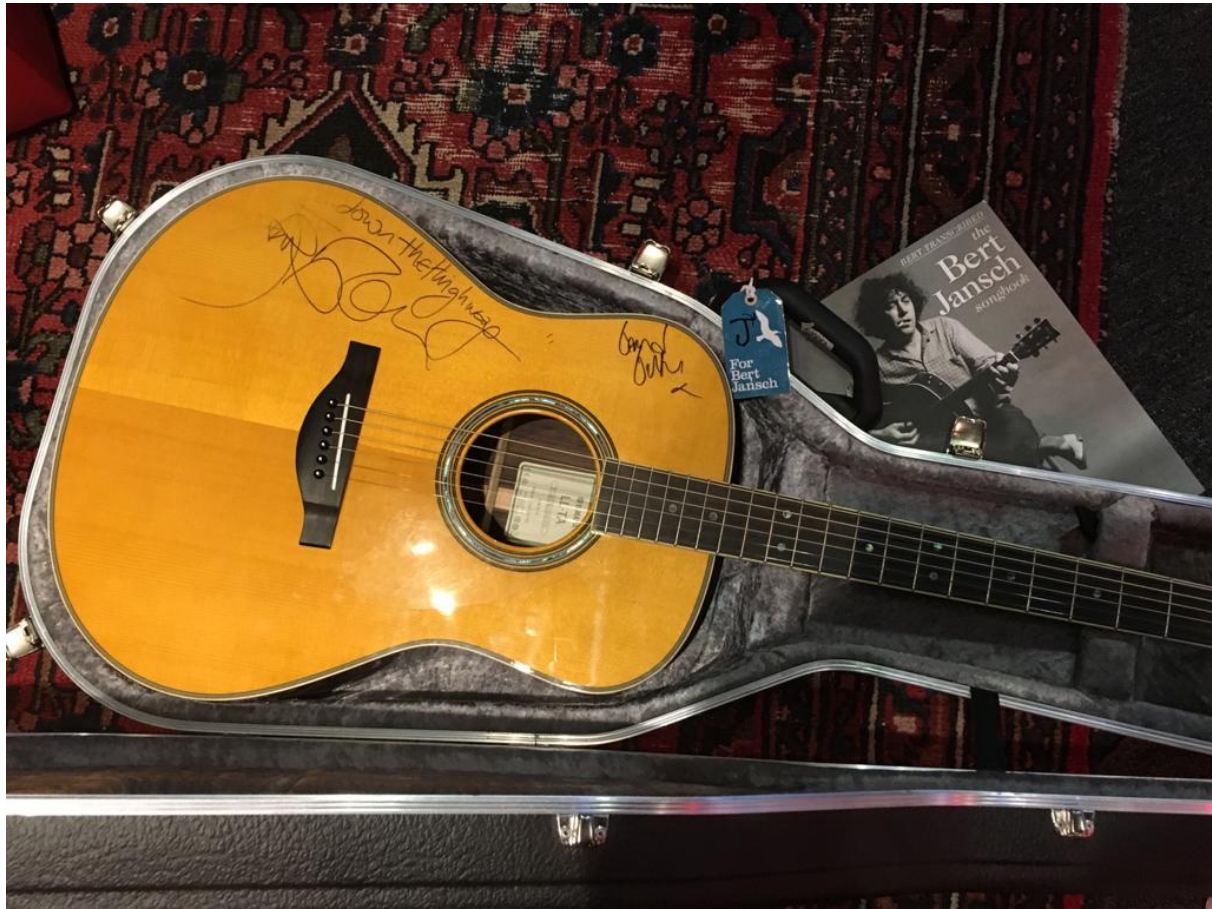


The 'Johnny' Guitar's Journey

November 2018 – April 2023. Manchester to Milan



UK:

Manchester with Johnny Marr

London with Bernard Butler

Camden Town with Louis de Beaumont; Ben Murphie; Gabriel Kazz; and Dariush Kanani

Belgium:

Brussels with Neeka and Frank van der Linden

Netherlands:

Delft with Renee Meesters and Faint Lights

Eindhoven with Eltjo Haselhoff

Denmark:

Århus with Rolf Skytte Jensen

Skibby with Peder Skytte

Aars with Jens Stage

Lystrup with Lars Ingelman

France:

Rians with Pierre Lebras

Reims with Didier Bégon and Pascal Froissart

Pernes les Fontaines with Philippe Rouquié

Treillieres with Johnson Hogg

Israel:

Beer Sheva with Nir Mehlman

Tel Aviv with Amos Zimmerman

Italy:

Bergamo with Buck Curran and with Andrea Valeri of **Pisa** and with Kamil Wysocki of **Parma** and finally to

Milan with Luca and Mario Barbaglia.

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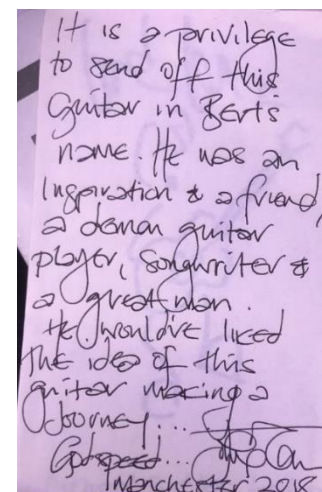
**In 2018 at the time of Bert Jansch's 75th birthday**, a Yamaha TransAcoustic guitar, from Bert's most favoured LL series, started a journey across continents, passed from artist to artist, each one expressing how much Bert and his music has meant to them – and to the world. It kicked off with a party at the famous Yamaha showroom in Soho, London in December 2018 – and was quickly embraced that we soon had five different 80 plays guitars spreading out over the globe. This is the story of the original guitar's journey that went right across the continent of Europe, to Belgium, Holland, Denmark, France, Italy and Israel.

## Johnny Marr – Manchester

The Johnny Guitar began its journey in Manchester with The Smiths' guitarist, Johnny Marr – for whom it is named. Johnny played his own composition A-Z and signed the guitar with the words 'Down the Highway', before passing it on to his friend, Bernard Butler, guitarist previously of Suede. You can see their signatures on the picture above.

Bert had invited Johnny Marr to play his *Crimson Moon* album in 2000, after which they became firm friends and collaborators until Bert's death in 2011. Johnny said, "Bert was very dear to me, and he will always be an inspiration not only as a musician but as a man." He added 'Bert was a massive influence on me and without Bert Jansch, rock music as it developed in the 1960s and 1970s would have been very different. I feel privileged to have played with him in the studio, on stage and at his home."

Johnny wrote in the travel diary that accompanies each guitar "It is a privilege to send off this guitar in Bert's name. He was an inspiration and a friend, a demon guitar player, songwriter and a great man. He would have liked the idea of this guitar making a journey ...  
Godspeed ... Johnny Marr  
Manchester 2018"





Johnny and Bert sitting on Bert's sofa in Kilburn in 2008, with more of Bert's guitars hanging on the wall behind them.

## **Bernard Butler – London**





Johnny passed the guitar on to **Bernard Butler**, who had also become a friend and colleague of Bert's, performing with him on stage and on recordings. Bernard said: 'When most people were just breathing, Bert was playing guitar. That sound really was his whole life; the vibrations of the strings were life-giving. The notes were like words and the whole sound a conversation. Bert was a friend of mine; I played with him and hung out with him. This amazing journey is taking Bert's inspiration – his humanity, his heart, his vision and passing it on – and passing it on – until it comes into all these different forms. That's what folk music is all about and I think that Bert would really love this to be happening right now. Bernard with Bert before Bert's 60th birthday concert 2003.

Bernard brought the guitar to the launch party at Yamaha Soho, where he spoke about the journey, and played it there, and sent it on its way.

## Camden Town

From the party the Johnny was taken home by young guitarist Louis de Beaumont and it hung around Camden Town for a while, being enthusiastically played by him and his mates Gabriel Kazz and Ben Murphie. **Louis de Beaumont** who recorded in Camden Town said, 'Bert's music had sunk in deeply enough for me to be playing with Bert riffs without even realising.'

**Gabriel Kazz** said: As you play something by Bert on your instrument, it's as if you are witnessing a kind of forgotten, magical language unfolding under your fingers. It's mysterious and fantastic!'



Ben Murphie



Louis de Beaumont



Gabriel Kazz

Gabriel added: I had this amazing Yamaha TransAcoustic guitar at home for a few days in December and it's been a magical experience.'

**Ben Murphie** said: "The guitar was wonderful to play – It sounded incredible and made me dizzy. It has been a huge honour to find myself part of this project and of a musical tradition that involves Bert Jansch, Johnny Marr, Bernard Butler and all the other great musicians. I will remember it always. I can't wait to see the final product with all of the videos."

The Guitar then passed into the hands of rising star **Dariush Kanani**.

The Bert Jansch Foundation chose Dariush to be one of our featured Associate artists, recognising his talents as a player, teacher and organiser. Dariush has presented online gigs for BJB with artists on 'Around the world in 80 plays' which can still be seen on the BJB Facebook pages under videos. Not only is Dariush head of workshops for BJB but is a sought-after teacher for Stephan Grossman tutorials and for the residential Renbourn Guitar Workshops. In the Autumn 2023, Dariush toured the UK with the distinguished guitarist Clive Carroll (also an 80 plays alumnus on the Pilgrim Guitar).



Dariush Kanani with the Johnny guitar beside the Regents Canal

## Johnny Goes Abroad



Frank van der Linden and Neeka at the studios of Radio 1 in Belgium. Johnny Marr wrote his message and signature exactly where a guitarist's arms rub the guitar when playing. We can see it gradually fade from view.

## Belgium

'Johnny's' next step was to hop over the North Sea to appear on Belgium's No 1 Radio Station, in a Folk Radio show, hosted by Ronald Verhaegen. It was played with gusto by popular Flemish players, **Frank van der Linden**, and **Neeka**.



## Holland

'Johnny' then crossed to Holland to a trio called **Faint Lights**, in Delft. This group were long time Bert fans and had written a special song for Bert when he passed away. The group consists of **Robèrt Gillesse** vocals and guitar, **René Meester**, guitar, mandolin and keys and **John's Gravemade** guitar and banjo. Their leanings are towards folk, blues and rock. In most of their songs they make use of complex arrangements of two intertwined guitar parts.



'Johnny' with Faint Lights, in Delft

## Eltjo Haselhoff – Eindhoven

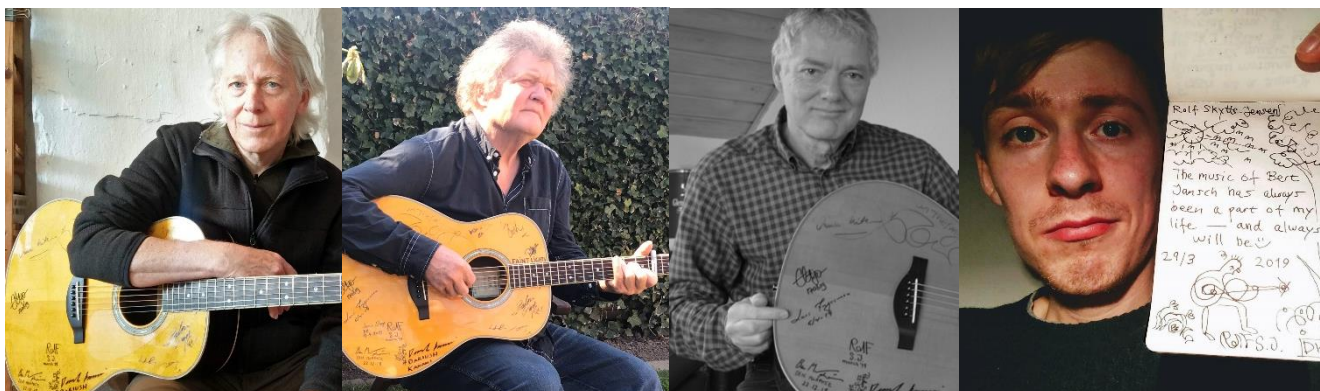
The guitar was then given a thorough play by Eltjo Haselhoff in Eindhoven. Eltjo said: "What a great initiative. The person who invented this crazy idea deserves a statue! Without Bert's inspiration, maybe I would still be strumming 3 chords today... I enjoyed the TransAcoustic Yamaha. I may get myself one of these Yamahas soon, probably the concert model. It would make a great couch guitar and it's certainly a lot of guitar for the money."



Eltjo Haselhoff with the Johnny in Eindhoven

## 'Johnny' Goes to Denmark

Bert had made several tours to, and a big impression in Denmark. The words that the Danes, **Peder Skytte** and **Rolf Skytte Jensen** as well as **Jens Stage** and **Lars Ingesman** have used to describe Bert's influence on them are truly poetic. Rolf said, "It always seemed to me that Bert played his guitar like a rally car driver, steering down a dirt road at full speed – not predictable, but always under control! His voice might crack, and tempos might change twice in a bar – even then, all was expression – and always a human vibration."



Peder Skytte, Jens Stage, Lars Ingesman and Rolf Skytte Jensen in Denmark

Lars said: "In 2014, I had the good fortune to attend a workshop with John Renbourn focusing on Bert's music. And, in 2017, I was pleased to join up with the Bert Jansch Foundation to host a very successful Bert Jansch Guitar Workshop here in Aarhus, Denmark." Peder who saw Bert several times, said "Always I will be able to hear Bert's tone among others, so clear and touching, so original and true. I believe he touches every soul."

## 'Johnny' Goes to France

The famous **Pierre Lebras** (right) in France, known for his 'old Picker' YouTube channel, is a much admired portrayer of Bert's music. He was persuaded to take a turn in what he called 'The Chain Gang' of Bert admirers. He played four of his favourite Bert / Bert & John pieces: *Springtime Promises/Soho/Of Love & Lullaby/Sylvie*, interspersed with sips of wine and amusing stories of his visits to



Didier Begon



Pascal Froissart



Philippe Rouquie



Pierre then passed the guitar on to his friends **Philippe Rouquie** and **Didier Begon**. The late **Pascal Froissart** also had a turn.

## Lockdown in France!

All was going swimmingly until March 2020, when everything in the world came to a halt. The guitars were also locked down because of the COVID-19 Pandemic. However, the artists made the most of having the Yamaha TransAcoustic stuck with them. We have several lockdown recordings even albums from all the guitars. In France the lucky keeper of the Johnny TransAcoustic in lockdown was Johnson Hogg.

### Johnson Hogg - in Treillieres

Having ample time with the guitar, Johnson Hogg gives a great rendition of *Chambertin* (not the only one on the journey, mind you) and also of *Blackwaterside*, (one of several on the journey) also *Back Home* and *M'Lady Nancy* – all watchable on his page here: [Johnson Hogg on 80 Plays](#)

Johnson who saw and met Bert in Wales, said: "I bought my first Yamaha FG340 acoustic in 1981. It is still a lovely guitar. I couldn't afford the models Bert lists on the Rosemary Lane album, but I had to have a Yamaha."

Fittingly, Johnson took the guitar to be photographed with him in iconic places including at the Jules Verne Museum. (Verne, of course the French writer who wrote the famous book: *Around the World in 80 Days*).



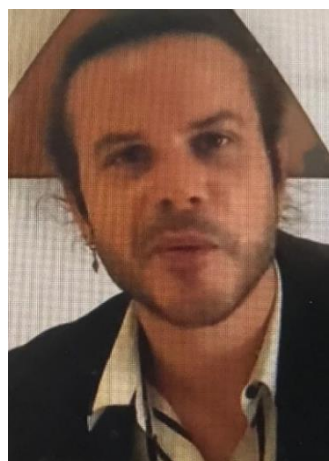
The Johnny guitar with Johnson Hogg, outside the Jules Verne Museum



## 'Johnny' goes from France to Italy and Israel

When the guitar finally moved on, in November 2020 it went to Italy to a young PhD student **Luca Barbaglia**, nominated by David Nigel Lloyd in California (who was shepherding the Graham Guitar round the USA).

From Milan, the Johnny was shipped to Beer Sheva in Israel to the wonderful **Nir Melman** who had been playing and teaching Bert's material for several years. Here on our [#ForBertJansch](#) YouTube channel, Nir plays *Rosemary Lane* and *Birdsong*, from the *Rosemary Lane* Album. Nir and several others (including Pierre most emphatically) say that this is the best Bert Jansch album ever. [Nir on For Bert Jansch](#)



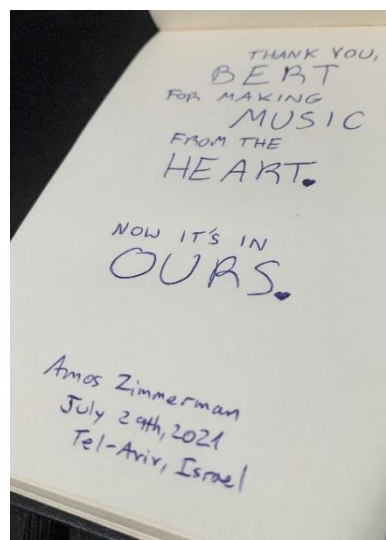
Luca Barbaglia



Nir Melman



Amos Zimmerman



Amos' note

The guitar then went to Tel Aviv to **Amos Zimmerman** who played his own composition, *Rabbit Hole* and Bert's *Oh How Your Love is Strong*. He poignantly wrote in the travel diary that accompanies each guitar: "Thank you Bert for making Music from the Heart – Now it is in Ours."

## 'Johnny''s Weekend in Bergamo

The guitar went back to Luca in Milan who wanted to re-record his song and also get his father **Mario Barbaglia** to play on it for the journey.

Prior to doing so, Luca lent the guitar to **Buck Curran** who took it to Bergamo to record his song.

Before it came back to Luca in Milan two other Italians, **Andrea Valeri** from Tuscany (who at 18 had won the title of 'Prince of the Acoustic Guitar'), and **Kamil Wysocki** from Parma (originally from Poland) had rushed up to Bergamo one weekend and each took 'Johnny' out for a day and played their songs on it.



Buck Curran with the Johnny guitar at Bergamo Castle.

Kamil Wysocki took it to a beautiful lakeside location to play his Bert inspired piece: 'Jolly Cricket'. You can see him here on the YouTube channel [Kamil and Jolly Cricket by the Lakeside](#). Andrea Valeri took 'Johnny' for a stroll in the park.



Kamil Wysocki





Andrea Valeri with the Johnny Guitar near Bergamo, Italy