwyn' found its way on to record (*Gwin Y Gwan*). Saturday April 30th saw them at Lampeter, Saturday May 21st at Trinity College, Carmarthen and Saturday June 4th in Cardiff.

The negotiations with Sain for the third album had not gone well. The band was keen to go in to the studio again, but the record company were less enthusiastic. Hefin Elis, the co-producer of *Gwin Y Gwan* was particularly reticent to cooperate. He was also a director of Sain and made it quite clear that the company was not prepared to invest any more studio time in the band, not until record sales were healthier. This was a time when Welsh language record sales had past their peak, to sell 2000 LPs was amazing, and most bands would have been happy to sell a 1000 records. To expect Eliffant to sell more than other bands was optimistic, and in reality the band was

suffering from a general decline in record buying which was eventually to affect the world wide record industry. This was the cross over period between vinyl and compact discs. The debate between Sain and Eliffant became a little acrimonious, and negotiations had reached stalemate, and so the only answer seemed to be for the band to go it on their own, and start their own record label. The boys were far from unanimous as to the choice of material for the new record. Geraint was still the only songwriter and much of his recent material was going in a direction that some of the band members were less comfortable with. The songs were becoming less rocky, there were more ballads, and the material called for a greater degree of musicianship. In spite of this, plans went ahead to record at Richard Morris' studio, Stiwdio'r Bwthyn in Cwm Twrch, in the Swansea Valley. It was decided to make a single initially, and see how it sold before recording an album. The 'A' side was to be a new song 'Ti Yw'r Unig Un I Mi', this was a simple pop-rock number with Euros' playing a prominent part on 'Hammond' organ. The 'B' side was the re-recording of an acoustic number that Geraint had written some years before, 'Tywyllwch'. This was a rocky number with a jazz-funk feel in the intro and bridges, but it was also essentially a pop song. The two backing tracks were recorded over the weekend of the 11th and 12th of June, and the vocals and lead guitar were recorded on June 19th. Geraint and Gordon mixed it on Thursday June 23rd. The artwork for the record sleeve was done by Douglas Williams, a friend of Gordon. It was printed in black and white to keep costs to a minimum, and 500 records were pressed. The new record label was called LLEF, an acronym that stood for 'Llais Ei Feistr', which is Welsh for 'his masters voice'. The logo shows an elephant listening to an old fashioned gramophone, a clever parody on the well-known HMV logo. The idea was born in the smoky depths of the public bar at Fishers pub in Cellan, near Lampeter, and was beautifully drawn by Doug again.

The sleeves were printed locally in the Lampeter area, but they needed folding and gluing. This was done mainly by Euros and Gordon; they also had to put the singles in to the sleeves. A labour of love I'm sure. The idea was to sell the single at live gigs, the price was £1.30. The Eliffant aide-de-camp of the day, Haydn Talgrwn, was happy to do the selling. Mail order was also an option that was used; this was probably the first time that a Welsh language record was sold by mail order. The music press of the day in the main welcomed the new single, but by this time the magazine *Sgrech* and its in-house writers had decided that Eliffant's time had come. I believe that the *Sgrech* people were surprised and a little miffed that Eliffant had won the first competition for best band back in 1979, for their own reasons of course, and now was pay back time! *Sgrech* certainly slated the single, commenting that it was too little too late. They compared the 'A' side with "the dreadful *Mouldy Old Dough* by Lieutenant Pigeon" and "Derec Brown's Racarac music", the later comparison Eliffant were more than happy to accept as a compliment, not least because of Derec Brown's popularity at the time. The single found its way on to the radio and jukeboxes, and now are sought after by collectors. The rest of the year saw gigs at Pontypridd (July 22), the Eisteddfod in Bangor (August 2), Pontrhydyfendigaid (September 3) and Bangor (October 8). On September 16th Eliffant were at the HTV studios in Cardiff to record 'Seren I Seren', 'Diwedd Y Gaeaf', and both tracks from the new single. On Sunday December 4th they were at the BBC in Cardiff to record 'Dilyn Fi' and 'Ffair Caerdydd'.

Nineteen eighty-four started in the usual fashion with the band rehearsing every week at Felin Fach. This was the year that would see them celebrate seven years together, at least the founder members. True to the quirky Eliffantine ethos, the band decided to celebrate six and a half years instead. A gig was arranged at the theatre in Felin Fach. A concert really, a sit-down affair at the two hundred seat venue. It was well advertised, the band was well rehearsed, and they all dressed for the occasion in dinner jackets and jeans! It was well attended, and a video still exists of the performance. The place was full of friends, family, admirers and supporters. This was not to be the final gig, but it should have been. On Friday February 3rd the band played the last live gig at Clwb Ifor Bach, the Welsh club in Cardiff. The last supper was the Eliffant Christmas Party on Saturday February 18th. There were two more commitments to fulfil. HTV recorded a performance of 'Nol Ar Y Stryd', 'Dilyn Fi', 'Eryn Y Tad' and 'Protea' again at the theatre in Felin Fach. Eurof Williams directed it, to be used as an insert in the SER television series. The final Eliffant performance was for the BBC in Cardiff, a recording of 'Capten Idole' for the Bilidowcar youth programme. The details of the break-up are no longer important, but the end had come; the boys quietly went they're separate ways. Eliffant was over, well, almost.

In the years following the end of Eliffant the band members followed very different routes. Euros worked at the theatre in Felin Fach as a lecturer and eventually managing the place. He developed the annual pantomime in to a nationally renowned institution, got deeply involved in the local radio station, Radio Ceredigion, and facilitated the artistic development of the whole of the Aeron Valley community. Clive followed his career in the Pembrokeshire library service whilst regularly gigging with a local band doing mainly country covers. Gordon followed his career in the building trade in the West Wales area, drumming for several local bands, playing obscure but tasty album track covers and blues. John left the bank and went in to the recording business. He now runs a commercial recording studio in Cardiff. Geraint went on to pursue his solo career turning professional in 1985. They had made many friends over the years, one in particular, Haydn Talgrwn, who was a kind of roadie and aide de camp, became a helicopter pilot, flying between the oil rigs in the North Sea. In 1994, his fortieth birthday was looming, and Gordon was asked to try to get Eliffant to reform for the event. All were keen to do it, a full ten years after the split. The boys met to discuss the preparations and the set list. Rehearsals were held in Felin Fach, but as it turned out, John Davies didn't play, a friend of Gordon, Terry Dixon, was recruited to play flash guitar in his place. The gig happened on Friday August 26th at the Gogina Arms in Llanarth, near New Quay, Cardiganshire. Eliffant played a short set of nine songs and one encore. The set list was:

1. Gwin Y Gwan.
2. Llosgi'r Pontydd.
3. Merthyr.
4. Magi.
5. W Capten.
6. Ffair Caerdydd.
7. Nol I Gairo.
8. Can Y Mynydd Du.
9. Lisa Lan.

The gig went very well, and all the boys enjoyed playing together again. So much so that when Euros asked Eliffant to play a gig at the theatre in Felin Fach as part of the Aerwyl Arts Festival, they agreed. This time the guitarist on flash guitar was Geraint Williams from Llanddarog, near Carmarthen. As Gordon was unavailable due to other musical commitments, the bands original drummer Colin Owen was invited to play; he accepted. So on Friday May 12 1995 Eliffant took the stage one more time in their spiritual home of Felin Fach, and in front of an appreciative audience of friends, family, admirers, old roadies and assorted familiar faces. They played the nine song set again, this time the encore went on for nine numbers, the audience wouldn't let the band go until they had played all the songs twice! Was it a case of :

“Play it again, play it again, play it again till you get it right!!!”

To be continued? Watch this space.....