

# Let's Talk Dusty!

The Ultimate Forum for Dusty Springfield Fans

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## Dusty backing Alma Cogan

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### Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27398)

by **Sweetbaby** » Fri Jul 23, 2010 8:32 pm

☺ Forgive me if this is common knowledge but I was gobsmacked to find a mention on the Ready Steady Girls site that the 1964 Alma Cogan single *Snakes & Snails* "supposedly features" Dusty on backing vocals & it took next to no Googling to unearth this info from a 1998 interview with Chris Curtis of the Searchers who responds to the statement "You also made a single with Alma Cogan" thus: " Yes, she was lovely, just the nicest person in the whole wide world. She was very up on the groups, she loved John Lennon & her best friend was the manager of the Ad-Lib in Leicester Square, which is where the bands used to meet. I wrote *Snakes And Snails* for her & she was made up with it. I got Bobby Ore on drums, John Paul Jones on bass, Jimmy Page, Vic Flick & Joe Moretti on guitars & they played out of their skins. She didn't realise that she'd have to sing over a heavy rock backing & she loved it. The backing vocalists were Dusty Springfield, Doris Troy, Rosetta Hightower from the Orlons, & me. Boy, did we have fun."

Again forgive me if this is common knowledge: here's Alma with Dusty & co.

[youtube]<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4zVNC5UF7w>[/youtube]

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### Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27408)

by **Brian** » Fri Jul 23, 2010 9:27 pm

I've had this record for years. There was a 'story' that Alma 're-recorded' it before it was issued in 1964, but I doubt it - after all with those backing singers would YOU want to record it again!

Alma and Dusty were great friends apparently in those days - enjoying each others 'parties' ❤️ Alma hosted some great parties and just about anyone who was anyone attended. With Dusty's love of backing singers it makes it even more credible.

Brian

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### Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27452)

by **Corinna** » Sat Jul 24, 2010 10:56 am

Maybe the experts here knew it, but it was complete news to me! Thanks for posting this, Richard!

Though Dusty's voice often is very prominent, even as a background singer, I had difficulty hearing her in this recording.

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### **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27455)**

by **Cardiff Bluesgirl** » Sat Jul 24, 2010 11:22 am

I did know this but hadn't heard about again til now and as Brian says she popped up all over the place doing this and then of course had to be "Gladys Thong" so that she didn't irritate her record company. 😊

those were the days when they all used to sing backup for each other and I posted somewhere else re Gladys Knight saying that on tour when there were several acts on the same bill, that they were all friends and used to do this all the time. I know they did it for recordings too as they were on the same record labels, so would help each other out in the studios. 🤝

I know Dusty loved being one of the "Vandellas" didn't she when one of them wouldn't turn up for a song or a rehearsal. those were great days and all that talent helping each other out because they loved and respected the music and the songs and each other. 🤝

you can usually hear her fab voice in the backings, it always reminds me of her in The Springfields when we waited for her voice to burst free of the trio and take us up there with her, Magical. ❤️

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### **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27561)**

by **Sweetbaby** » Sun Jul 25, 2010 12:35 am

😊 Well - as Alma's recording contract only guaranteed that her label allow her to record a specified number of tracks I wouldn't think she'd likely make two recordings of the same song. And certainly Chris Curtis seems unaware of any subsequent sessions for *Snakes & Snails*.

I've only gained any appreciable awareness of Alma quite recently & she really seems to be fascinating both as a vocalist & a personality. Alma's OTT fashion sense I think could qualify her as the Dusty of her day & the fate that befell Dusty as the Sixties waned: being largely viewed as an anachronism, befell Alma at the decade's start. Sadly dying at 34 Alma never had the chance to transcend her image from her hitmaking days the way Dusty has done.

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### **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27579)**

by **Corinna** » Sun Jul 25, 2010 7:48 am

Tragic that Alma died so young. She has an intriguing voice for sure!

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### **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27595)**

by **Cardiff Bluesgirl** » Sun Jul 25, 2010 9:45 am

she was lovely and we all used to sit around the tiny black and white tv and watch her shows. she was very glamorous and attractive, was very popular here and it was very sad that she died so young. a great character full of fun and life.

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### **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27617)**

by **allherfaces** » Sun Jul 25, 2010 3:04 pm

That's a pretty groovy song from Alma -- I like it better than the CD of her stuff I have which is a bit more, or further back retro. I \*think\* I can hear Dusty's voice now and then, too.

good find, and news to me. Thank you.

You have to love all the girls singing on each other's records. Way cool.

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### **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27683)**

by **daydreamer** » Mon Jul 26, 2010 9:51 am

I have to admit to never having been able to pick Dusty's voice out on the record, which is unusual as I'm usually so tuned into it and checking the Complete, Paul does say that the backing was re-recorded, so maybe it was. You do have to wonder why?! Alma was one of stars of the 50's who managed to change her image (she dropped the dresses for a start) in the 60's but then had her life cut short. There were/are rumours that Alma and John Lennon were lovers, he certainly seemed to have a thing for her and his pet name for her was Sara Sequin 😊 Not sure if this link will work but it's from RSG!

<http://www.almacogan.com/video/lennon.html> (<http://www.almacogan.com/video/lennon.html>)

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### **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27728)**

by **Tommy Stevens** » Mon Jul 26, 2010 5:21 pm

*daydreamer wrote:*

I have to admit to never having been able to pick Dusty's voice out on the record, which is unusual as I'm usually so tuned into it and checking the Complete, Paul does say that the backing was re-recorded, so maybe it was. You do have to wonder why?! Alma was one of stars of the 50's who managed to change her image (she dropped the dresses for a start) in the 60's but then had her life cut short. There were/are rumours that Alma and John Lennon were lovers, he certainly seemed to have a thing for her and his pet name for her was Sara Sequin 😊 Not sure if this link will work but it's from RSG!

<http://www.almacogan.com/video/lennon.html> (<http://www.almacogan.com/video/lennon.html>)

The question on my mind is, what was he thanking Dusty for? Ahh, we've probably seen it on YouTube, whatever it was.

Next question: How many of the dancers were thinking something along the lines of "What the hell... I spent ages trying to get into the audience and THIS is what they play?"

She is very pretty, though. And I like Snakes and Snails, even if Keith Richard didn't.

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### Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27768)

by **Sweetbaby** » Mon Jul 26, 2010 11:18 pm

☺ My earlier comments notwithstanding I acknowledge the unlikelihood of a report of *Snakes & Snails* being re-recorded arising arbitrarily.

I can't open the link to the video at Almacogan.com - is it of John Lennon introducing Alma's take on *Tennessee Waltz* on RSG? I actually like that track & I'm glad it gave Alma a latterday hit in several European countries but it is camper than a row of tents - I wonder if an RSG airing might not have been more beneficial to one of Alma's "beat" recordings. I think perhaps Alma's bid for a Sixties comeback was hampered by Helen Shapiro becoming the chart queen of the early Sixties scene: Alma & Helen were both on the Columbia label who might have held back promoting Alma so as not to risk eclipsing their star vocalist Helen.

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### Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27849)

by **Isparks18** » Tue Jul 27, 2010 12:51 pm

If you've never read the book, *Alma* by Gordon Burn, I recommend as just could not help thinking of Dusty when I read some parts of it. I have never heard Alma Cogan sing, but going to order something right away? Any suggestions? Greatest hits, perhaps?

Linda

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### Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27850)

by **karen** » Tue Jul 27, 2010 1:05 pm

Being around at this time [ oh dear that age thing ] still have a few of her records, so just for fun..

🎵 [youtube]http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oAe6H-RkEY[/youtube] Sorry Dusty not backing on these. 😊

Last edited by **karen** ([./memberlist.php?mode=viewprofile&u=352](#)) on Tue Jul 27, 2010 1:13 pm, edited 1 time in total.

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### Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27851)

by **karen** » Tue Jul 27, 2010 1:07 pm

Hello Young Lovers.. [youtube]http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9hUNYileM8[/youtube]

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### Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27852)

by **karen** » Tue Jul 27, 2010 1:08 pm

Start of the blues... [youtube]http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Fn7tb8WbmQ[/youtube]

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### Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27857)

by **Cardiff Bluesgirl** » Tue Jul 27, 2010 1:24 pm

oohhh nice to hear her again and great that others on here are having a look at her. she was such a

bouncy character and really lived it up. if you can get the biography channel then they show a history of her career from time to time and its interesting to see how outgoing she was for those times. I love all her songs, "sugarbush", "twenty tiny fingers" "eskimo" and all the others really. she was quite a big star in the UK and it was so sad when she died. a girl in the Dusty mode, she loved all her fashion and parties etc. 🤔

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### **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27860)**

by **karen** » Tue Jul 27, 2010 1:27 pm

Had to stop Liz , but loved Eskimo, so one more. 🎵 [youtube]http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2DoK1W7iec[/youtube]

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### **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27862)**

by **Cardiff Bluesgirl** » Tue Jul 27, 2010 1:37 pm

yes that was a goodie wasnt it?? 😊 I went on all her videos a little while ago and you know what its like on utube, you just cant stop 😞  
I hope she gets some more airplay, she was great.

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### **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27866)**

by **allherfaces** » Tue Jul 27, 2010 2:20 pm

Wow I lost the plot somewhere along the line. I thought that Helen Shapiro and John Lennon were lovers and Alma Coogan played for the other team. 🤔

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### **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27867)**

by **karen** » Tue Jul 27, 2010 2:29 pm

No Nancy it was Alma and John 😊

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### **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27869)**

by **allherfaces** » Tue Jul 27, 2010 2:33 pm

I never seem to get these stories straight. 😞

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### **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27877)**

by **humboldt** » Tue Jul 27, 2010 3:37 pm

The bad old days when female singers had no control over their career.

[youtube]http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mGMcRK9JOo[/youtube]

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### **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27916)**

by **Tommy Stevens** » Tue Jul 27, 2010 9:20 pm

**Sweetbaby wrote:**

😊 My earlier comments notwithstanding I acknowledge the unlikelihood of a report of *Snakes & Snails* being re-recorded arising arbitrarily.

I can't open the link to the video at Almacogan.com - is it of John Lennon introducing Alma's take on *Tennessee Waltz* on RSG? I actually like that track & I'm glad it gave Alma a latterday hit in several European countries but it is camper than a row of tents - I wonder if an RSG airing might not have been more beneficial to one of Alma's "beat" recordings. I think perhaps Alma's bid for a Sixties comeback was hampered by Helen Shapiro becoming the chart queen of the early Sixties scene: Alma & Helen were both on the Columbia label who might have held back promoting Alma so as not to risk eclipsing their star vocalist Helen.

By 1964, neither of them had much of a career and while Shapiro might have been able to pull a comeback off (though she didn't), being associated with pre-Beatles music, Cogan was associated with pre-rock music. I can't think of anyone in either the US or the UK who started out doing "mom and dad" music and later successfully reinvented themselves as a credible rock artist.

Which brings up an interesting "what if." If the Lana Sisters had had several big hits, would Dusty have been able to go on to become "queen of the mods."

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### **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27917)**

by **Carole R.** » Tue Jul 27, 2010 9:23 pm

In her biography about John, Cynthia Lennon says that John 'fancied' Alma Cogan, but makes out that it went no further than that.

Going back to the fab RSG clip, I was astounded to see that Alma Cogan appeared at all.. I thought she'd gone way out of fashion by then!..

...and the song Tennessee Waltz seems so dated for a prog like RSG.. 🤔 Amusing to watch the teens trying to dance to it... Full respect to Alma but it was SQUARE with a capital 'S'..

Nice to see SANDIE dancing with Paul McCartney.. 🤗

CR xx

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### **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27918)**

by **Cardiff Bluesgirl** » Tue Jul 27, 2010 9:40 pm

Carole I think it was Cathy McGowan dancing with Paul not Sandie. and yes dont they all look strange dancing so stiffly. I think you can see the natural chemistry between John and Alma. he was a sexy man.

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### **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27927)**

by **Sweetbaby** » Tue Jul 27, 2010 10:54 pm

**Tommy Stevens wrote:**

By 1964, neither of them had much of a career and while Shapiro might have been able to pull a comeback off (though she didn't), being associated with pre-Beatles music, Cogan was associated with pre-rock music. I can't think of anyone in either the US or the UK who started out doing "mom and dad" music and later successfully reinvented themselves as a credible rock artist.

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There's no question that Alma being considered square factored into her '60s career eclipse but I think it's at least possible that being on the same label as Helen may also have been a factor. I wasn't specifically referencing 1964 as far as suggesting Columbia may have held back promoting Alma to focus on Helen. Helen had her first UK chart entry in April 1961 a month after Alma had her last & Alma continued to record for Columbia - Helen's label - through the period of Helen's chart dominance.

Female vocalists on the '60s Britpop scene seem to be considered rivals in a way that male vocalists & groups weren't - I'd guess an acknowledgment of the fact that the charts would only accommodate a set number of records by female singers. The fact that Petula Clark was not as successful in the UK as the US I think may be due in part to Petula's UK label Pye giving her "beat" records - as opposed to *This is My Song* - less promo so as not to detract from Pye's star Britgirl Sandie Shaw.

That said, though not one of the first-tier Britgirls Petula certainly had considerable success on the '60s Britpop scene despite a prior incarnation singing "mom and dad" music. My impression of Petula's early career is that she didn't have a strong image over & above her voice so the UK record buyers of the '60s had more of an open mind about her than about Alma who seemed dated on account of her party girl persona from the '50s.

Any road - one of the interesting tidbits about Alma is that she was the first person for whom Paul McCartney played *Yesterday*, knowing that with her prodigious musical knowledge Alma would be able to tell him if the melody he'd heard in a dream was from an existing song. Although it never occurred to McCartney until later that Alma might think she was being given the song - the Beatles were friends with Alma but never thought of her as a musical collaborator - to me Alma proved to be the quintessential interpreter of *Yesterday* with her normally sunny voice positively icy on this track which was among the last recordings she'd make:

[youtube][http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U\\_typ5QcWCI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_typ5QcWCI)[/youtube]

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## **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27936)**

by **Tommy Stevens** » Tue Jul 27, 2010 11:30 pm

**Sweetbaby wrote:****Tommy Stevens wrote:**

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pre-Beatles music, Cogan was associated with pre-rock music. I can't think of anyone in either the US or the UK who started out doing "mom and dad" music and later successfully reinvented themselves as a credible rock artist.

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I forgot about Petula, mainly because in the US she didn't have a career before Downtown. I'm not really familiar with her UK hits before that, but the few I know, I would classify more as pre-Beatles than as pre-Rock. The arrangements to Romeo and Sailor would fit in on a Gene Pitney record.

Looking at her discography, it seems like they did try to market her Beat songs for a while, some were big hits and some weren't. In fact, she had more charting UK singles than Shaw did in 1965, though Shaw's were bigger hits. It was the other way around in 1966. Shaw had more hits, but the highest charting one was Clark's. By 1967, neither were doing as well with their "Beat" material, so we got "This is My Song" and "Puppet on a String." (Though Clark had one more Beat hit with "Don't Sleep On The Subway," which is my favorite of her hits)

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## **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27938)**

by **Sweetbaby** » Wed Jul 28, 2010 12:07 am

😊 Petula had a '50s chart career that was based as much on "mom and dad songs" as Alma's - although she then charted far less than did Alma, Petula actually had more high ranking hits. I wouldn't insist that Pye focused on Sandie's releases at Petula's expense - I'm just suggesting the possibility. I acknowledge that the failure of several Petula singles to repeat their US success on the



UK charts may have been due in part to a resentment based on viewing Petula as a deserter courting American favor. I see the British music scene of the '60s falling into three periods & the "beat" era which I'd date from '63 was over by '67 when *This is My Song* & *Puppet on a String* became hits. *Don't Sleep in the Subway* is also one of my fave Petula hits; although it was a UK hit it stalled outside the Top Ten at #12 - perhaps because in the UK "subway" denotes not an underground train or station but rather a pedestrian underpass & the "sleeping rough" image that conjured up wasn't appealing.

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### **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27958)**

by **Carole R.** » Wed Jul 28, 2010 8:24 am

First off, Liz ,sorry 'bout the Sandie/Cathy confusion..Everyone had the same hairstyle didn't they?!.. 😊

Re the Alma/Petula 'thing'..I think its right that Alma belonged to the Mum and Dad style of pop music at that time, and to be honest, I don't think she ever lost that tag.

I was told that Petula was primarily an actress in her very younger days, so, I'm thinkin she never really got into a Mum and Dad pop 'groove'...

I'm thinkin that her smoother move from 'Mum and Dad to 'trendy' came with her many collaborations with Tony Hatch, who wrote Downtown, Don't Sleep In The Subway et al....He had a very purple patch with his then wife Jackie Trent during those Sixties yrs.

For the record(so to speak) I thought 'Downtown' was a brilliant song and is still a great mood-lifter if I'm feelin abit down and out!... 🙌🙄😄

CR xx

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### **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27969)**

by **Cardiff Bluesgirl** » Wed Jul 28, 2010 9:08 am

yes I agree Carole and I also love Downtown too it does cheer you up. 🙌

I remember Tony Hatch saying that he could have lived off the royalties from the Crossroads theme as it was on all the time 😊

I suppose songwriters make lots of dosh from airplay and thats why Dusty always used to say about her most played songs that she wished she had written them. 😊

I wonder if Alma and Dusty are "throwing" parties UP There,now they would be worth going to 😊

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### **Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27978)**

by **SweMaria** » Wed Jul 28, 2010 10:41 am

YES, Their parties would be worth going to!! 😊

I was a child at the beginning of the sixties but I do remember "Downtown" and it was a big hit in Sweden too! 😊

Like you said that song makes you happy! 🙌 I love it! 🎵 🙌

I remember the song "The Tennessee Waltz" by Alma Cogan - I used to sing it without understand a single word in English.. 🙄 . In fact it wasn't just that song I didn't understand .... 🙄 You just create your own words and Sing a long! 😊

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### Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27981)

by **karen** » Wed Jul 28, 2010 10:57 am

Well here it is for you to both sing along to. 🎧 Could hear Dust doing this one too. 😊  
[youtube]http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulStYh-qKFA[/youtube]

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### Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p27984)

by **SweMaria** » Wed Jul 28, 2010 11:31 am

Thanks! 🙌

I can imagine Dusty singing it too 🎵 🙌

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### Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p28017)

by **Tommy Stevens** » Wed Jul 28, 2010 6:31 pm

Just a few more theories about why Petula made the transition and Alma didn't: Like Carole said, it had a lot to do with Tony Hatch. Downtown itself was not only a good song, but it captured the moment, especially with the shout-out to Brian Epstein. Plus, having him as a writer meant she had a steady stream of good original songs that sounded contemporary. Snakes and Snails is a good record, but it was more of a Chris Curtis record than an Alma Cogan one. Maybe it should have been a hit, but I'm sure having Keith Richard trash it didn't help and the followup was a single of two recent Beatles songs, which probably looked a bit dodgy back then, coming after a year of EVERY pre-rock singer making a desperate attempt to look relevant by covering a Beatles song.

And I think she might have eased into it with her pre-Downtown singles, rather than just jumping from Tennessee Waltz to Snakes and Snails.

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### Re: Dusty backing Alma Cogan (#p28045)

by **Sweetbaby** » Wed Jul 28, 2010 9:13 pm

😊 It bears mentioning that the song that established Petula as a '60s chart presence: "Sailor", was a cover of a European hit by Lolita & it was obviously "Sailor"'s success which prompted Alma to likewise cover a Lolita hit: "Cowboy Jimmy Joe" although the results were less felicitous, as "Sailor" gave Petula her first UK #1 (still managing to give Anne Shelton a final Top Tenner) while "Cowboy Jimmy Joe" returned Alma to the UK Top 40 - just - for a final time.

While Alma's take on "Tennessee Waltz" may seem a bizarre vehicle for an attempted UK chart comeback it actually was a calculated move on Alma's part. Kathy Kirby had just become the UK's top female vocalist via her remakes of "Let Me Go Lover" & "Secret Love" both arranged by Charles Blackwell who Alma recruited to update "Tennessee Waltz". As with "Cowboy Jimmy Joe" the theoretical success lost something in the translation into reality.

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