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“Lydia Purple” by Canadian Group “The Collectors” - History Of A Psychedelic Song From The Sixties

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The year was 1968. The Canadian rock band [The Collectors](#) decided to record a hit single in a former meat packing plant in Los Angeles. The psychedelic song *Lydia Purple* was the result. Glenn Miller, who played electric bass and sang background vocals for *The Collectors*, shares his memories with [Lost & Sound](#).

“*Lydia Purple* was a blatant attempt at getting an AM radio hit”, admits Glenn Miller. That may explain why the song sounds like a super group consisting of The Beatles, The Bee Gees, The Rolling Stones, The Kinks, The Who and The Mamas & Papas. But compared to British productions of that era, The Collectors sounded much better. Not only, because they were more accomplished musicians than your average rock musician.

Producer David Hassinger also contributed to the polished sound: “Hassinger and his head engineer Richie Podler had a lot to do with the sound on that album. Hassinger used his trademark ‘tape delayed echo’ technique on it. I believe that album was recorded on an 8 track tape machine, a Scully, I think. The monitor speakers were modified Altec studio monitors and the playback amps were McIntosh tube amps.”

(Source: [Virtual Audio Museum](#))



Scully 8 Track

Lydia Purple was recorded at American Sound in North Hollywood. “Great little studio”, says Miller, “used to be an old cold storage meat packing plant. The walls were over a foot thick and filled with sawdust for insulation. The Grateful Dead recorded their first album there with Hassinger producing.”

While most pop and rock musicians of the sixties didn’t play their instruments on records (this was the task of professional studio musicians), The Collectors played their instruments themselves.

“We all played on that session”, Glenn Miller remembers. “I played a fretless Fender Precision bass , Ross Turney on drums, Bill Henderson on guitar and recorder, Claire Lawrence on sax and recorder and Howie Vickers on lead vocal. Bill, Claire and myself sang background harmonies.”

“We hired a string arranger and brought in some studio players who

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played in the symphony for the string overdubs. They did a lot of that work – three guys and a girl. They called themselves 'The Hollywood String Quartet'. And we had Los Angeles studio musician Larry Knechtel who played piano and electric harpsichord."

Unusual for a pop song are the dynamics of *Lydia Purple*. "We didn't use much compression on any of the tracks. Bass was recorded with a mic in front of the amp. Same with guitars. The drums were Ross Turney's personal set of Ludwigs", explains Miller.

Lydia Purple was released as a single in both the USA and Canada. The song is on the first Collectors album, titled simply *The Collectors*. "It made the Billboard charts but not very high", Miller says. "It was a regional hit in a number of cities in the USA. And a big hit in Canada. It's the most different sounding song of any we recorded then and was where we started to develop our vocal harmony sound, which was pretty hip for the time."



The Collectors (1968): Claire Lawrence, Glenn Miller, Bill Henderson, Howie Vickers, Ross Turney

In 1970 The Collectors changed their name to Chilliwack. Under this name they had a long and successful career with different line ups until the nineteen-eighties. [Canadianbands](#) gives you more details about the history of Chilliwack.

This article is based on an email-interview with Glenn Miller.

More about The Collectors

- o [Liner Notes](#) for the CD reissue of The Collectors' *The Collectors*
- o [The Collectors on MySpace](#) (with songs)
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