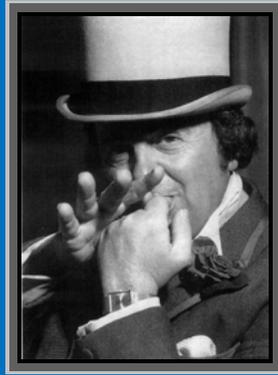


AROUND THE WORLD ON A WHISTLE



Ronnie, rushing home after one of his early schooldays in London's Islington was proud to hand over his school-cap full of pennies to his mother, especially as he knew that she needed money because only that very morning his mother had asked Ronnie to get a loaf of bread on tick.

"I got it whistling to some workmen Mum and a fellow went round with his hat after I'd finished, and there it is Mum, all for you".

His mother started to shed tears and again later when again he was given a pint-mug full of pennies in their local Islington Pub where his mother had been playing the piano and he accompanied her with his whistling.

At school he soon joined the school choir which held the yearly all London top award with appearances at the Central and County Hall Westminster and the Royal Albert Hall. He became a choir boy at ST Bartholomew's the Great, Smithfield and at London's oldest City Church, St. Helens. It was at a school concert that talent scout Paul Beverley heard Ronnie performing "The Birdcatcher Song". He was immediately given a contract to appear in the BBC Children's Hour and on Radio Luxembourg and Radio Normandy.

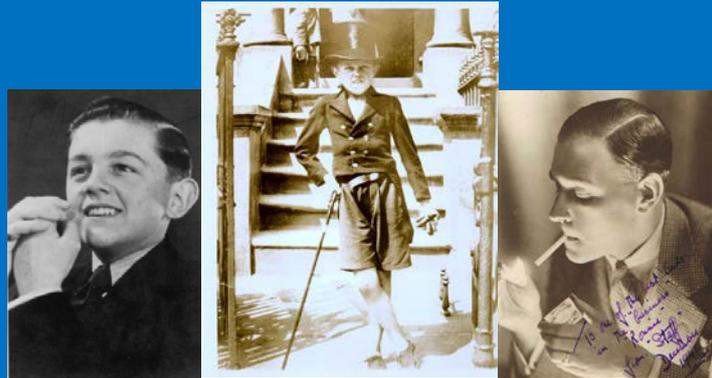
This 'whistling' for pennies made him think he could always whistle in the street to earn his living but thankfully after leaving school at the age of 14 and a short term as a trainee accountant he obtained a contract with "Steffani's 21 Silver Songsters", a boys choir that weekly toured England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales.



Steffani's 21 Silver Songsters then and now

During 1939, after making his first REGAL ZONOPHONE recording (Cinderella and Tenderfoot Ride) the choir toured Norway, Sweden and Denmark. In Sweden he hit the newspaper headline with the words: "Little Ronnie got the Credit of the Stamping Feet".

A contract was offered to him by the Danish Impresario Emile Jacobson to stay in Scandinavia but his loyalty to the Songsters and Steffani had him politely refuse.



First official photo

Arturo Steffani

Back in England the “21 Steffani Silver Songsters” continued making DECCA recordings like the “Wizard of Oz” including “Somewhere over the Rainbow” and “Gulliver’s Travel”.

Due to the outbreak of the war when all British Theatres were temporarily closed Ronnie rehearsed his Solo Act with Steffani in Beccles. The moment the ban was lifted Ronnie with “Steffani’s Silver Songsters” were soon back on the road again.

Ronnie vividly remembers singing “Land of Hope and Glory” accompanied by organist Reginald Fort with his two ton traveling Theatre Organ at the Winter Gardens in Morecambe in front of the wounded soldiers from Dunkirk.

Ronnie was called up and after his discharge from the Army started touring the length and breadth of Britain and soon became known as the “Show Stopper” not always appreciated by the “Tops of the Bill” Stars which affected him in getting work and recognition, so in 1947 he and Steffani who’s “21 Silver Songster Act” by that time had come to an end, went off to America and within a year “Rolly Young” of the “Globe and Mail” in Canada wrote:

“Unless I am mistaken, Ronnie Ronalde, when he hits the lights of Broadway, will make theatrical history.”

This American recognition seemed to start the BBC to use Ronnie, especially when Don Iddon of the “London Daily Mail” in his American column stated:

“A young man called Ronnie Ronalde is a great success in New York, watch him for stardom!”

In the UK Press it stated that “Ronnie certainly made history by not accepting American syndication” for himself as an artist, whereby he would have been controlled as to when and where he would appear, as was the case with so many stars.



Steffani - Al Wilson – Ronnie

Ollie Olsen – Ronnie - Chick Johnson

Radio City Music Hall Scene

Again history was made by being the only British Star to appear yearly at America’s Top Showplace, the mammoth 6500 seater “Radio City Music Hall” in New York . It was at one of those shows that billed him as the greatest whistler in the world, when Ronnie was approached by a Californian Professor to join his School, a “Whistling Establishment” in Hollywood which had just opened due to the popularity of whistling being brought into films by producers and directors having actors occasionally whistling a chorus.

One can remember Al Jolson whistling “Sweet 16” which later became one of Ronnie’s biggest hits.

Bing Crosby often whistled parts of his songs such as “White Christmas”, so did Gracie Fields and Julie

Andrews, both of whom had appeared with Ronnie in the British Music Hall Theatres.

After Ronnie's return to London he recorded at Abbey Road Studios with Norman Newell and George Martin many songs amongst the "Happy Whistler", which really sums it up to why people whistle, it makes them feel happy, well it does for Ronnie.

Ronnie smashed all records at the Blackpool Winter Garden as well as when he played nightly to packed houses during his Great Yarmouth Summer Seasons. He hit the BBC top listening figure with his Sunday Lunchtime BBC Radio Broadcasts and Ronnie's rendition of his first million seller "If I were a Blackbird" and "Song of the Mountains" stayed in the New Musical Express hit parade for 26 weeks.

Ronnie is happy that during his life in the Theatre he worked with many famous stars, was accompanied by outstanding musicians one notably was Lionel Solomon with his solid gold flute in Bishop's "Lo! Hear the gentle Lark" playing the obligato with Ronnie whistling at the Royal Albert Hall of which later a recording was made.

Albert Ketelby's "In a Monastery Garden" and "Sanctuary of the Heart" were recorded after Joe Matthews of Capitol Records witnessed his performance with the Radio City Music Hall's Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Charles Previn and Richard Leibert bringing forth the organ sound, suitable to many of Ronnie's Columbia, Capitol, PYE, Philips, York, DECCA and EMI discs.

Ronnie whistled "Ave Maria" in the film "Love on the Dole"; the background music in Rumer Godden's film "Innocent Sinners". His "Birdsongs at Eventide" was used in the TV series "The Singing Detective"; Ronnie's singing of Handel's "Largo" was used in the Anglo American film "What do we do now" and his yodeling number "Mockingbird Hill" was incorporated into the film "Clubland". Ronnie also appeared in a Saatchi and Saatchi TV Commercial running for 3 years which was followed by TV New Zealand's Cameron Bennett "60 Minutes" program, a story of his life.

Thames Television presented a weekly show titled "Meet Ronnie Ronalde" simultaneous with his BBC Radio series; and theatre engagements kept him very busy indeed. AVRO Radio, Dutch Television and the Danish Television were early success stories and the coveted "Royal Command Performance" had the Queen rise from her seat to watch Ronnie perform his bird whistles below her box and the Duke trying to copy him.



Ronnie with the Beverley Sisters Tommy Trinder Charlie Chester Billy Whittaker Winifred Attwell David Jacobs

About this time Radio Luxembourg's Geoffrey Everitt invited Ronnie to become a DJ for 6 weeks, it lasted 2 years and many more radio series were to follow.

Ronnie's travels took him all over Great Britain, Ireland, Holland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Africa, America and the Far East entertaining the troops and of course to Australia and New Zealand where he made many people homesick whilst they listened to his bird calls and to Canada where he appeared with Olsen and Johnson at the 25 000 seat Canadian Exhibition in Toronto. Ronnie had become a household name and a cynical reporter wrote in the Manchester Evening News that "Everyone seems to love him!"

The lure to Beccles, his Manager's and best friend's hometown, was always great so Ronnie had decided to

buy a house on the River Waveney where he spent many happy hours in his garden and on his boat. Of course the house was always full with music, rehearsing for yet another recording; another Summer Show; another Winter Season or Tour.



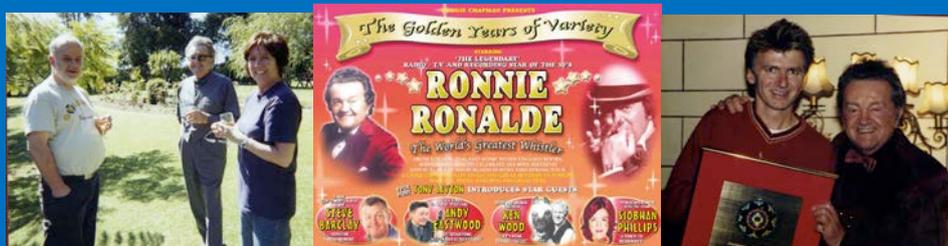
Hospital Ward Ben Warriss, Rod Hull, Tessie OShea – Ronnie signing autographs

Appearing in a Sunday Concert in Guernsey Ronnie was offered a Hotel and within weeks had bought it. That's where he met and married his wife Rosemarie and they have 3 children. Ronnie continued to travel appearing yearly on TV in England, Holland and Denmark, EMI recordings with Norman Newell and Norrie Paramour, Summer Shows and Pantomimes and concerts in England's Theatres, Concerts in Australia and New Zealand and of course many more seasons at the Radio City Music Hall in New York.



Ronnie with Jane Russell Sydney James – Ronnie Lawrence Harvey - Ronnie

Some years later Ronnie sold the hotel and emigrated to New Zealand where he continued in his theatrical profession but also found time to write his own Autobiography titled "Around The World On A Whistle" which EMI accompanied by releasing a CD of the same title which immediately went Gold. Whilst in New Zealand many of his theatrical friends came to visit him, most memorable was Britain's own John Peel and his wife Sheila. John was a great fan of Ronnie, often playing his recordings during his unforgettable BBC Radio programs.



John Peel – Ronnie – Sheila Peel Variety Program Neil Finn – Ronnie

Ronnie spent his 75th Birthday on stage in Auckland, New Zealand with Neil Finn who was promoting his new song "Try Whistling this" which was followed by a trip to America where Ronnie was inducted into the "Hall of Fame" and awarded the honour of Whistler and International Entertainer extraordinaire.



Andy Eastwood – Tony Leyton Australian Variety Bill Joan Regan – Ronnie

After two sell-out concerts with Impresario Roy Watterson at Sydney's Town Hall covered by many

Australian Radio Hosts, Alan Jones, Kevin Trask and Red Symons, who, during his radio program took it upon himself to wake up Melbourne every morning for a period of 3 months with one of Ronnie's songs taken from the EMI UK double CD featuring 50 of Ronnie's favourite songs, titled the "Essential Ronnie Ronalde".



Ronnie with Toni Hatch Max Bygraves Brenda Blethyn the Krankies Alf Person and Don Smoothery



Ronnie – Kevin Trask Red Symons – Ronnie Ronnie – Keith Skues Kenny Cantor – Ronnie Chas & Dave – Ronnie

2005 Ronnie and his wife Rosemarie moved to the Gold Coast in Australia from where he still made yearly visits to England appearing in Concerts to the delight of his many fans and attends the "Steffani Silver Songsters" reunion he is patron of, being held annually in Blackpool and organized by Rex Graham from the Isle of Man. Whilst attending the International Variety Convention and Tent 36 50th Birthday Celebration in London at their last night during a Gala Dinner at London's Guild Hall Ronnie had the great honour of being presented to Princess Michael of Kent; she loved his whistle and wouldn't let go of his hand.



Princess Michael of Kent Ronnie A Water Rats Performance Martin Bell – Ronnie

During these visits he always finds time to attend one of the Lodges of the celebrated Grand Order of the Water Rats he is a proud member of.

It was a huge surprise for Ronnie when a world famous Orchid Hybridizer from America, Andrew Easton, surprised him with a wonderful gift; he had grown a most beautiful new orchid and named it "Ronnie Ronalde"; his way of saying – thank you- for being able to listen to Ronnie's whistling and music.



Joan Collins – Ronnie Ronnie – Paul Daniels Roy Castle – Ronnie

Although EMI UK had re-released many of Ronnie's songs over the past few years every time he performed in a Concert in Britain, New Zealand or Australia his fans kept on asking him when will he record a new album. So he did, he recorded 15 tracks in a day and a half and this is what the producer Mike McCarthy of Manuka Studio had to say:



Mike McCarthy – Ronnie

Ronnie's orchid

Ronnie – Jim Sutton

I have to say that you have achieved something truly remarkable with this album.

The breath-control, phrasing and musicality of both your whistling and vocal performances is outstanding. And the fact that you recorded fifteen tracks in just a day-and-a-half is just remarkable. Most artists these days would be happy with half that number.

To have done all this at the age of 86 – when most people struggle to climb a flight of stairs without running out of puff – is just phenomenal.

By the time the CD had finished playing all 15 tracks, I was left with one overwhelming impression – deep respect.

It's been a privilege to produce your album

Mike McCarthy

Ronnie's recording career spans an incredible eight decades; his first recordings were made at the age of 14 years old as one of the Steffani's Silver Songsters so naturally the name of

“Ronnie Ronalde - Route 86”

seemed a fitting title for this new album.

Ronnie's music has always been fresh and original. This new album presents a new, fresh style. Ronnie Ronalde is clearly enjoying himself. The atmosphere of this album is almost as if Ronnie had come to your house to perform - just for you.

It is a delightful mix of songs –singing, yodelling and whistling – some of them new to Ronnie's recorded repertoire.

It is a fact of life that one only has to go into the streets and hear someone whistling, perhaps a boy delivering the newspapers or the postman with the mail. The “whistle” is universal, it can be heard everywhere, night and day, all round the world, it has no language problems.



Some of Ronnie's theatre bills

There is an impeccability about Ronnie Ronalde's work which persuades the listener to remember the phrase “the Pink of Perfection”; and as a noted newspaper reported on one of his concerts:

There are many famous tenors and many famous sopranos, but only one famous whistler

Ronnie Ronalde

In 2012 Ronnie and Rosemarie decided to return home after many years living abroad and are now happily settled in Ronnie's beloved Suffolk. It has not taken him long to entertain again, at the Hackney Empire, receiving a Standing Ovation.

As Terry Wogan was often heard to say over the airwaves:
"Come back Ronnie Ronalde!"

Well, he has.



Roy Hudd, the van Buren family and Ronnie

