

SOUTHEND MUSIC - AN EXHIBITION

This exhibition will reflect the growth, variety and development of popular music by the groups and individuals that grew up and/or lived in the Southend-on-Sea area. From the Rochford Hundred and along the Thames to Canvey, then cutting inland to Basildon.

The exhibits will consist of mainly contemporary photographs - originals, blow-ups or collages. The curator will ultimately be responsible for the selection, creation and production of these exhibits. There will also be posters, album sleeves, handbills and other artwork. As examples, the detachable 'mural' from the *Shades* seafront coffee bar (where the *Paramounts* first performed) still exists, as do *Vivian Stanshall's* paintings and drawings. There'll be musical instruments and other relevant artefacts such as a Greenop banjolele, manufactured at Norton Greenop's banjo factory in Leigh on sea or Chris Copping's original bass amp that went round the world with *Procol Harum*.

This being a celebration of music, an appropriate, accompanying soundtrack will play throughout. This will be on sale as a set of CD's. A glossy, commemorative book will also be published. There is also Roger Deakin's superb television documentary '*Southend Rock*', which could be screened, as well as the *Kursaal Flyers* 'fly on the wall' television programme.

Intertwined with the exhibition will be live performances at various venues throughout the area. Not many of the older venues survive but we still have the *Kursaal*, the *Cricketers* (still with the same family running it since the '60's), and there is a possibility the *Pier* may have a theatre reinstalled by the time the exhibition opens. Also we have the *Cliff's Pavilion* and the *Palace Theatre*. Who we can get to perform will be clearer after some research. Current performers shouldn't be a problem, though how many of the older acts would be happy to be involved is yet to be established.

The exhibition's start date will be just after the end of the Second World War with the re-opening of The *Kursaal* - and it's ballroom. The *Kursaal* dance floor, argued by some to be the best in the land, is a fitting place to start. The job of providing the music was given to *Howard Baker*, a musical legend at the time. Instrumental in promoting the careers of *Vera Lynn*, *Charlie Kunz*, *Joe Loss*, *Norrie Paramour* and *Dorothy Squires*. At first he would play just the sort of



The Cricketer's Inn, circa 1970's

music people wanted before the Feuhrer's interruption but with the explosion of Rock 'n' Roll in the 50's musical tastes begin to change. Indeed, Howard brought in local rockers to augment the night's performance, the *Colin Dale Combo* being one such group. The *Kursaal* was just one of many venues providing musical entertainment in our area, there was also the theatre at the end of the Pier, the early on home of the *Ben Oakley Orchestra*.

The *Ritz* and *Odeon* cinemas doubled up as live act venues. *Ted Heath and his Music* at the *Ritz* and the *Stan Kenton and his Orchestra* at the *Odeon* are among the many. These venues went on to put on shows by the rock 'n' roll stars of the '50's, then in the '60's, *Cliff*, *Everly Brothers*, *The Beatles*, *Gerry and the Pacemakers*, etc., etc. Westcliff's

Since opening in 1964 the *Cliff's Pavilion* has been the main venue for headline international musical performers. And in Basildon there was the *Locarno*, most renowned in the 60's as the *Dave Clark 5's* home from home. Then there were the clubs/bars: *The Nightscene*, *The Shades*, *The Studio* and coming up to date, *Club Riga*, *The Sunrooms* and *Chinnery's*.



There was on occasions, a floating venue. From 1957 to '63 *The Royal Daffodil* did '*Rock Across the Channel*'. The ship sailed from Southend to Boulogne jammed packed with fans, local bands and others - *The Shadows*, *Gene Vincent* and *Jerry Lee Lewis* being among the guest artists.

Apart from performers and venues another aspect of musical creativity is song writing. One of the most prolific hit composers of the last century, is Westcliff's own, *Geoff Stevens*. Geoff has had hits with not only 60/70's groups such as *Manfred Mann*, *Herman's Hermits* and *The New Seekers* but international recording stars such as, *Elvis Presley*, *Frank Sinatra*, *David Soul* and *Scott Walker*, to name just a few. Not only did Geoff write he also produced, discovered and managed talent. Most famously, *Donovan*. Geoff also created *The New Vaudeville Band*. All these artists will feature in 'Geoff's Area' in the exhibition.

Peter Eden was Geoff's business partner for several years. Peter more or less went straight into the music business soon after leaving Southend art school.

Another worthy in this 'roll call' is Leigh-on-Sea's *David Hatfield*, not only was he in major local bands (*Kursaal Flyers/Hogshead*) he brought over and tour managed top US country acts such as *Arlo Guthrie*, *Peter Rowan*, *Flaco Jimenez*, *Jim Rooney* and *The Juggernaut String Band*. David also ran his own record label, *Waterfront*.



The Dave Clark 5 at Basildon's Locarno, circa 1964.

To illustrate the potential of this diverse exhibition here's a list (vaguely chronological), of some of our stars to be commemorated. Some lost in the mists of time, some still very much in our consciousness, some at the peak of their powers.

Howard Baker, *Ben Oakley*, *The Nancy Mount* (*Peggy's sister*) *Trio*, *The Whirlwinds* (later, *Force Five*), *The Barracudas*, *The Colin Dale Combo*, *The Monotones*, *Houston Wells and the Marksmen*, *The Orioles*, *The Paramounts*, *The Planets*, *Ian Gregory*, *The Dave Clarridge Band*, *The Problems*, *Oliver Benson*, *Geoff Stevens*, *Peter Eden*, *Vernon Haddock's Jubilee Lovelies*, *The Dave Mills Band*, *Graham Bonney*, *Nookie Soul*, *Vivian Stanshall*, *Ramlin' Les Western* (*Rayleigh*), *Procol Harum*,

The Fingers, *Antoinette*, *Bronzelina Cottage*, *Digby Fairweather*, *Mickey Jupp*, *Dr. Feelgood*, *The Cadets*, *Kenny Baxter*, *Legend*, *Red & Myra Abbott*, *Pete Willsher*, *Yazoo*, *Depeche Mode*, *Kursaal Flyers*, *Eddie and the Hot Rods*, *Deano's Marvels*, *Bill Legend*, *The Jukes*, *David Hatfield*, *The Vicars*, *Idiot*, *The Aliens*, *The Steve Hooker Band*, *Wilko Johnston*, *Tomahawk*, *Bob Fish*, *Pete the Hat*, *Mick Wilsher* (*New Vaudeville Band*).

Plus a plethora of Punk Bands:

The Machines, *The Vandals*, *The Spurts*, *The Psychopaths*, *Captain Strange*, *Deciballs*, *The Shocks*, *The Synyx*, *The Icons*, *The School Bullies*, *The Bleeding Pyles*, *The Convicted*, *The Kronstadt Uprising*, *Allegiance To No One*, *Autumn Poison*, *Burning Idols*, *Stax Century*, *The Prey*, *Anorexic Dread*, *Armless Teddies*, *The Leepers*, *Speedball*, *Grinder*, *Sripey Zebras*, *86-Mix* and *Taming the Outback*.

Moving on:

Danielle Dax, *Joy Sarney*, *Scintillale*, *Tina Cousins*, *Ponjo's Stompers*, *Hogshead*, *The Hamsters*, *Frank Mead*, *The Pilchards*, *Mo Wittam*, *Robin Trower*, *Alison Moyet*, *Denise van Outen*, *Lee Mead*, *Dave Bronze*, *Jake Shillingford/My Life Story*, *These New Puritans*, *Seb & Barry Philpot* (*The Hoosiers*), *Pier Talk*, *The Violets*, *The Legendary Undertakers*, *Neil's Children*, *The Horrors*, *The Ugly Guys*, *Famous Potatoes*, *Illegal Eagles*, *Ruckus Juice an' Chitlin's*, *Dirty Fairies*, *Seasiders*, *Theoretical Girl*, *Get Cape. Wear Cape. Fly*

There are other more spurious Southend musical connections: *Status Quo's* *Francis Rossi* is related to our town's ice cream dynasty and *Ian Dury* reckons he contracted polio in a Southend swimming pool. *Joe Brown* was a fireman on the Southend/Fenchurch Street Railway and we're sure *Helen Mirren* must have sung sometime in her illustrious career - but maybe that's stretching things a bit. Even so, she is to be approached to open this prestigious event.



Geoff Stevens, 1964