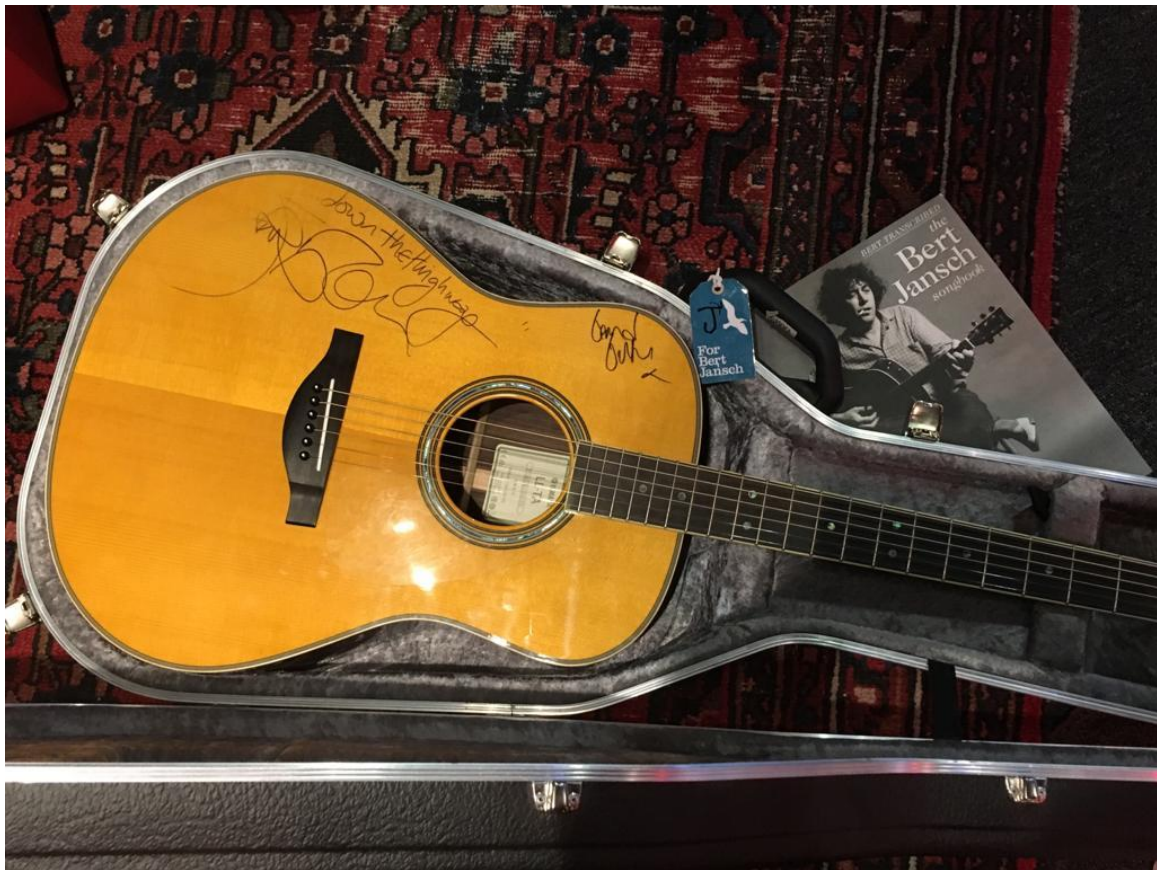


1 The 'Johnny' Guitar's Journey

November 2018 – April 2023. Manchester to Milan



- **UK: Manchester** with Johnny Marr; **London** with Bernard Butler; **Camden Town** with Louis de Beaumont, Ben Murphie, Gabriel Kazz and Dariush Kanani.
- **Belgium: Brussels** with Neeka and Frank van der Linden.
- **Netherlands: Delft** with Renee Meesters and Faint Lights; **Eindhoven** with Eltjo Haselhoff.
- **Denmark: Århus** with Rolf Skytte Jensen; **Skibby** with Peder Skytte; **Aars** with Jens Stage; **Lystrup** with Lars Ingesman.
- **France: Rians** with Pierre Lebras; **Reims** with Didier Bégon and Pascal Froissart; **Pernes les Fontaines** with Philippe Rouquié; and **Treillieres** with Johnson Hogg.
- **Israel: Beer Sheva** with Nir Mehlman; **Tel Aviv** with Amos Zimmerman.
- **Italy: Bergamo** with Buck Curran, with Andrea Valeri of **Pisa**; and Kamil Wysocki of **Parma**; and finally to **Milan** with Luca and Mario Barbaglia.

In 2018 at the time of Bert Jansch's 75th birthday, a Yamaha TransAcoustic guitar, from Bert's most favoured LL series, started a journey across continents, passed from artist to artist, each one expressing how much Bert and his music has meant to them – and to the world. It kicked off with a party at the famous Yamaha showroom in Soho, London in December 2018 – and was so quickly embraced that we soon had five different Yamaha TransAcoustic 80 plays guitars spreading out over the globe.

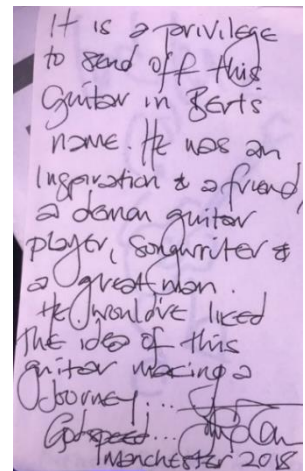
This is the story of the first guitar to set off on this special journey which was named the 'Johnny' for Johnny Marr the guitarist of the renowned band 'the Smiths'. Jonny played on and signed the guitar in Manchester in November 2018. The Johnny Guitar subsequently went right across the continent of Europe, to Belgium, Holland, Denmark, France, Israel and Italy.

Johnny Marr – Manchester

Johnny played his own composition A-Z and signed the guitar with the words 'Down the Highway', before passing it on to his friend, Bernard Butler, guitarist previously of Suede. You can see their signatures on the guitar in the picture at the top of this story.

Johnny had been invited by Bert to play on his *Crimson Moon* album in 2000, after which they became firm friends and collaborators until Bert's untimely death in 2011 aged 67. Johnny said, "Bert was very dear to me, and he will always be an inspiration not only as a musician but as a man." He added 'Bert was a massive influence on me and without Bert Jansch, rock music as it developed in the 1960s and 1970s would have been very different. I feel privileged to have played with him in the studio, on stage and at his home."

Johnny wrote in the travel diary that accompanies each guitar "It is a privilege to send off this guitar in Bert's name. He was an inspiration and a friend, a demon guitar player, songwriter and a great man. He would have liked the idea of this guitar making a journey ... Godspeed Johnny Marr Manchester 2018"



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Above: Johnny and Bert sitting on Bert's sofa in Kilburn in 2008, with more of Bert's guitars hanging on the wall behind them.

Bernard Butler – London

Johnny passed the guitar on to his friend **Bernard Butler**, who had also become a friend and colleague of Bert's, performing with him on stage and on recordings. Bernard said: 'When most people were just breathing, Bert was playing guitar. That sound really was his whole life; the vibrations of the strings were life-giving. The notes were like words and the whole sound a conversation. Bert was a friend of mine; I played with him and hung out with him. This amazing journey is taking Bert's inspiration – his humanity, his heart, his vision and passing it on – and passing it on – until it comes into all these different forms. That's what folk music is all about and I think that Bert would really love this to be happening right now.'



Bernard with Bert before Bert's 60th birthday concert 2003.

Bernard wrote in the Travel Diary that he was so happy to have this beautiful guitar as a reminder of the good times he had had on Bert and Loren's sofa idling the world away. Bernard brought the guitar to the launch party at Yamaha Soho, where he spoke about the journey, and played it there, encouraged those who might receive it to be inspired by how Bert worked – with dignity and soul. He sent it on its way with the words 'Do your thing – as Bert did'.

Camden Town

From the party the Johnny was taken home by young guitarist Louis de Beaumont, and it hung around Camden Town for a while, being enthusiastically played by him and his mates Gabriel Kazz and Ben Murphie. **Louis de Beaumont** who recorded in Camden Town said, 'Bert's music had sunk in deeply enough for me to be playing with Bert riffs without even realising.' Louis wrote in the Travel Diary "It is possible that if we all manage to share what Bert has shared with us, someone in the future will listen, relate and be inspired by what we each have to say. Happy picking!"

Gabriel Kazz, Louis' friend, told us: "As you play something by Bert on your instrument, it's as if you are witnessing a kind of forgotten, magical language unfolding under your fingers. It's mysterious and fantastic!"



Ben Murphie



Louis de Beaumont



Gabriel Kazz

Gabriel added: "I had this amazing Yamaha TransAcoustic guitar at home for a few days in December and it's been a magical experience. May we all help carry Bert's music and magic even further into the future."

Ben Murphie said: "The guitar was wonderful to play – It sounded incredible and made me dizzy. It has been a huge honour to find myself part of this project and of a musical tradition that involves Bert Jansch, Johnny Marr, Bernard Butler and all the other great musicians. I will remember it always. I can't wait to see the final product with all of the videos." He added in the Diary, "I can imagine Bert would have been so excited to see his music grow like this"

The Guitar then passed into the hands of rising star **Dariush Kanani**.

Dariush Kanani by Regent's Canal with the Johnny Guitar



Dariusz went so far as to say the Diary: “Bert’s music remains fresh and continues to inspire and influence new generations of guitarists. He is one of the most important artists in the history of Western music.”

The Bert Jansch Foundation chose Dariusz to be one of our featured young artists, recognising his talents as a player, teacher and organiser. Dariusz has presented online gigs for BJB with artists on 'Around the world in 80 plays' which can still be seen on the BJB Facebook pages under videos. Not only is Dariusz head of workshops for BJB but is a sought-after teacher for Stephan Grossman tutorials and for the residential Renbourn Guitar Workshops. In the Autumn 2023, Dariusz toured the UK with the distinguished guitarist Clive Carroll (also an 80 plays alumnus – on the Pilgrim Guitar).

Johnny Goes Abroad



Frank van der Linden and Neeka at the studios of Radio 1 in Belgium. Johnny Marr wrote his message and signature exactly where a guitarist’s arms rub the guitar when playing. We can see it gradually fade from view.

Belgium

The Johnny’s next step was to hop over the North Sea to appear on Belgium’s No 1 Radio Station, in a Folk Radio show, hosted by Ronald Verhaegen. It was played with gusto by popular Flemish players, **Frank van der Linden**, and **Neeka**. Frank wrote “This guitar – and it’s a pretty good one, is travelling in Bert’s name, and in fact it’s the enduring love for Bert and Bert’s music that is travelling with it.” Neeka said that her friend Tom, who also played the guitar, told her that Bert’s vibes were going straight through his bones!.

Holland

‘Johnny’ then crossed over the border to Holland to a trio called **Faint Lights**, in Delft. This group were long time Bert fans and had written a special song for Bert when he passed away.

The group consists of **Robèrt Gillesse** vocals and guitar, **René Meester**, guitar, mandolin and keys and **John's Gravemade** guitar and banjo. Their leanings are towards folk, blues and rock. In most of their songs they make use of complex arrangements of two intertwined guitar parts.



'Johnny' with Faint Lights, in Delft

René Meester said that in the Acoustic Routes documentary, Bert was wondering who may be sitting in the wings to follow his generation of guitarists and songwriters. Well said René "I guess we all are showing him now there is hope!"

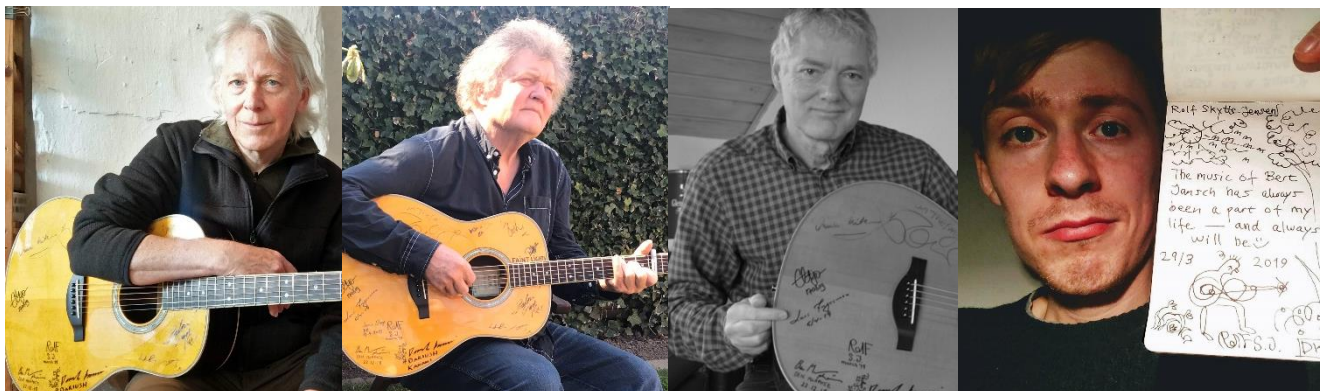
Eltjo Haselhoff – Eindhoven

The guitar was then given a thorough play by Eltjo Haselhoff in Eindhoven. Eltjo said: "What a great initiative 'Around the World in 80 Plays for Bert Jansch'. The person who invented this crazy idea deserves a statue! It's the best project I have ever been involved in! Without Bert's inspiration, maybe I would still be strumming 3 chords today... I enjoyed the TransAcoustic Yamaha. I may get myself one of these Yamahas soon, probably the concert model. It would make a great couch guitar and it's certainly a lot of guitar for the money." Eltjo Haselhoff with the Johnny



‘Johnny’ Goes to Denmark in March 2019

Bert had made several tours to, and a big impression in Denmark. The words that the Danes, **Peder Skytte** and **Rolf Skytte Jensen** as well as **Jens Stage** and **Lars Ingesman** have used to describe Bert’s influence on them are truly poetic. Rolf said, “It always seemed to me that Bert played his guitar like a rally car driver, steering down a dirt road at full speed – not predictable, but always under control! His voice might crack, and tempos might change twice in a bar – even then, all was expression – and always a human vibration.”



Peder Skytte, Jens Stage, Lars Ingesman and Rolf Skytte Jensen in Denmark

Lars said: “In 2014, I had the good fortune to attend a workshop with John Renbourn focusing on Bert’s music. And, in 2017, I was pleased to join up with the Bert Jansch Foundation to host a very successful Bert Jansch Guitar Workshop here in Aarhus, Denmark.” Peder who saw Bert several times, said “Always I will be able to hear Bert’s tone among others, so clear and touching, so original and true. I believe he touches every soul.”

‘Johnny’ Goes to France

The famous **Pierre Lebras** (right) in France, known for his ‘old Picker’ YouTube channel, is a much admired portrayer of Bert’s music. He was persuaded to take a turn in what he called ‘The Chain Gang’ of Bert admirers. He played four of his favourite Bert / Bert & John pieces: *Springtime Promises/Soho/Of Love & Lullaby/Sylvie*, interspersed with sips of wine and amusing stories of his visits to London in the 1960s, with many favourable remarks.



Didier Begon

Pascal Froissart

Philippe Rouquie

Pierre then passed the guitar to **Didier Begon**. **Philippe Rouquie** and **Pascal Froissart**

Lockdown in France!

All was going swimmingly until March 2020, when everything in the world came to a halt. The guitars were also locked down because of the COVID-19 Pandemic. However, the artists made the most of having the Yamaha TransAcoustic stuck with them. We have several lockdown recordings even albums from all the guitars. In France the lucky keeper of the Johnny TransAcoustic in lockdown was Johnson Hogg.

Johnson Hogg - in Treillieres

Having ample time with the guitar, Johnson Hogg gives a great rendition of *Chambertin* (not the only one on the journey, mind you) and also of *Blackwaterside*, (one of several on the journey) also *Back Home* and *M'Lady Nancy* – all watchable on his page here: [Johnson Hogg on 80 Plays](#)

Johnson who saw and met Bert in Wales, said: “I bought my first Yamaha FG340 acoustic in 1981. It is still a lovely guitar. I couldn't afford the models Bert lists on the Rosemary Lane album, but I had to have a Yamaha.”



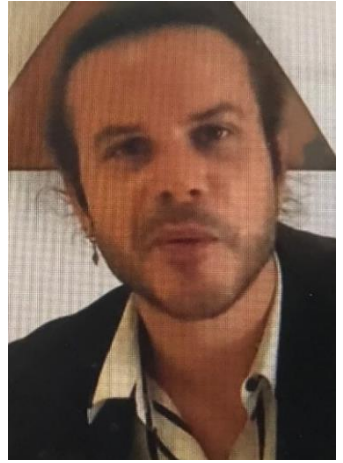
The Johnny guitar with Johnson Hogg, outside the Jules Verne Museum

Fittingly, Johnson took the guitar to be photographed with him in iconic places including at the Jules Verne Museum. (Verne, of course the French writer who wrote the famous book: *Around the World in 80 Days*).

'Johnny' goes from France to Italy and Israel

When the guitar finally moved on, in November 2020 it went to Italy to a young PhD student **Luca Barbaglia**, nominated by David Nigel Lloyd in California (who was shepherding the Graham Guitar round the USA). Luca wrote "The guitar and its meaning made by lockdown lighter."

From Milan, the Johnny was shipped to Beer Sheva in Israel to the wonderful **Nir Melman** who had been playing and teaching Bert's material for several years. Here on our [#ForBertJansch](#) YouTube channel, Nir plays *Rosemary Lane* and *Birdsong*, from the *Rosemary Lane* Album. Nir and several others (including Pierre most emphatically) say that this is the best Bert Jansch album ever. [Nir on For Bert Jansch](#)



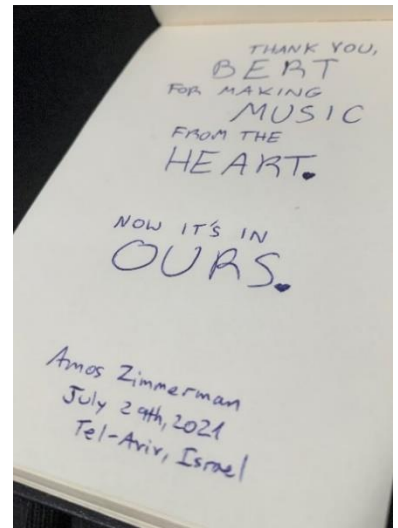
Luca Barbaglia



Nir Mehlman



Amos Zimmerman



Amos' note

The guitar then went to Tel Aviv to **Amos Zimmerman** who played his own composition, *Rabbit Hole* and Bert's *Oh How Your Love is Strong*. He poignantly wrote in the travel diary that accompanies each guitar: "Thank you Bert for making Music from the Heart – Now it is in Ours."

'Johnny's' Weekend in Bergamo

The guitar went back to Luca in Milan who wanted to re-record his song and also get his father **Mario Barbaglia** to play on it for the journey.

Prior to doing so, Luca lent the guitar to **Buck Curran** who took it to Bergamo to record his song. Buck, American in origin, first discovered Bert in Norfolk Virginia in the 1990s. Similar to what others say, Buck says that the spirit and atmosphere of Bert's music has given such deep inspiration to his own music.



Buck Curran with the Johnny guitar at Bergamo Castle. March 2022

Before it came back to Luca in Milan two other Italians, **Andrea Valeri** from Tuscany (who at 18 had won the title of 'Prince of the Acoustic Guitar'), and **Kamil Wysocki** from Parma (originally



from Poland) had rushed up to Bergamo one weekend and each took 'Johnny' out for a day and played their songs on it.

Andrea Valeri (above) took 'Johnny' for a stroll in the park. He said "I will keep this moment in my heart as long as I will be on this planet. On a park bench Andre played Late Night Blues for Bert.



Kamil Wysocki

The next day 10 April 2022, Kamil Wysocki took 'Johnny' to a beautiful lakeside location to play his Bert inspired piece: 'Jolly Cricket'. You can see him here on the YouTube channel [Kamil and Jolly Cricket by the Lakeside](#)

(Looking at the guitar in Bergamo – we can see that Johnny Marr's signature is completely rubbed away! And Johnny Marr signed it again on its return in 2023!)

Buck then returned the guitar to Luca and his father Mario in Milan who played their songs, wrote their messages and packed up the guitar for its return to the UK.