

An unmistakable voice of distinction and versatility

The Voice: Chris Farlowe
By Peter Brummund

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'THE VOICE' IS A VERY fitting title for a book about someone whose singing has been so instantly recognisable across the decades.

The hugely distinctive nature - and sheer power - of Chris Farlowe's vocals are unmistakably apparent whether he's operating as a solo performer or as the front man in a band.

And it's been the case in a bewilderingly wide range of musical genres that has encompassed pop, rock, r'n'b, blues, soul and jazz.

Farlowe unleashed on a song can seem a bit like a lion on a hungry prowl - visibly too, when it's displayed within the idiosyncratic stage demeanour of a real character.

Islington's John Deighton started off working as a north London carpenter and joiner - but instead it was a long and continuing presence in music that was crafted.

For those who broke through in the momentous onrush of

the '60s, it was handy that being the right age had coincided with the possession of a notably individual talent. Chris Farlowe himself was born four days after John Lennon, and one before Cliff Richard - and it's been a colourful journey right from his late-'50s triumph in the all-England skiffle competition.

This hardback career study of a true stalwart has emerged from Germany, where Farlowe has always been popular - a little ironic in a way, given that his single 'Out of Time' was number one in the UK charts in the week when England's footballers beat West Germany to win the 1966 World Cup.

Attractively designed and presented on high-quality paper, with vintage - and overwhelmingly rare - black and white photos throughout, it's been expertly translated to preserve both its integrity and its atmospheric flavour.

With his own conversations supported by associated reflections from industry figures and detailed (and fully attributed) research, Peter Brummund paints his subject as one whose tremendous achievements have run along-

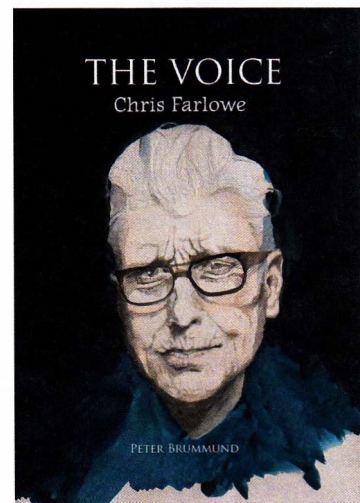
side a fair amount of adversity.

Farlowe reached the heights as a full-blown swinging Sixties pop star bringing out terrific singles and marvellous albums, and subsequently as vocalist with the internationally acclaimed Colosseum (he once told me that the most satisfying aspect of his professional life had been his part within the "technical" aplomb of Colosseum's special brand of progressive jazz-rock).

But there have been occasions when he's been a victim of circumstance, the author avers - citing hindsight examples of unfortunate artistic choices, missed opportunities, and other misadventures and setbacks.

Whether immersed in a studio commitment, engaged to make a very telling guest appearance, out on a big tour - or even when he's been flickering beneath the surface in periods of only sporadic musical activity - he has demonstrated supreme resilience.

Brummund has found an interview during which I asked Chris about the road accident where he was badly injured as a pedestrian, a fleeting



sojourn in jail for refusing to pay his obligation to the local council, and a spell in bankruptcy. He'd shrugged and said: "I'm one for experiences, me."

Further episodes involving the overcoming of misfortune have followed. A later chapter recalls the concert he gave with a leg in plaster the day after a horrible fall on the marble floor in the lobby of his hotel. He wouldn't have wanted to be 'out of time' for the show...