

Jim Lea – A potted history.

1949. Born James Whild Lea on 14 June. From a very young age shows a natural insightful artistic talent. Family background of musical ancestors genetically passed on natural musical ability.

1959. Aged 10, begins playing the violin.

1960. Passes violin exams with distinction and comes top of the class at school.

1961. Aged 12, joins the Staffordshire Youth Orchestra where he becomes part of "a wall of sound"

1962. Aged 13, buys first guitar and nine months later buys first bass guitar and plays in first band.

1963. The beat boom arrives and Jim is in heaven.

1965. Aged 15, applies to art colleges around the country. Sees the 'N Between's' play at Wolverhampton Civic Hall.

1966. Aged 16 applies for job as bass player with the 'N Between's. Application is accepted and so leaves school immediately. Becomes musical arranger for the band and turns professional. Later is informed, by Dave Hill, that the group is changing personnel and that Noddy Holder is to replace guitarist Mick Marson and singer Johnny Howells is leaving to form his own band. There is a suggestion to replace Johnny with Robert Plant but it is never followed up. Noddy Holder becomes lead vocalist. The line up is now:- Don Powell, Dave Hill, Jim Lea and Noddy Holder. The material the band plays live are covers of soul, motown, blues, but no top 20 material. Jim becomes musical arranger for the band creating a wall of sound.

1966. December, the band sign to EMI. "You better run" is their first single produced by Kim Fowley. The band becomes popular in the West Midlands.

1967. Everyone climbs on the flower power bandwagon. The band starts playing Frank Zappa and the Mothers and other west coast material.

1968. The band has a stint in Grand Bahama and return after 3 months completely broke, but bonded as a unit. Jim begins to play violin on

stage. Band began playing further afield in the UK from Scotland to London.

1969. Band sign to Fontana Records and the name is changed to 'Ambrose Slade'. An album is recorded called 'Beginnings'. The record company encourages them to write their own original material. The band is spotted by Chas Chandler, former member of the Animals and former manager/producer for Jimi Hendrix. Chas signs Ambrose Slade and also encourages them to write original material. Jim writes "How does it feel" at home on an old out of tune piano with half of the keys not working, but decides it is not suitable for the power of the band. Chas decreed that he would pay for one of the band to have a phone so he could communicate easier with them - telephones in houses weren't the norm in those days - he elected Jim.

1970. The band adopts a skinhead image and change their name to 'Slade'. The first few singles flop due to adverse reaction against the skinhead image from the music press. The first album is released and the band carry on working live and build a reputation as a powerful live act. The first hit single now becomes inevitable due to the excellent live reviews. For the first time Jim is putting money in his pocket from shows.

1971. "Get down and get with it" enters the UK top 20 singles chart. Chas insists the band quickly write a follow up and so Jim and Noddy begin a song writing partnership. The next single features Jim on violin and rockets to number one and a string of powerful number one hit singles follow.

1972. Slade play the Lincoln festival, they steal the show and cement reputation as a premier league live act. Slade are the biggest chart act in Britain at the time and all live tours sell out.

1973. Slade sell out Earls Court, London and the band sets sights on America. Jim starts piecing together, in his head, what will become Slade's hit "Merry Christmas Everybody" in an American Hotel shower. The Christmas idea came from a chance jibe from his mother in law when she suggested that Bing Crosby's White Christmas was more popular than any Slade record.

1974. The band shoot the movie "Slade in Flame" where Jim admits he actually played himself rather than the film character.

1976. The band move to New York City. Later in the year, the band returns home to the birth of punk.

1977. Three lean years follow and Jim forms record company with his brother Frank and makes records under the name of the 'Dummies' which get radio attention, Slade can't get arrested but still continue recording and playing live.

1980. Heavy metal has a new popularity in Britain and in that year the Reading Festival carries many rock acts. Slade are added to the bill at the last minute as a replacement for Ozzie Osbourne and steal the show. In the winter of that year they are back with sell out tour, a top ten single and a hit album.

1981. Monsters of Rock Festival at Donnington, Slade steal the show once again. Jim moves into record production also produces Slade recordings.
1983. More hit singles follow, American band, Quiet Riot, have a number one in the USA with "cum on feel the noise".

1984. First chart successes with a single and album in America. Jim unfortunately becomes ill after only one gig with Ozzie Osbourne on tour in America. The band has to return home and never play live again in that guise.

1985. With the band off the road Jim decided to dedicate his time to his family. He also gets in to more song writing which begins to branch out in different directions away from Slade. This material is put on the back burner. Slade continue recording albums.

1991. The last hit single 'Radio Wall of Sound' is written and produced by Jim.

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1993. Slade 2 is formed but Jim and Nod are no longer willing to remain in that side of the music business. Jim enters into the property business.

1997. Jim attends college to study psychology.

1998. Jim begins writing and recording again, but it remains in the cupboard as he is unsure of the vehicle to get it out to the public.

2000. Jim puts absolutely everything on hold for a couple of years to help his mother care for his ailing father.

2002. Jim's father dies in November. Jim plays a charity show at the Robin Hood club in Bilston, West Midlands. It is no surprise that it's a high octane,

high volume, wall of sound of a gig, but a big surprise that he plays guitar, not bass, that he sings, which he had never done before, and that he talks at length to the crowd between numbers instead of being his normal shy self .He plays with two musicians, that he didn't know, and the gig is based on a jam session that he calls 'Jim Jam' .

2003. Jim is asked to play live again but he declines to do so, asked what he was going to do he replied "I'm going to make an album and it will be Therapy."