

ESTABLISHED

Bucketfull of Brains

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Alan King & Mike Evans Speak

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The Action

Alan King & Mike Evans Speak To Tim Fuller



If there was any beat group that deserved success in the mid-sixties it was The Action. Their pop/soul sound went down a storm in the clubs. Despite five excellent Parlophone singles produced by maestro George Martin success eluded them. The group had a unique flair for interpreting black American soul music, using the original arrangements and adding their own ingredients to make some of the finest music of the era. Posterity has recognised their massive achievements and they and their exploits have become the stuff of legend. B.O.B went in search of two of the group's original members to provide an insight into their now timeless mod sound.

The Action were originally formed as The Boys in late 1963. Although they had worked together in bands previously, this was the first time they had come together as a four piece. The group at this point comprised vocalist Reggie King, Alan 'Bam' King on guitar, Mike Evans bass, and Roger Powell drums. Reggie and Roger had first met in the Army Cadets when they were fourteen. Mike and Alan were schoolfriends.

• Where were you originally from ?

Mike: People used to say we were from Kentish Town because Bam, Reggie and Roger were all from Kentish Town. I was from Camden, and Pete (Watson) was from Kings Cross.

• Alan, you started off in a band with Mike ?

Alan: Yeah, Eddie Stewart and The Movers. We used to play in a pub in Malden Road called the Malden Arms. That was the nucleus of The Action. Eddie Stewart left, and Reggie joined. He actually lived on the corner opposite the Malden Arms. He wasn't with the band then, but he knew Roger.

• How did you get into music ?

Mike: Playing with Bam and then some other friends who lived in the same street and the thought occurred that they had guitars, so maybe I should get a bass.

Alan: I mainly got into guitar by playing with Mike, we used to sit in his bedroom, with an acoustic each. Although I played a bit before that, in a Skiffle band with some other kids, a tea-chest bass etc. After that came Eddie Stewart and the Movers

• What were your main musical influences at that time ?

Mike: Quite diverse, we used to listen to a lot of Jazz, Elvis, Buddy Holly. Always American music.

Alan: I was really into Buddy Holly, I tried to learn all his songs, also Elvis, and all the soul and R'n'B around at that time.

• Mike, you then played in a band with Keith Moon.

Mike: There was a period when I lost contact with Alan for a while, I went with a friend to see a group performing in a Wembley front room with a view to joining. Their drummer was Keith, he was good even then, despite only being thirteen. We formed a band and used to play and rehearse in a pub in Clapham. We started doing lots of gigs, and were semi pro. Keith was very young, he was still at school, and the opportunity came to go and play airbases in France and he couldn't come so we had to get another drummer. We always kept in contact, and he was always phoning me up to come and see his latest band, until even when he was with the Who.

• How did you come to link up with the others after this time ?

Mike: The Sandra Barry and the Boyfriends idea had come about. It was after I had come back from France. They contacted me and asked me to join. This was a band with Reggie, Bam and Roger.

Sandra Barry a singer who lived locally in Hampstead needed a back up group for some gigs and recordings. This is how the four piece group came together as the Boyfriends. It was around this time that they decided to go professional.

In early 1964 the band with Sandra Barry released 'Really Gonna Shake' which was an up-tempo beat track written by Flegge. Following this they went to Germany playing five hours a day during the week, and between six and seven hours on weekends. Their manager mishandled the money they earned in Germany and the band ended up getting their parents to pay to send a van out to bring them home.

Once the Sandra Barry contact was finished the group decided they wanted a bigger sound and needed another guitar player. Here Pete Watson enters the story. He was self taught and his main influences were Buddy Holly, Eddie Cochran and Gene Vincent.

• How did Pete come to join the band ?

Mike: I knew Pete because I used to go to all the guitar shops around Shaftesbury Avenue. One was Sound City and he was the house player there. He was always playing in a Chet Atkins style and I got to know him. When we needed another guitarist I said I knew this guy



and we should try him.

• **Where did the name the Boys come from ?**

Mike: It was nothing to do with the group, it came out of the Sandra Barry deal. We did do a couple of gigs backing her, but it was never anything really serious. They made us do the promotion wearing black suits and ties which wasn't really us at all. We did a gig with the Swinging Blue Jeans, Merseybeat was just coming big. We didn't really rate it. Then we got the chance to go to Germany and we paid our dues in places like Brunswick and Hanover. We had to really work hard. The good thing was we became polished, and broadened our repertoire because we had to play eight hours a day and needed a lot of songs. We started to write a bit more because we were living and breathing the playing twentyfour hours a day, living behind the stage. The Boys single came out of this.

• **What do you remember about the Sandra Barry period ?**

Alan: The tracks we recorded were 'Really Gonna Shake' and the b side, 'When I Get Married'. Reg played a little bit of guitar which was enough to compose at this time. He was very original. A lot of people used to compare him with Jess Roden from the Alan Bown Set, maybe because they both put their fingers in their ears while singing. I thought Reg had a real crooning voice, great voice, very silky rather than bluesy, very distinctive and more melodic.

• **So when you came back from Germany you linked up with Kenny Lynch for 'It Ain't Fair'?**

Mike: We were actually with Mervyn Conn and he knew Kenny Lynch. We used to go down to his office in Carin Music, Saville Row. We then had another management change, his name was Siggy Jackson, he used to put out all the reggae and bluebeat. He was alright. I think he was the one who thought of the name, The Action.

• **So how did The Boys differ from The Action ?**

Alan: The sound was almost there. It was basically the same band as The Action, but it was self penned rather than Tamla Motown.

This link up resulted in the Pye label single 'It Ain't Fair' and 'I Want You', both sides being written by Reggie. 'It Ain't Fair' in collaboration with Mike. Both tracks display the trademark Action sound in its early development. Reggie's vocal maturity is immediately apparent. The band had come back from Germany in September 1964 and the record was released two months later. Although it was not a great success commercially the band did get a television spot as a result. The record suffered from poor promotion and Kenny Lynch was not interested in continuing, but the band persevered and secured a residency at the Marquee. They supported The Who at their Tuesday night Marquee residency and were starting to build up a good following. They also changed their name to The Action. The Who's management weren't happy with the good audience reaction they were receiving and tried to get them ousted from the support slot. This failed and they eventually ended up with their own residency.

They needed more gigs and so signed up with the Bob Druce Agency, enabling them to get shows all over the country. Denise Hall from the agency was heavily plugging the group. It was her persistence that persuaded George Martin to come and see them perform at the Bedford Hotel, Baham. Martin paid off the group's remaining debts with their former manager and bought out their management contact for £42! He asked Brian Epstein to manage them,

but while Epstein agreed in principal as a favour, it became clear he could not devote enough time to push them sufficiently. However while playing at the Birdcage Club in Portsmouth the group met Ricky Farr, who subsequently took over managerial duties.

• **How did you link up with George Martin and what was he like to work with ?**

Mike: I remember we were building up a good reputation in the clubs and getting good audiences, but we didn't have a recording contact. We tried a couple of companies and got turned down. Then someone had the idea to go to the top guy. We thought we might as well as we've tried everybody else. I think it was a girl who was working for our booking agency (Denise Hall) who actually got hold of him to come and see us. We were playing somewhere in Baham, and he just turned up and we met him. He said he liked us and we should come for a test. So we went to Abbey Road. The first thing we did, 'Land Of A Thousand Dances', he wasn't even there. He came in halfway through and liked what he heard, he always thought that 'Land Of A Thousand Dances' would be a number one. It was one of those tracks you would hear in clubs (the Chris Kenner original). It was an obscure record then and I loved the sound of it. It was a really good dance track. I think what we tried to do was capture that feeling of it, I don't know if we succeeded with it really. The records were never a reflection of what we were playing live. They were two different techniques. Thinking now it was a great privilege to work with George Martin. I think even at the time we realised it because he was so successful. He was very knowledgeable and we were working with 'the master'. The difficulties we had were the pressures we were under, because you had a three hour session and you had to come out with something at the end. I think they were wonderful sessions, we learnt so much in the two and a half years we spent with him. We were a lot wilder live and we used to improvise and extend by gauging the feeling of the audience. When it came to the recording studio you couldn't get that feeling, the technology was pretty basic so you had to conform to a certain technique. We learnt how to do a record in three minutes on four tracks, get the extra voices, overdubs, in very intense circumstances. George was under pressure to have hits, especially as he had just gone independent with AIR productions. He was paying for the recording time, spending all the money, hiring the studios, Abbey Road most of the time. Every time he produced a song he thought it would be a hit, otherwise he wouldn't have bothered with us for two and a half years. He didn't need us, he must have seen something he liked.

Alan: He was really easy going and helpful, and after five minutes you'd think you'd known him a couple of years. He was great with ideas, backward piano and things like that. Most of the singles like 'Land Of A Thousand Dances', 'I'll Keep On Holding On', 'In My Lonely Room', we were doing in our set. I think we played it 'live' then added the vocals, not much using more instruments, I can't remember doing overdubs. It was always very basic due to the time limit.

• **Did you have much contact with The Beatles as a result of working with George Martin ?**

Mike: We used to see them a lot and they knew who we were, and they made jokes about us. I found out that if they liked you they'd make jokes about you. Everyone was in such awe of them, I used to think it is just us, but it was everyone. I always wonder why we never got a song from them. We were trying hard, as was George. There were songs they did we could have done, we enjoyed playing Beatles songs for fun. During the 'Revolver' sessions Pete was too busy playing cards with Pingo to ask for a song. One time we were rehearsing in the Marquee, going through our routine, and suddenly the Beatles walked in. We'd just finished a song and they all clapped, and then we did a couple more numbers. It was a really genuine moment. We would also see them at TV studios and Abbey Road. It would have been nice to get closer to them but it didn't happen.

Alan: The only time I remember coming into direct contact with them was when we were doing a show in Manchester. They were in the next studio recording a Christmas Special. We went round to watch them. I think they were miming to 'Paperback Writer'. When they came off stage, John Lennon said to us as a group, 'Are you with the dancing girls?', Pete replied, 'No, we haven't got the legs for it'. John replied, 'Well Douglas Bader made it'. He had a really quick wit. We did also see them a lot at Abbey Road, but only in passing.

• **Were you becoming more soul orientated, as you seem to have chosen Motown type tracks for your singles ?**

Mike: There was a point where we discovered it. I can specifically put it down to when we started doing gigs at The Scene Club in Soho. Guy Stevens played all soul imports, not things you regularly heard. It wasn't that they were the right records to cover, we just enjoyed playing them. We just thought we can do this and do it well, The other side of the coin was people liked it.

Alan: We were getting heavily into the soul scene, R n B and Tamla side of things, and anything not well known, like 'Baby You Got It'.



• Was it the next best thing to the American originals?

Mike: Yeah, because the originals were inaccessible, you didn't know who the musicians were or anything about them. We didn't try to copy the original, we tried to add a bit or do it differently. What people liked about it was that we could do the arrangement of the original and because we didn't have horns we could do the voices, because we were strong on voices. I don't think we were a pop band at all, we were using jazz influences. We used to listen to jazz and bring those influences in. In 1965 the Action were drenched in John Coltrane, and also later Mighty Baby. That's why I thought we were always caught between two styles, because you had to be a pop band and get success which is what everybody was measured by. There was always pressure to do that. In the end I don't think we were that ambitious enough.

• How did you choose particular tracks for your singles?

Mike: We all did really, we would be playing all these songs, in our live set, mainly obscurities that we liked. We had a huge repertoire of them, and when it came to recording sessions we would just try them out. We also knew a guy who worked at Screen Gems. He used to get hold of lots of demos for us. They were all composed by Brill Building type writers, all classic stuff and we were able to play them. We would then try them out and if George Martin said "Yeah that's promising", we'd take it a stage further.

The Marvellettes 'I'll Keep On Holding On' backed with Mickey Lee Lane's 'Hey Sha Lo Ney' was their second single issued in February 1966. It was easily the best they had released to date, the arrangement being the key with a marvelous middle eight. Reggie's vocal performance and the overall big sound of the Fickenbacker guitars making it an essential record after only the first listening. It received good reviews in the music press, but was not the hit the group had been hoping for. However it did heighten their profile enabling them to secure more gigs and some television appearances.

• 'Keep On Holding On' is the best known and definitive Action track. Did the band think it would hit?

Alan: That was the biggest hit of them, if you can call it a hit. It certainly enhanced our reputation. George Martin must have seen something there, but it didn't seem to materialise for us. You'd think with somebody like EMI behind you a big hit was possible.

Mike: It was probably the closest to how we played it live. That's what I mean about the difference between live and studio. We would try out a lot of things and spontaneous arrangements would happen.

• Why do you think none of the singles were hits?

Mike: They weren't popular enough. At the time artists were caught up in the "you can't survive without a hit" and so everything was tied into that, and nobody had a vision that Rock and Roll was gonna last, however successful they were. I remember sitting in a discussion with Pete Townshend pontificating about it, and saying "what are we going to be doing in six months. It could all be over". And were all saying "do you reckon so Pete?" And he's got a musical on twentyfive years later!! I don't think we had their kind of drive, or image, and probably talent. The Who's live stuff is nothing to do with their pop hits. It's a prime example of the difference between live and studio.

• You mentioned liking Phil Spector productions?

Alan: We went through a period of being really into Phil Spector. We used to do a couple of Ronettes' numbers, the harmonies really suited us. Roger's kit had two bass drums, and on the left one he had a tambourine so every off beat it sounded and it worked great for Tamla Motown stuff and even better for these Ronettes things because it created such a big sound.

Mike: We did a couple of Ronettes numbers, we decided we liked Phil Spector productions, and we liked The Ronettes. For some reason we hooked into it, to see if it would work. I remember one time at the Marquee, we were practising, and Cream, who had only just recently formed, were also practising there in another room. Eric Clapton came in, and we were playing "Walkin' in the Rain" or "Be My Baby". He stood watching and said to us after that he would like to play that sort of material, but that he couldn't because he was expected to be a bluesman.

In the May 1966 issue of 'Rave' magazine a competition was advertised to design a sleeve for The Action's forthcoming album. This was accompanied by some great colour photos of the group performing live at The Marquee. This was as a result of the success of 'I'll Keep On Holding On', but for reasons only known to EMI the album was cancelled. It is interesting to speculate what material would have been included on the album, probably obscure soul covers in their own inimitable style.

• What do you think of the 'Ultimate Action' compilation?

Alan: The choice for the tracks was made by Edsel. It was basically all the singles plus a few

other tracks.

Mike: It doesn't sound good as a concept album, as it is a compilation. We always hoped that the tracks we worked on would be put on an album. We were moving toward that, but it depended in those days on having a hit. At that time, the mid sixties, there was a shift. Before you had an album out you had to have a hit or two. Late sixties it shifted towards just putting albums out. Concept albums started to come out. The Beach Boys followed by The Beatles, and then by a natural progression more people bought more ideas into music and how to change it. That was when we moved away from soul music. It was incredible how we were able to do arrangements for these tracks, 90% of the stuff we played live wasn't recorded. "Just Once In My Life" on the Ultimate Action doesn't sound finished. It sounded to me like there should have been something else on it. It was probably one of the last things we did, I remember listening to the demo. A Goffin/King song that was lying around at Screen Gems. Our version was before the Righteous Brothers hit, we got the demo through Ricky's friend. We tried it with George, either that was the best we could come up with or we thought it won't work. It was a good song, though if you're a live band you get to grips with songs by playing them and then you're ready for the studio. The thing was we never played it. It was a case of learning the demo and playing it in the studio, and it would be the same for some of those other tracks. "Wasn't it You", I think we play live. It sounds like it. "The Place" was written by Jack Hammer. I remember because he came in the studio with us. I don't know how we got it, probably through Ricky. Again we only played it in the studio. Jack Hammer even helped put the last reprise on it. He kind of directed it. It was quite a good song, quite poppy as well. I don't think there's any more unreleased stuff that George produced.

• Did you know that Paul Weller was going to do the sleeve notes for the 'Ultimate Action'?

Alan: No, I didn't. Although he did write to me at some point asking if I had any spare singles, and I sent him what I had but I never kept in touch. He was apparently a great Action fan.

Their next single was another cover, The Radiants 'Baby You Got It', which differed from the original in that it was more powerful and commercial. It was backed with a very soulful interpretation of the Temptations' 'Since I Lost My Baby'. This was the end of the soul covers: at least as far as recording went. They continued to play covers in their set. For potential live tracks they would listen to the records and write down the words, also taking note of the arrangement. They would then add ideas of their own, and make it fit their own sound. Sometimes with slower numbers like the Impressions' 'Keep On Pushing', they would speed the tempo up in order to make it more danceable.

• What sort of places did you play?

Alan: We used to play at the Scene Club, The Twisted Wheel in Manchester. When we weren't playing we were up dancing to these great tracks. We would get copies of the tracks we liked and try to work them out for our live set.

• You seemed to have attracted a largely mod audience?

Mike: I don't really understand what that all means now. We didn't have Lambrettas and go off to Brighton. We had the haircuts and the clothes though. The other thing was, it was that particular youth audience that liked that music. That was why we played The Scene and The Birdcage in Portsmouth, and all the clubs we played in were mod oriented.

• You didn't appear to go to Europe a lot like some other UK groups?

Mike: As the Boys we had been there a lot, and with the Action we used to play in France, Holland and Germany.

Alan: One of the first things we did as the Boys was to go to Germany, Hanover and Brunswick, which was great because we lived and played together all the time and got really tight. We might have done a few shows as The Action. I think we did a festival in Essen. We mainly did one off shows all over this country. We never toured, like on some of the big package tours.

• Were there any bands you remember playing with, and did you have any particular favourites?

Mike: Obviously The Who, Ronnie Woods' band (The Birds), Herbie Goins, Alan Bown Set, Brian Auger and The Steampacket which included Rod Stewart and Julie Driscoll. They were all really great. We also played with US acts, Wilson Pickett once or twice, Stevie Wonder. We used to go and see a lot of the visiting black R n B acts, like Solomon Burke. We used to do "Everybody Needs Somebody To Love", Otis Redding whom we met, and Booker T and the MG's.

Alan: We did Tuesday nights at The Marquee with The Who which were great and we eventually took over from them. I remember playing at the Reading Festival and we followed Cream. It must have been one of their first performances. I remember it was pissing down with rain. We had to follow them on, they were fantastic. There was hardly anybody there





when we went on: You used to see all the bands in the Blue Boar cafe on the M1. We gave Rod Stewart a lift once because he lived in Islington. We did a few gigs with Steampacket and a few people like that at the Club Noreik in Tottenham on Saturdays. After that we would go up to Manchester at about 12.00, to play the early morning session at the Twisted Wheel allnighter, and drive back Sunday without any sleep and play the other Club Noreik in Putney on the Sunday night. I remember a gig we did there supporting Jimmy Witherspoon. I remember we played the Club Noreik with The Steampacket and I had a Gibson amp with wheels. There was a balcony above the stage. Long John Baldry was doing a number totally drunk. Being as tall as he was, he grabbed hold of the balcony and got up on my amp in order to reach. The amp slid away and he was left holding the balcony one handed and singing with his mike in the other. We must have done gigs with other bands but I can't remember all the names. I can remember playing with the Troggs and the Yardbirds.

• Your manager for most of this period was Ricky Farr.

Alan: He was a great laugh, quite a dominating guy, we knew his brother Gary quite well. I think we met Ricky through the Birdcage Club. He was quite interested in managing us. He seemed quite clued up. He was also one of the reasons we got involved with George Martin.

Mike: Ricky was great. At the time we didn't appreciate him. We were very young and didn't have our heads screwed on. He had a lot of drive and worked hard finding us songs, and he was very good at hyping it all up. He had The Birdcage club in Portsmouth, where we built up a good following.

• What TV appearances can you remember, particularly 'Ready Steady Go' ?

Mike: We did at least two RSG's. They were all mimed anyway. I remember finding them quite boring to do. We'd get there half tired. We had to be there at nine in the morning and stay till seven in the evening. All we would do is sit in the dressing room all day, then they would call you for the performance.

Alan: I remember doing a few RSG's. We were told to be there for nine and then we would wait three hours for anything to happen. We used to do a live warm up with Pete Stringfellow who was the compere. We used to play live for about 15 minutes before the show went out. We got quite well known for that. We also did 'Scene at 6.30' in Manchester.

• There is also the BBC '20th Century Focus' film that John Platt obtained from the BBC ?

Mike: I got a copy of what John Platt had, and when I looked at it, it looked a bit pulled out of context. What they had tried to do, it was an unusual idea for the time, was to follow a group around, and see what happens, in between the gigging. The idea was to focus on Reg. It starts with him waking up, and then the door opens and the band arrive.

1967 saw the band changing direction. Their next single featured two self penned numbers, 'Never Ever' and '24th Hour'. Both tracks showed how much they had progressed and other influences were evident in their compositions. They were obviously being influenced by the new wave of bands coming out of the West Coast of America. The follow up in July 1967 was a demo track called 'Shadows And Reflections', backed with 'Something Has Hit Me', another group original. The former showed that although they had changed their style slightly they could still make fabulous arrangements, and the fact they couldn't hit must have been extremely frustrating for George Martin. They were dropped by both Martin's AIR productions and Parlophone. At this point Pete Watson quit and the Action carried on as a four piece.

• How did Pete come to leave ?

Alan: I don't know why really, I think it was because we were looking for something different. Pete was more of a 'riff' player. It's different playing lead guitar on a twelve string. For me at least it was the fact he played a twelve string. If he had played a six string lead guitar it might have been different. It fitted in great at gigs because it was such a big sound.

Mike: It was to do with the group changing and being caught in an identity crisis a lot of the time. We wanted to do something else and it didn't really work with him. To be positive it was great what he did. He was a good singer, he could play, and in terms of the Action he was part of it. It wouldn't have been the same without him. It changed quite radically after he left. It was not that he didn't want to do it anymore. He was a good player, but not a wild bluesman, and we were getting more into experimentation. That's the way I see it, maybe the others saw it differently.

• What was the group like as a four piece ?

Mike: It was difficult because we were in this dilemma. I don't think we knew who we were. Really the band should have ended instead of trying to carry on as we had done before. It's a dilemma because we were trying to carry it on and change at the same time. It should have been cut dead. We couldn't do that because we had a living at stake. We just carried on in a haze, and the four piece didn't work at all.

Alan: It put a lot of onus on me because we didn't have a lead instrument, I wasn't a lead guitarist at all. We did a few gigs as a four piece. One of the tracks on the new 'Brain' album, 'Look At The View' was recorded as a four piece with Ian Whiteman on piano. It's possible that we did record some other stuff.

• When did you start doing original material as against covers, or was it a transition ?

Alan: It was with a change of drugs. With The Action it was all speed and a bit of dope. I think it changed with acid. It changed our whole outlook. It was about 67/68. We listened to loads of new American bands, and went to new clubs like the UFO, Middle Earth, and The Electric Garden. The first few gigs at these places we were still the Action. Then we got involved with John Curd of Straight Music. He was originally The Action's roadie, the worst we ever had. He used to fall asleep at the wheel of the van. John said he knew this guitarist (Martin Stone). He came to see us. We took one look at him, and he had a woolley hat with long hair and a long beard. We were getting a bit 'fily' looking ourselves but he was way ahead of us. We liked him and he was just what we were looking for. He played great bluesy, rock n roll guitar. We spent a lot more time in the studio. We got involved with Georgio Gomelsky, the Marmalade label and Polydor Records.

After Martin Stone and Ian Whiteman joined the group, demos were recorded in various studios. These were experiments for new ideas they were developing and differed a lot from the George Martin productions. They were put onto an acetate with the possibility of release by Polydor records in 1968. They were never put out and its only this year that Dig The Fuzz records have released them as the 'Brain' album.

• The 'Brain' album shows that the group had progressed and were moving towards self compositions and finding a new direction.?

Mike: We actually called that 'Rolled Gold'. It was all the material between The Action and us becoming Mighty Baby. All the frustration and identity crisis. Not knowing what we wanted to do. It began to take a direction finally after Reggie left. Mighty Baby is a pure thing on its own. The Action with Peter was a pure thing on its own. Everything in between is a frustration. Not knowing who we were, what we were doing, and trying to find a new direction.

Alan: We called it Rolled Gold just for the sake of calling it something. I used to have the acetate album, with a gold cover I made up myself. We all lived together in place in Chelsea, Lots Road, with a shop underneath. The group Family moved in about four doors away. We had an electric lead going from our skylight over two or three roofs, and plugged into their landing light. That was our electricity. We got quite friendly with them while we were living there. A lot of the tracks were recorded under the influence of acid. Obviously 'Brain' was made on the spot, Reg just made up the words, there was no arrangement as such.

• Reggie left at around this point ?

Alan: We weren't gigging much at this time. We were doing a mixture of Tamla, but trying to incorporate the new material. We were all going off the rails a little bit. Reggie more so than the rest of us. We did this gig in Newquay, one of the last gigs he did with us, a place called the Blue Lagoon. Reggie used to have a really long lead on his mike and go out into the audience. There weren't a lot of people only about fifty or sixty halfway through the gig he went into the audience and rounded them up, and completely tied them up with his mike lead. He then went round and knocked down all the palm trees and it cost us about £30 out of our gig fee. By that time we were playing with Martin and Ian and he was wondering where he stood. We were all a bit off the wall. It was just that transition period. We wanted to do different stuff.

Mike: Firstly Ian, and then Martin came along and the direction changed. It was right for me, Roger and Alan. We started to develop our playing. Then Reggie had to drop out. We weren't a group. There was nothing for him at the end of that. We were just playing on another planet completely.

The Action metamorphosed into Mighty Baby and they went on to record a couple of albums and appear at the Isle Of Wight Festival organised by Ricky Farr. Alan King went on to join Ace who had a hit with 'How Long'; they even play the odd gig every now and then. Reggie King recorded a solo album for United Artists in 1971 on which some of the former Action members played. He then suffered an unfortunate accident which involved a brain operation. He was last heard of teaching at a college in South London. With the release of the 'The Ultimate Action' in 1981, and 'The Brain' album this year they are now represented with records worthy of their legendary status.

Tim Fuller