

Time and place

Ray Davies

rather foolishly got married [to Rasa Didzpetris, a Lithuanian student and singer] at the end of 1964, and we lived in a bedsit in Muswell Hill. As I was due to go on tour, and she was pregnant with our first child, Louisa, we decided to buy a house.

At this point, the Kinks had had No 1 singles, but I didn't have enough money to pay the £9,000 asking price, so I had to get an advance from my management.

We moved into 87 Fortis Green, a semi-detached in north London, in early 1965. It was a lovely house, set back from the road, with a driveway covered in trees. It was from the Regency period, and I think it was listed. It had four bedrooms — two on the first floor and two little attic rooms. Even though it was on the main road, it was quite quiet.

I wrote a lot of my favourite songs there. I wrote Sunny Afternoon on an upright piano in the front room, which was painted orange. Waterloo Sunset was written on a mini grand piano in the back room. The walls in there were Thames Green, and that's probably what inspired me to write the song. I also wrote Days there.

At the time, the Kinks were at their early height, and we couldn't go far without screaming fans running after us. Nowadays, I'm a sociable and amicable person, but then I just felt invaded. The house was a refuge to me. We'd have fans hanging around outside. I'd call the police, but my parents lived 200yd away, and as my mother was a very accommodating person, she'd take them in.

People I knew used to descend on me, thinking I was some sort of special person, but I was dull just like everybody else. They'd come up from the West End, assuming I lived in a mansion, then get disappointed when they arrived at a semi. I'd be playing Max Miller records and drinking from a six-pack, whereas they'd be expecting to hear psychedelic music, and tune in and turn on. I can't

remember who used to come round — all hippies looked the same then. I was close to Ned Sherrin at the time, though, and he visited a lot.

My wife was more sociable than I was, so we did have the occasional party. I remember, at one, having a disagreement with a fashion guru after he accused me of wearing flares. He left in a huff — and when I'd thrown everyone out, I wrote Dedicated Follower of Fashion to get my anger out.

I never thought I'd ever own a house. My second daughter, Victoria, was born there, and I had an extension built at the back, so we had a bigger room for dinner parties, kids' parties and meals at Christmas. We had a 100ft garden with an apple tree and swings for the girls to play on. It was very un-rock'n'roll.

My marriage broke up in 1973, and my wife and children moved up the road. I hung on in there until late 1974, living alone or with girlfriends. It never felt like a home again, which is why I left. I sold it to my sister, Gwen, for £25,000, so it stayed in the family. She sold it in 1988, and I believe it's owned by a BBC producer now.

That house was important to my writing — I wouldn't exchange my time there for anything. When I was a kid at art school, I used to walk up and down that street, and I always thought what a great house it was. I got what I wanted. I was lucky. I've lived in a lot of places since, but it's the only house I've ever thought of as home.

Interview by Kate Bohdanowicz

🍀 *Americana — The Kinks, the Road and the Perfect Riff: A Memoir by Ray Davies* will be published by Virgin Books on October 3 at £18.99. *The Kinks* album *Muswell Hillbillies* will be re-released by Universal on October 7

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“A WHITE WALL IN THE LIVING ROOM OPENS, REVEALING A GOLD-LEAF COCKTAIL BAR WITH A NEON SIGN THAT SAYS ‘BOO!’”

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I wrote Waterloo Sunset in Muswell Hill, and I really was in paradise

