



Project name: Shifty Records Archive Project  
Date of Interview: 31/03/2014  
Location of Interview: CPT  
Language/s of interview: English  
Length of interview: 15m:32s  
Name of interviewer: Michael Drewett  
Name of interviewee: Roger Lucey  
Name of translator: N/A  
Name of transcriber: Victoria Hume  
Audio file name/s of interview: SHIFTY\_CPT\_LuceyRoger\_20140331.wav

### **Interview with Roger Lucey**

Emphasis in *italics>.*

Michael Drewett [MD]: OK, Roger. I just wanna begin by asking you um – how you first got involved with Shifty, like what was your first involvement with them?



Roger Lucey [RL]: Well you know, I met Lloyd when he arrived in – in Cape Town and he joined the Radio Rats, cause the Radio Rats played at Sue and my – at my wedding party. So we met then. And – um... I can't quite remember how it happened, but um; you know, right from – right from the beginning, when Lloyd started with the caravan, I was kind of – around, y'know, so I was living at Crown Mines and he was just down the road in Concordia, er, before he moved, y'know – at the first site, at the first house that he was at. So it was um – er – it was just – the scene, I guess, y'know, just – just being around; and I spent a lot of time down, y'know, just hanging around down there. I suppose hoping to get recorded. Or hoping to put some, y'know, some of the stuff down at different times. Which I did do. And um – and we also, y'know, we did a little bit of work, y'know, which brought some – a little bit of money into Shifty, y'know, we did some – some commercial work. Er – we did, y'know, which basically came through *me*. Um, y'know, the stuff we did for – for John Varty, you know, from Londolazi. Um. And then – I also did the stuff for the mountain-climbing film through Lloyd, y'know, for *Solo Ascent*. And that was also like a little gig.

RL: Was that as early as that, eh? So...

MD: Yah, yah. Yes it was – so I mean that would have been ... er ... '81, '82, yah.

RL: OK. Bit later.

RL: Well, look um – or maybe eighty – [Timecode – 00:02:22]

MD: So Shifty only really got going as a studio, he sort of started around '83 putting a studio together...

RL: Well I was hanging around there before Lloyd started calling it Shifty.

MD: Is it?

RL: Yah yah. Yah Yah.

MD: Oh right.

RL: Yah that came later.

MD: Bit later, yah. OK. And –

RL: And bear in mind that, y'know, I'd already – I'd met Ivan – Ivan's wife was Sue's very very good friend, and I don't quite remember it, because there was so much going on at the time, but Ivan credits me as giving him his first gig, which – which was at Mangles, er – but I, y'know, I was introducing a lot of people, y'know, at Mangles, and then Ivan, and Lloyd, y'know, started Shifty together. Y'know, Ivan was involved in the thing. So I was just part of that general sort of social – social scene, y'know. But it was *before*, I mean, y'know, it was *before* Lloyd started calling it Shifty.

MD: And then when it came to formal recording, I mean you did two songs that were part of um – the 'Forces Favourites' and 'A Naartjie in our Sosatie,' but er – and you were also supposed to be working on a live album, weren't you, with – at one point?

RL: We did a live *recording*.

MD: Yah. Was it – was the idea for that to become an album?

RL: Yah. I think so. I mean it was, y'know, that we were – I was – I was hoping that it was gonna become an album. I mean it was a recording at the Market Theatre of a very very good band. And um, y'know, what was *salvaged*, I

mean you can hear it, it's, y'know, it's um... look Lloyd was kind of dipping his toes in the water, y'know, with – with live – with live recordings. And it was a hard thing to do at that point in time, it was hard – and his caravan's parked outside, you don't know how long the songs gonna be, you've got tapes that only run for fifteen minutes, or, y'know, twelve minutes, or something.

[Timecode – 00:04:20]

So, y'know, it was – it was – it was a difficult thing, and there was no backup tapes, there was no – so, y'know, we ended up only having about three songs that were useable. You know, out of the – out of the concert.

MD: And one was used for 'Naartjie' in...

RL: 'Storms and Fires'. 'Storms and Fires' was recorded there, yah.

MD: And in terms of erm – Shifty's attitude to you as an artist when you did record those songs – or especially when you did 'Spaces Tell Stories', um... were there any directives, or could you basically do you own thing...

RL: Oh yah.

MD: ...in the studio, you could just go in there, and...

RL: No, I didn't – I mean that wasn't in the studio, that was live, y'know, so –

MD: Was that also live, 'Spaces Tell Stories'?

RL: What 'Spaces Tell Stories'? Oh no, 'Spaces Tell Stories' – I can't rem – ach you know, I can't remember – we didn't record 'Spaces Tell Stories' specifically for that – for the *Forces Favourite* album, it was recorded for something else. And it was um – Johnny was – we had the band together, and – um – look I can't remember the circumstances, I can't remember how we got to do it. It was – it was um – we had the arrangement – Johnny basically came up with the arrangement, um.

MD: Johnny Blundell?

RL: Johnny Blundell. Erm. And we had a, y'know, a very very good band, people like y'know, Ian Herman, Johnny, er – I can't remember who played the bass on it. But – it was just, y'know, a very very – powerful little group – and it was a *One Take*, y'know. Um. Lloyd – Lloyd wasn't – Lloyd didn't like recording my political stuff, I mean he made that very clear to me. He much preferred doing my country stuff, you know the Tighthead Fourie stuff. Um. Y'know, so. Yah.

MD: That was your main recording with Shifty, was basically Tighthead Fourie. As in, the bulk of what you did with Shifty was that.

[Timecode – 00:06:19]

RL: Well, y'know, it was – I mean even the Tighthead stuff, it was very few and far between, y'know, it was little bits and pieces, I didn't *do* much recording with Shifty actually, y'know.

MD: How many Tighthead songs were recorded?

RL: Well we did a single. Erm, we did 'Whisky Straight up'. And – and um – and there's something else on the back of that

MD: You did 'No easy walk'.

RL: We did a version of 'No Easy Walk'.

MD: 'It Takes a man to cry', was that – ?

RL: No, that was – that – that wasn't – that wasn't on that. There was something else, which is – er -

MD: And so – so Shifty released – they released that single?

RL: No, I mean they tried to release it, y'know – I mean it just, it came out. Yes; it was an *attempt* to release it, er – y'know...

MD: But nobody – the radio wouldn't play it?

RL: No – no, no. No, it was – it has the same fate as, y'know, James's stuff. James's singles – were bomber – and just kind of getting nowhere.

But I mean, I think at that time everybody was testing the waters and just seeing – you know bear in mind that I had just got into big trouble with the security police; I still didn't *know*, but it was quite clear that I was rapidly becoming persona non grata in Joburg, y'know, amongst, y'know, the – the venues; I was – we were able to play at Jameson's, that was the one place.

Er Le Chaim had closed down, Chelsea has closed down. Erm. Er, y'know, so it was just the – there was – it was the – yah, it was a very difficult – you know, it was – I mean we didn't *actually* know what was going on at that time

– we didn't know the extent of what was going on. Y'know, the – the undercurrents.

[Timecode – 00:08:08]

MD: So... Erm. You're not like other artists who did a whole album, so you you're not – you didn't have that experience. But if you think about Shifty, do you think they did what they could, in terms of distribution, and marketing and so on, or was it – cause their hands were quite tied by the – the context, or d'you think they were a bit naïve?

RL: Well, y'know... Look it was very limited, I mean at that time, the – the – y'know, there wasn't an internet, so you – you were – you had to go – the – the route was that if you – you needed to get stuff played on the radio; that's how you did it. So, y'know, that was what we tried to do – and, y'know, Brian Roth and I – um – did a trip round the country, going and speaking to all the – all the student radio stations. Um... that's when Tammin – Barker, y'know, was running Rhodes - Rhodes Radio, and um

MD: Rhodes Music Radio, yeah

RL: And what we were trying to do at *that* point was trying to set up a circuit; y'know, in conjunction with – with the radio stations. And it appeared, y'know, it seemed like it was, y'know, having a measure of success. Lloyd – and Peter Davidson – later, several years later went and tried to do a similar thing again. That was the first attempt to do it. With – with me and Brian. Um. I don't know if you know who Brian Roth was – he was the drummer with Tighthead Fourie and the Loose Forwards, but he was also a marketing person.

And he was very – he had a lot to do with Shifty at that point in time. Um. Er. He was very involved in. In a lot of – of the promotions that we were trying to do. So that – that – that trip around the country, I dunno if that's ever been mentioned to you, probably not...

MD: No.

RL: ...But that was – that was a concerted effort to go round and try and link up the student radio stations; to set up the circuit. The problem was that the sta – there was such a high turnover. So within two years, the entire staff – at the student radio stations had turned over. So you couldn't keep – there was no synchronicity, there was nothing, y'know, you couldn't, you just couldn't keep it going.

Er – it was – it just became an impossible task. But we would go every Saturday morning down to, y'know, what's now Mary Fitzgerald Square, and sell Shifty – Shifty – cassettes and albums.

[Timecode – 00:10:29]

Y'know, at the market – at the – at, y'know, down at the market there. And, y'know, I was a regular – at that, and Brian, and um –

MD: Warrick – said he did quite a bit of selling – at the market?

RL: Warrick did some, yah – he did, yah.

MD: Later I think.

RL: Oh it was a – we – me and Brian and er – Peter Davidson, we were all there doing it, y'know, Saturday after Saturday – um – and, y'know... there was only so many albums you could sell, like that. And we - y'know, nothing was getting played on the radio. Well, I think there was a little bit, y'know, there was some – stuff. But, y'know, it was just – um...

It was very difficult, I mean, y'know, I was very involved in the Bernoldus – 'Wie is Bernoldus Niemand' – in the launch, in the album launch, at the Guildhall. Y'know, I had a *lot* to do with that: the way it looked, the production, I got – er, y'know, the sponsorship, and, y'know, set up the gig, and – erm – and it was, y'know, really very *successful*. But it ki[nd] – it just didn't – it couldn't carry on. Y'know, it launched and then, I dunno what the album eventually sold, y'know, but – erm – y'know, all these things were destined to become legends, and, y'know, without real commercial success. It was just, y'know. You had – you had to get stuff into the shops, the record shops, and shops didn't wanna take the stuff unless they had a good chance of selling the thing. Y'know. That's how things worked.

MD: Yeah. There was also a distribution monopoly as well, so you had...

RL: *Absolutely.*

MD: ...you could only go to independents basically, who could maybe take them.

RL: And it was, yah, you know, you had to do it on a sale or return basis, basically, and then there was no – there was no impetus for them to push it, or sell it; and, y'know, that's – that's where you were.

MD: Yeah. And erm – from what you were saying as well, it sounds like there was quite a lot of camaraderie at Shifty amongst the artists who were there, so...

RL: Yeah there was a hell of a strong feeling, y'know?

[Timecode – 00:12:48]

There was a very very strong feeling of wanting to get it happening, and wanting to make it happen. Um... and making Shifty – I mean I spent a lot of time, y'know, doing things like – like soldering jack plugs, y'know, for Lloyd's patch bay. I mean we were, y'know, doing things, y'know? Trying - trying to do things all the time, I mean – a lot of people did a lot of voluntary work, y'know? Put a lot of – a *lot* of time into – into Shifty.

MD: And they were also playing on each others' albums and so on –

RL: And playing, and singing on the albums, and doing this and that and – you know, I – yah, yah, a lot of that.

MD: And just – the last real question I want to ask you is: What do you think Shifty's legacy is? You know – looking back now.

RL: Well, y'know, Lloyd did a – a - y'know, he really did a – a very – unbelievable and amazing thing. By going out and recording the amount of stuff that he did. And y'know, if it hadn't been – if it hadn't been done, it would have been lost, it would have been lost, y'know; we 've already seen how – how – whole periods of South African music history are being airbrushed, y'know, out – because they're not recorded. And because so much of it is *recorded*, but it's recorded – um – y'know, it never got out – it never got *out* there, y'know; it's – it's just – disappears, so Lloyd is – Lloyd – and it really was I mean, y'know, Lloyd was tireless in that I mean he – he – give him his due – he – he went out and he – he recorded – um – a strata of South African music that described – more than any other – *collection* of music – what was going on in South Africa.

Y'know, it really told – it told a – a really deep and – um – *expansive* South African story, um. You listen to the albums, you know the Shifty collection. Erm – across different genres, and styles, and different artists – but it – it – it was um – um – a golden time, y'know.

So I think that's – that's – that's the legacy, that er – he, um, he put – he put it down, y'know? He got it down. He got James Phillips down, y'know? Um. And. Yah, that's it.

MD: OK. That's all. Thanks.

RL: Cool.

[/ends]

