Cliff Richard made a change in 1973 with the album 31st of February Street, for which he wrote four songs. In the late sixties, Cliff found he was stuck on a plateau with songs like “Congratulations”(1968), #1, #99 US), although he did record some great songs like “Big Ship” (#8, a metaphysical love song in line with novels by Wilson Harris) and “Sing a Song of Freedom” (1971, #13, banned in South Africa). His efforts to move to a higher plane can be noticed on the album; he begins with Latin rhythms introducing the title song, an invitation to enter—“There is a place deep within my mind” which you can enter “if you feel inclined”—sang twelve songs, and returned to the title to sing with thoughtful acoustic guitar that he knows a place “locked within your mind” you just have to look and you will find” that’s on Thirty-first of February street. If you are a poet, or a songwriter like Bob Dylan, you will appreciate the mysteriousness of the title, which set the tone for the whole album: it was taking place in an unusual place which you entered by leaving the old, sure paths behind. You cannot reduce what you find to a single linear meaning but must ponder over it—and perhaps meaning will come to you in accordance with your level of awareness and then take you to a higher level. One song on the album gave us a pathway, it showed him moving to a higher plane in a way we could understand—a new version of his #1 hit from 1959, ‘Travelling Light’. He sings it like “Eleanor Rigby”, with viola accompaniment and varying rhythms. I didn’t like it at first, but my two daughters loved it—much more than the original version which I was able to buy later (here in Iowa City). This was a poor Beatles album; but it was not a hit because it was introspective, ballad, not rock ‘n’ roll.

However, it must have shown Bruce Welch, formerly of the Shadows and now a producer, that Cliff was ready to move to a higher plane, and he collected material and produced for Cliff the album I'm Nearly Famous, (#5 on the album chart, #76 USA 1976). Three singles from the LP were on the UK charts, and two of them on the American charts. One, the biggest hit was “Devil Woman”; which was #5 on Cashbox and #6 on Billboard in the US. Cliff’s breakthrough top ten hit (he had 13 hits in the US). Thereafter, Cliff kept making albums that contained songs of a range of moods, energies, styles and emotions, some of which were released as singles and were hits, as follows: songs that have a rock ‘n’ roll energy and make you feel like dancing and feel good like “Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music” (1978); dramatic stories, like “Heart User” (1984); thoughtful love like “A Little in Love” (1980); spiritual songs like “Remember Me.” (which is being sung by your guardian angel to you, 1987); spiritual self-improvement such as “Never Say Die” (Give A Little Bit More) (1988); and “Some People” (1986); gospel songs and spirituals like “It is No Secret” (1978); Christian songs which have an underlying spirituality akin to Sufism like “Yes He Lives” (1977); healing love songs like “Healing Love” (an album called Healing Love—Songs of Inspiration was released in the US in 2007); or mystical songs that make you empathise with suffering humanity such as “Every Face Tells a Story” (1977) and “Everyman” (1980).

Or they are songs about society at the deepest levels. Two of the best are on an LP called Rock ‘n’ Roll Juvenile, which was released in 1979 and was no. 3 on the UK albums charts—a good surprise; these were not included on the US release of the album, which was entitled ‘We Don’t Talk Anymore’, after Cliff’s hit single, #1 and #7 US. Both songs were written by Terry Britten and B.A. Robertson.

The first is “Cities May Fall.” This song begins with what sounds like a lead guitar with an ominous riff by a saxophone, and then Cliff sings a warning: “The city is defeated / With no one left to beat...A crumbling tumble down / To humble humble town / Our lives a ruin...” He offers some hope, “We reconstruct a bit” but concludes, “We hardly know what we’re doing” because “The writing’s on the wall” he

wails. “Cities may fall” But the lover is blind to what is happening for “She’s a diamond, innocent girl”. As he sings, there is an echo, as though the voice is bouncing off tall empty buildings. His voice goes higher and higher up the scale until it is almost screaming. But people are blind, so the singer distracts himself—to what I take today to be the effect of globalization: “Back through the city / I was another cog / For the machinery there / Now the machines have gone / The silence hanging on / I sit, I stare.” The song ends with waves from an electronic keyboard moving onwards, and the waves ripple lower and lower until they sound like a death knell while the heartbeat becomes audible again and slows down until it stops. The other song, linked to this, is a polyphonic rock ’n’ roll song (slow, then fast), accompanied by a rock guitar, called...

“My Lucky Week Come.” There are great lines in the song which you must figure out—“Take dust from the goldmine” gets followed by the triumphant but ambiguous “King Midas you’re selvedge / And my luck won’t change so my luck remains” for later “The Phoenix is rising—Cause my luck won’t change...” The phoenix is a mythical bird that arises out of its own ashes, but how can the phoenix rise if the person is successful? He must in fact be ashes. He sings to Lady Luck, “The chances you gave me,” but they are “A definite maybe.” She stayed and played for him. At the end, Cliff is singing different lines at the top of his voice, about being on top of the mountain and his luck not changing, and the chorus singing behind him—until it all stops with unclear voices talking. But a moment: Cliff did not write “Cities May Fall” and “My Lucky Week Come”. How can we say they are his songs? In the sixties, the singer and the songwriter used to be considered different people having to play different roles, just as the actor and

Cliff Richard - the shadow connects?

“My mother had been a lifelong fan of Cliff Richard, citing his timeless good looks and good health—after most of his contemporaries had long gone to put – as the clearest example of clean living and a life steeped in spirituality. I had hummed along with Cliff, from ‘The Young Ones’ to ‘Summer Holiday’ in Uganda – until I turned hot-headed adolescent. But as I began listening to spiritual, particularly Sufi music, I became aware of the other worldly component in Cliff’s voice, I came face to face with my mother’s idol in 1998 on receiving the Sony Gold Award for my BBC radio series “Songs of the Sufi Mystics.” He congratulated me on winning the award and told me he had followed the series with great interest.” — Jammie Siddiqui

Jammie Siddiqui is a novelist, broadcaster and lecturer in Indian classical music and has written articles on radio by Paul Sherward, Lata Mangeshkar and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, among others.
the playwright were different. Today some critics confuse the two if a singer does sing a song she did not write, it can't be authentic. This is a misunderstanding of the roles of the singer and the writer. There are many songwriters who did not want to record their own songs but gave them to other singers to record such as Otis Blackwell ("Don't Be Cruel" and "All Shook Up" to Elvis and "Great Balls of Fire" and "Breathless" to Jerry Lee Lewis). The versions Blackwell recorded later of his songs do not sound as good as the versions by the singers he gave the songs to, although we discover how his inflections affected theirs. The performance was the thing, and both Elvis and Cliff frequently changed words in the songs (Elvis more than Cliff). And Cliff could write. In 1992, Cliff visited Uganda (when we were there in Iowa). He visited a village called Bulange and he wrote a song called "Bulange Downpour". "Bulange" was the name of the Parliament building of the Lukiiko (of the Baganda people, in Mengo next to Kampala) but did not know it was also the name of a village in which there was red mud which seemed to turn bloody when it rained. Therefore the song—which took me time to track down because it was released as a B-side, and I found it on an album by Cliff, My Songs, 2004—is significant in the light of what happened in Uganda under Amin. It starts with thud slid. Cliff sings, "the pathway lied / the earth turned red" and "no about is enough to carry the weight of life" and ends with African voices incanting in Luganda to light drums.

Cliff's real name was Harry Rodger Webb. He was born in Lucknow, India on October 14, 1940 and grew up in Calcult. He left with his family for England in August 1947. He spoke English with a Bengali accent when he arrived in England and he was teased by his classmates for being an Indian because of his dark hair and dark skin, except that they confused it with the other Indians and asked him where his headdress and bow and arrow were. He changed his name when he became a singer, Richard later Little Richard and Cliff after Heathcliff, the protagonist of his favourite novel, Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë. The novel is about the dark outsider who won't be admitted—and eventually takes over. He always wanted to star in a musical of Wuthering Heights, and he did so in the nineties. He released a CD called Songs From Heathcliff (1995) (815 album charts). A single from the album, "A Misunderstood Man", was #19 on the singles charts. You can understand why Cliff would not tell critics everything about himself, quite apart from the fact that as D.H. Lawrence said, "Never trust the roller, trust the tale"—in other words, respond to the music, not what the singer says when talking. It is not up to the singer to have to interpret to the audience the meaning of what he sings.

The story has been told many times that what made Harry (Cliff) decide to become a singer was his hearing of Elvis' "Heartbreak Hotel" on the radio. I teach a course on African Literature at the University of Iowa and when I get to Besie Head's novel, Maru, I play "Heartbreak Hotel" and make a comparison between the two. Why? Because when Head was in the International Writing Program, for which my wife and I began working in 1977, she would come to our apartment and make me play "Heartbreak Hotel" over and over again. I realized years later that there was something the heart in the original "Heartbreak Hotel", not the later live versions of the song by Elvis. I finally figured it out. Elvis was a twin whose twin brother was born dead. He always missed his twin. With its heavy echo almost prefiguring a second voice (as in Elvis' recording of "Blue Moon"), it is possible to hear "Heartbreak Hotel" as a song of loss of the twin: "Well, since my baby left me / I've found a new place to dwell. / This is the way Head's Maru begins with the loss of the baby, and the novel is full of twinings. From Steve Turner's biography, I discovered that Harry (Cliff) had a brother who was born nineteen months after him and who died very young. Cliff's mother Dorothy said, "He was too young to explain what he was feeling but Rodger and I felt that he had lost something in that moment...I think he is always conscious that the brother he had was lost. When he was young, he didn't show anything but when he grew older he would sometimes say, 'I had a brother...a few years ago I heard him say, 'if my brother had lived he would now be forty.' It's obviously never left him." (Steve Turner, Cliff Richard: The Biography, BCA, London / New York / Sydney / Toronto, 1993, page 37).

If one speculates metaphorically, one can wonder whether he missed his brother almost the way Elvis missed his twin. I have argued that Elvis "twinned" himself to several singers and songs he went on to record later such as "That's All Right" (Arthur Crudup), "Blue Moon of Kentucky" (Bill Monroe) and later "I Feel So Bad" (Chuck Willis). Cliff loved the classics of the rock 'n roll era and he would later record these songs and they would become his and remind us of the original hit versions of years gone by such as "It's All in the Game" (Tommy Edwards, #1 US, 1958, Cliff #2,1963 UK, #25 US 1964).

He had his first hit in 1958: "Move It", #2 in August, a song considered to be a rock 'n roll classic. And rock 'n roll is the basis of all his singing (listen to his "Start All Over Again", 1978, and "Cos' I Love That Rock 'n Roll", 1981). With many curves along the road, Cliff Richard seems to know where he is going for he's on the 31st of February Street.

Professor Peter Nazareth, born in Uganda, plays Cliff Richard in his class, 'Elvis as Anthology at the University of Iowa in the U.S. where he is Professor of English.'