

Macari's Musical Exchange – part of Wembley's Pop Music history.

This article only came about because of an enquiry to Wembley History Society. What were the name and address of a music shop in Ealing Road run by the Macari family around the 1960s, and could we provide a photograph of it? The first part was quite easy, Macari's Musical Exchange was at 46b Ealing Road. But we can't find a photograph of the outside of the shop. **If anyone reading this has one, please share a copy of it with us (c/o Brent Archives)!**

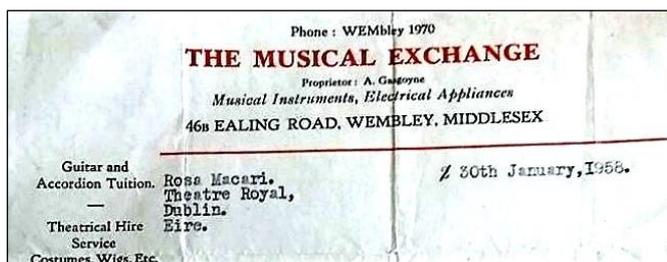


An old postcard of Ealing Road, with the shop's location arrowed. (Brent Archives online image 8823)

Along with the shop's address, we did receive a number of memories of the Macari family and the shop from the Society's members and friends. Some of these were quite detailed. As they help to tell the story of those times, I decided to put them together in an article, both for general interest and for anyone who might like to know more about Wembley's music history. I've since received some more information from the family itself, and am now including that as well.

Terry doesn't remember the shop, but was taught to play the guitar in 1957/58 by Anthony Macari, at the family's home in Canons Park. With his knowledge of Music Hall and Variety Theatre history, Terry let me know what a musical family they were. In the years after the Second World War, Anthony and his children, Larry, Joe and Rosa, were in an accordion band, Macari's Dutch Serenaders. By the 1960s, they were also known as Anthony Macari and His Dutch Serenaders, with Larry no longer in the group.

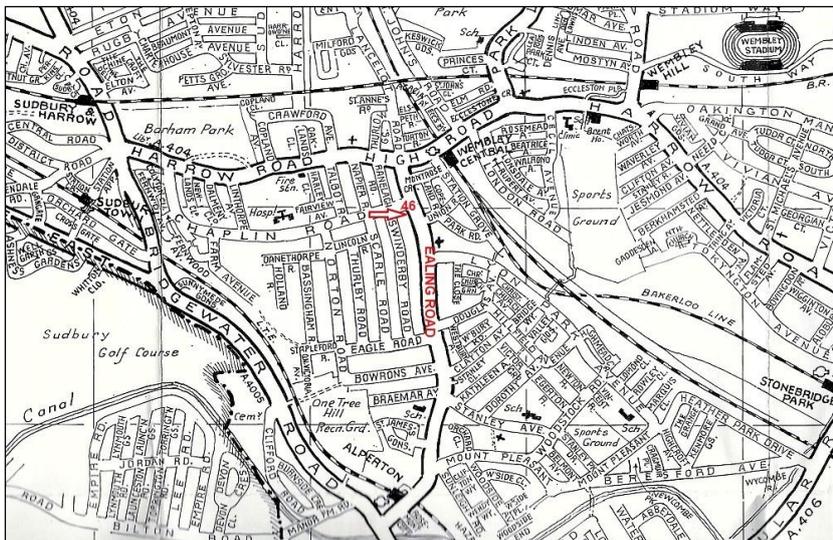
46 Ealing Road is on the corner of Chaplin Road, at the northern end of a small parade of shops (numbers 46 to 60). The Macari shop is not shown in the 1958 edition of Curley's Directory of Wembley, but that must have been out of date, as the business had opened by January that year. This is the top of a letter sent by Anthony to Rosa, who had a singing engagement in Dublin at the time.



The Musical Exchange headed notepaper from 1958. (Courtesy of Glo Macari)

Macari's Musical Exchange does appear in the 1962 and 1968 editions of the Directory. There were two shops at number forty-six. 46b was the music shop, while 46a was Derosa Ladies

Wear. This was run by Rosa and her sister-in-law, Jean (Joe's wife), and took over the costume hire business, as well as selling evening gowns and children's clothes. Anthony Macari is shown at 46c, the flat above the shops reached by stairs at the back, and he lived there for a time with his wife, as well as using one room [details later!] for the music business.



1960s street map of Wembley, with shop's location marked. (G.I. Barnett street plan / courtesy Zerine Tata)

The late 1950s was a pivotal time in music history. More people had radios and gramophones on which they could listen to music, but much of what you could listen to had been dance bands, such as Wembley-born [Victor Silvester's](#). Most "popular music" came from America, and performers like Elvis Presley and Buddy Holly introduced young people to more upbeat songs, played by small groups with guitars, which came to be known as "rock and roll".



Lonnie Donegan and his Skiffle Group, late 1950s. (Image from the internet)

In England, there was a transitional stage, with its roots in jazz and folk music, called "skiffle". Lonnie Donegan was one of its leading acts, but by 1958 the country also had its own "Pop" stars, such as Cliff Richard and his backing group, soon to be known as The Shadows (which included Jet Harris, from Willesden, on bass guitar and Tony Meehan, from West Hampstead, on drums). By then, many teenage boys wanted to play in rock and roll groups!

The Macaris had a shop in Burnt Oak before opening another branch of the business in Ealing Road, Wembley. Kay's older brother remembered the shop:

'It was in the parade of shops opposite the old St Andrew's Church which is now the Wembley Mosque, not far from the junction with Chaplin Road. There was a cycle shop

next door. The shop wasn't that big, they had a couple of upright pianos, lots of brass instruments, acoustic guitars and mostly "old fashioned" instruments.'

'He was passing the shop one day and Hattie Jacques and John Le Mesurier were coming out with instruments they'd bought for their kids. Keith Moon [*more about him later*] who lived in Chaplin Road used to practice there, and also in the Pavitt Hall on the corner of Union Road.'

Alan remembers the shop well, with guitars hung on the walls. He and some friends had formed a group as was so common in the early 1960s. He and the singer would go and 'jam' at the shop. He recalls the father and son running the shop being very helpful when he needed a new bridge for one of his guitars. Musicians wanting work or people requiring musicians would use the shop as a hub.



The 5 Stars skiffle group, c.1959. (Photo courtesy of Alan and Barbara Clarke)

Alan's first group was a skiffle band calling themselves "The 5 Stars". As you can see from the photograph, three of them played guitars, and their drummer, Roger, just had a side drum. A common feature of skiffle groups was the improvised bass, often called a tea chest bass (as that is what most of them were made from), although this one appears to use an oil can. A single string ran from the can (or wooden box) to the top of a broom handle. When the string was plucked, the sound resonated from the can, and the bass note could be changed by altering the position of the broom handle!

Three of the 5 Stars went on to form another group, led by their singer, Alan Hayward. The two Alans would practice in the shop, something the Macaris encouraged as it brought more interest to their business. There was no separate rehearsal room, just an area in the shop itself. Once when they were practicing, lead guitarist Alan was allowed to play "The Blue Moon of

Kentucky” (a song from Elvis Presley’s first record in 1954) on a maroon Gibson guitar which had been on display, hung on the shop’s wall.



Glo Macari, listening to a record at the shop, 1961. (Courtesy of Glo Macari)

As well as instruments, the shop also sold records. Anthony Macari’s grand-daughter Gloria (“Glo”) liked spending time in the shop, listening to the latest songs, and learning the words and tunes. Her family lived in Clarendon Gardens, and she went to Park Lane, then St Joseph’s R.C. primary schools. She was already playing guitar by then, and the famous guitarist, Bert Weedon, who often came into the shop, gave her some extra lessons.

Like many Wembley children at the time, most of her Saturday mornings were spent at the Regal Cinema, just up the road from the shop, for the children’s picture shows. Sometimes these also included the chance for youngsters to perform on the stage – ‘very exciting!’ Glo remembers singing “Bobby’s Girl” there, which was a big “hit” for Susan Maughan in 1962.



The Regal Cinema, in a 1950s postcard of Ealing Road. (Brent Archives online image 1195)

Alan Hayward and the Haymakers usually practised at Lyon Park School, and mainly performed at a club based there. One day, while rehearsing at the school, a teenage drummer called Keith Moon came to hear them. He showed them what he could do on his drums,

and managed to move the drum kit as far as the door while drumming! The group was not impressed with him (nor he with them).

The young Keith Moon, from Chaplin Road, was a hyperactive boy, who joined the local Sea Cadets aged 12, and learned to play the bugle. On his way home from Alperton Secondary Modern School, he often used to go into Macari's Musical Exchange, at one time learning to play the trumpet.

Glo Macari used to see him in the shop, and he must have been quite an attractive teenager. She used to go with her cousin to a nearby greengrocers (probably Smith's Fruiterers at 40 Ealing Road) to buy a couple of pounds of potatoes, just to see him sweeping up at the back! Keith then decided that drums would be his instrument, and Glo remembers him buying some drum sticks from her grandfather. He was allowed to play on drums in the shop, and took lessons from a local professional drummer, Carlo Little.

[In the early 1960s Carlo was a member of The Savages, the backing group for Sudbury "singer" and performer Screaming Lord Sutch (if you've ever heard a recording of his one minor hit record, "Jack the Ripper", you will know why I have put "singer" in inverted commas!). Carlo Little was a well-respected musician, and even played a few times for the "Rolling Stones" in 1962, when another Wembley drummer, [Charlie Watts](#), was not available because he was still employed as a commercial artist.]

musical exchange	
22 DENMARK ST., W.C.2 466 EALING ROAD 155 BURNT OAK B'WAY TEM 1400 WEMBLEY WEM 1970 EDGWARE 3171	
<p style="text-align: center;">GITARS</p> <p>GIBSON 335, Cherry 115 gns. GIBSON 335, Sunburst 120 gns. GIBSON 355, Custom 135 gns. GRIMSHAW thin line cello 62 gns. BURNS Vistasonic, mint cond 65 gns. SOLA semi-acoustic 55 gns. FENDER Telecaster, as new, Blonde 110 gns. JAZZ MASTER, excel. cond. 115 gns.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">GUITAR BASSES</p> <p>EPIPHONE Rivoli, new 160 gns. SOLA Bass, new 55 gns. FRAMUS Star 55 gns. FENDER Precision 75 gns. FENDER Jazz Bass 90 gns.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AMPLIFIERS</p> <p>VOX A.C.30, top boost, as new 125 gns. VOX A.C.30 normal, as new 100 gns. FOUNDATION Bass, as new 150 gns. GIBSON Explorer 25 gns. AMPEG Reverba rocket 55 gns. FENDER Bassman, new 150 gns. GIBSON Stereo, Reverb 60 gns. VOX A.C.30 60 gns. VOX A.C.30 Top Boost 85 gns.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ORGANS, S/H</p> <p>THOMAS A.R.1 180 gns. THOMAS A.L.2, with Leslie 280 gns. HAMMOND M.100 525 gns. BALDWIN 350 gns. NEW THOMAS A.L.2, with Leslie 320 gns. THOMAS A.R.1 205 gns. CONTINENTAL, new model 250 gns. S/H CONTINENTAL 180 gns. HOHNER SYMPHONIC, re- duced to 160 gns.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">P/A SPECIAL OFFER</p> <p>SOLA LINE SOURCE Speakers with amp 65 gns. SOLA LINE SOURCE, 60 watt 48 gns.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DRUMS</p> <p>LUDWIG DRUM KIT, minus cymbals 262 gns. TRIXON, CYMBALS complete and cases 135 gns. ROGERS, Cymbals, cases 130 gns.</p>
<p>We have a large stock of Piano Accordions, new and S/H On demonstration, the exciting new Hohner Electravox Accordion, produces all modern electronic organ sounds. Ideal for gigging Full Part Exchange and H.P. Facilities</p>	

An Macari's advert from the 1960s. (Image from the internet, courtesy of Tony Royden)

[Keith Moon](#) left school at Easter 1961, not quite 15 years old, and got a job. His earnings helped him to buy his own Ludwig drum kit. By the end of 1962 he had joined a semi-professional group, The Beachcombers. They all had day jobs, but played in the evenings and at weekends. In April 1964 he went to the Railway Hotel, Wealdstone, to hear a group called The Who

playing. They needed a replacement drummer, and Keith grabbed his opportunity. The rest, as they say, is history! You can hear The Who singing “My Generation”, and see Keith in action on the drums, in a YouTube video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WJWfOoi-k> .



Keith Moon drumming with The Who. (Image from the internet)

Gary was another young Wembley musician who often visited the shop. He remembers Rosa’s husband, Derek, being the manager there at the time, and that Grandpa Macari would sit in the shop with his accordion. He sometimes played along with customers, and Gary once joined him on guitar as he played “Under the Bridges of Paris”. Gary recalls seeing Keith Moon practicing there, and being told to calm down in case he damaged the drum kit. One of the instruments Gary bought in the shop was a second-hand Fender Stratocaster, for about £60 – this iconic guitar would cost a lot more now!

Gary worked as a courier, and the shop would call him if a customer needed help getting purchases home, such as large amplifiers. He remembers that the Macari’s bought the shop next door (46a, on the corner, which Rosa ran as Derosa Ladies Wear), and them making a recording studio behind the shop. He helped with the work on this, sticking old egg boxes to the walls as soundproofing.

Glo Macari told us that the recording studio was in a room at the back that her grandfather had originally used for giving accordion lessons. It had three booths, and wires going up through the ceiling to a control room in the flat above. There was a two-track machine that recorded the

music and songs straight onto demo discs. Groups would send these discs to local agents, to get bookings for gigs, or even sometimes to record companies, in hope of something bigger!

By the early 1960s, Glo's father Joe and Uncle Larry were working at Musical Exchange branches at Denmark Street and Charing Cross Road during the day, and playing some evenings in hotels or for wedding receptions. She began going along with them as a singer, and made some demo discs in the Wembley studio herself. In the Spring of 1965, still aged 14 and a pupil at St Gregory's R.C. School in Kenton, she got a recording contract.



Glo Macari singing for some friends in the shop, March 1965. ("Wembley News" photo, courtesy of Glo!)

This photograph of Glo Macari, singing in the Ealing Road shop, appeared in the "Wembley News", with a story about her contract, and her musical family. Her first single, released on the Piccadilly label, was "He knows I love him too much", written by Carole King and Gerry Goffin, and recorded with the Ivor Raymond Orchestra. You can listen to it on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIbQ5Tvb8hQ> .

Glo's records never made it into the "Top Twenty", but she went on to be a successful songwriter and musical arranger. Some of the songs she wrote were recorded by 1970s groups such as Smokie and Racey.



Record label for Glo Macari's song "Boy Oh Boy", a 1979 single by Racey. (Image from the internet)

Not all of the musicians helped by Macari's Musical Exchange in Ealing Road could be recording artists or become rock and roll legends (or experience the problems that came with

a “superstar” lifestyle). Most just played for fun, for their friends and contemporaries, or might have made a small amount from playing at dances in youth clubs, church halls or pubs. But playing a guitar, in a group, you were part of the beat music scene that made such a difference to popular music, in this country and beyond, from the 1960s onwards.



Alan Hayward and the Haymakers, playing at Lyon Park School c.1964.

L-R: Alan Clarke, Roger Horsborough, John Hammond, Alan Hayward and Pete Scott.

(Photograph courtesy of Alan and Barbara Clarke)

Alan Hayward and the Haymakers had a small popular local following. This picture of them, playing in a classroom at Lyon Park School, was taken by a Wembley Observer photographer in 1964. Around that time, they were allowed to play several songs during the interval at one of the Saturday night ballroom dances at Wembley (later Brent) Town Hall.

One day, around 1967, Gary got a ‘phone call from a friend who was at the shop, telling him to come down straight away with his guitar. He arrived and joined in with a “jamming” session in the shop which included Pete Townshend of The Who, Eric Clapton of Cream (whose drummer, Ginger Baker, lived in Wembley Park at the time) and two members of Status Quo.



A modern picture of 46 Ealing Road, now Kenya Jewellers. (Image from the internet)

I’m not sure when the local branch of Macari’s Musical Exchange closed, but it was probably around 1970. By the early 1980s, Ealing Road was becoming a centre for businesses run by

families of South Asian origin, from East African countries, where they had been made unwelcome after independence from British colonial rule. The two combined shops at 46 Ealing Road became Kenya Jewellers, and they still are.

During it's time in Wembley the Macari's shop had encouraged many young people play musical instruments, at the birth of modern Pop Music in Britain. The business continued, with its main shop in Charing Cross Road, before moving out of London, but is [still run by the Macari family](#) and supplying instruments to musicians today.

**Philip Grant,
Wembley History Society,
September 2021.**

[Thank you to all of the Society's members and friends for the information and memories supplied, to members of the Macari family for their information and images, and with special thanks to Tony Royden for his encouragement and help with the research for this article.]