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Hastings Pier Gig Memories



The Who poster from 1965, (HPC014.009)



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Gig Memories from Andre Palfry-Martin 2015

For me, it has been a very interesting half-century of involvement with Hastings Pier and the many people that I met. It has been a privilege to take part, and I now look forward to what the next years of the new Hastings Pier will bring.

1974

However, one story that I recall from Graham's [Graham How of Ace Promotions] time was when Status Quo appeared. "The ballroom was well over capacity, and thank the lord for the Victorians tendency to over-engineer the pier's construction, as when the fans were really into the show, you could feel the dance floor moving to the rhythm of the group, and you could look straight down between the dance floor boards and see the sea".



Another interesting story was when Sparks played the Ballroom in November 1974 and there was a bomb scare. It turned out to be a false alarm, but Ron from Sparks just refused to return to the stage, and it was the support group Pilot that played a blinding set, and kept everybody happy. (HPC057.005)

December 1972

Our first Martin-Casson Agency production featured an act right at the heart of the 'Glam-Rock' scene: Gary Glitter. Today he is most definitely 'persona non-grata', but in late 1972 he was at the top of the charts and was pulling in the crowds. We had him booked for 9th December and the show was advertised as the 'Martin-Casson Agency Christmas Present

to Hastings'. I recall that we had a contract for Gary Glitter and The Glitter Band to appear for £250.00 plus VAT, we sold plenty of tickets and it looked like being a good night. But late in the afternoon of the Friday 8th disaster struck: Gary collapsed and would not be able to appear as planned.

We decided to say nothing and maintain it as if everything was OK. However, in the early hours of the Saturday, we had arranged that the Glitter Band would come down and meet the fans. The Glitter management team would also be available, plus we just managed to withdraw from the bank sufficient cash to make refunds, if that was necessary. An alternative date was arranged and press information was ready to release immediately we made the announcement – or to be more precise, when I went on stage, with an estimated 1,400 in the ballroom to make the announcement.

When I said that he was not coming, you could have heard a pin drop. There was some reaction, but fortunately it was not what we had feared - disappointment yes, but trouble, no! And we did not have to make any refunds. The replacement date in early January 1973 was another great night and we estimated an extra 400 youngsters attended, giving a total estimate for that night of around 1900, which was our, Martin-Casson Agency record. At the time, I thought that I did not want to have to go through that again, but, on reflection, one might say that dealing large audiences, it's all part of the job.

One specific night that I will always remember was Friday 28th June 1968 – it was the Hastings College Summer Rave, and the show had been booked through John Schofield's office, the Strand Entertainments Agency. The line-up included PP Arnold, Tim Rose, Thackery, Skatalites and Skip Bifferty. The DJ for the night was from Radio One: John Peel. I was not there for this, as it clashed with my 21st birthday party (I had shipped out my parents and we had the house to ourselves). About 1.30 in the morning Colin Bell phones me in a panic, as for whatever reason, John Peel had thrown a wobbler and left in a huff. I believe He had gone off the pier at some point, and wasn't allowed back on as he didn't have a ticket, and nobody recognised him, just how true that is I cannot say. They had no compere/DJ, so could I get down as quickly as possible? I did manage to do it, and witnessed the PP Arnolds Set, and carried on till the early hours, then going back to my party. I must admit that I have

always been grateful for the fact that I saw PP Arnold live – she was sensational, and recently when I went with Colin to Eastbourne to see her on a revival show, she can still, all these years later, really send a shiver down my spine with her vocals.

June 1966:

Hastings College All Nighter – 25 June

There are so many stories from that night that I could fill a book, but a couple that stand out involved Georgie Fame. We found out earlier in the day that it was his birthday, so we set out to create a very large birthday card, and I sent out some of my team with some money to buy a large bottle of bourbon and birthday cake – it's quite useful when you have committee members with parents that are bakers, even at short notice.

He started his second set, and “Bang!” - smoke poured from his Hammond organ, and that was it! No organ! To many the backbone of his act was the organ, but in true show business ways, he picked up an acoustic guitar and carried on with the show.

Another memory that I have of the night involves Tony Rivers and me. About 4am Tony came into the kitchen to get his breakfast (we fed all the acts that were there throughout the night). He tells the story that he asked this chap for breakfast, and was told rather gruffly “If you want breakfast – cook it yourself! We're rather busy!” So off he goes and cooks his own his breakfast. Many years later when I was working with him, he recalled meeting this ‘this chap’ to which I said – “Ah! That was me!” We had a good laugh and have been friends ever since.

1965

I remember Christmas Eve in 1965 was the first visit to the Happy Ballroom of the Who. The show was coming to the end, and the boys had played their last number, but, as we all know, this was planned and they would return to give a final encore. Mr Knights sensed that Pete Townsend was just about to go into his guitar-and-amp-wrecking routine, and everybody was very hyped-up by this point. In a flash Bob is on stage, he grabs the microphone from Roger Daltry and says – “Oh look at the time, it's almost midnight and we have to be out by then. Can I have the curtains closed please, and many thanks to tonight's group, the Who, and to all you boys and girls out there in the ballroom. Go quietly, and take care as the deck is a little slippery with the frost, and have a

good Christmas” The Who were dumb struck, but just did as they were told, as did all the youngsters in the ballroom. Truly we all knew who was in control, but that was his way of ensuring a peaceful end to what had been a successful evening.

1963/4

Of my all-time favourites was Tony Rivers & The Castaways, who appeared several times over the years. Many of the acts that stand out in my estimation had their roots in the Mersey sound: The Hollies [August 1963], the Undertakers [October 1963], Cilla Black with Sounds Incorporated [April 1964], the Big Three [August 1963], the Swinging Blue Jeans [April 1964] and Gerry & the Pacemakers [September 1963, and advertised as Jerry & The Pacemakers].

Thinking about the environment of the ballroom, it has often been described as “an aircraft hangar at the end of a sixpenny bus ride from the promenade”.

1962

The first big-name attraction was Johnny Kidd & the Pirates, and that was in March 1962. He would always start off his act with throwing a pirate cutlass across the stage, so that it landed point first into the stage floor – the audience then knew that he was just about to appear. However, he only did that once on Hastings Pier, as rumour had it that the manager – Mr Robert (Bob) Knights - soon stopped it by saying that he must stop damaging the stage floor.

Many of us have memories of Bob Knights. He was one of those characters who always seemed to be about, and in particular in the evening. He was the general manager, and it was his pier - nothing happened that he did not know about! When there were dances in ‘The Happy Ballroom’ he would be around, dressed in his dinner suit. He was a big man and his presence was always there.

Golden Earring plus Nutz – Hastings Pier 30th November 1973

<http://ninebattles.com/?s=golden+earring&searchsubmit=>



Gig Memories supplied by Mick Mepham
Martyn Baker....Wonderful gig, that night. Mixed live in Quadrophonic sound too, as I recall, probably for the first and last time on Hastings Pier. What a fantastic Rn'B band they were Terry Huggins....They were originally called the Tornados, but had to change their name as there was already a band by that name (The other band had an instrumental hit with Telstar). They became the Golden Earrings, but later dropped the 'the' and the 's'.

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Jim Hobbs....I was there that night. Great gig in the very week they got to number one with Radar Love. I recall that the numbers were very low, which was a shame as they were amazing with great sound from their Quadrophonic sound system. Vanilla Queen (from Moontan) is still a favourite track. I wonder if their drummer still jumps over his kit on the last chords of Radar Love?

Mick Mephram....Hey Jim, I roadied most of that tour and that gig for sure. Silly sods in the Dome management wouldn't allow the quad p.a. to be set up at the back of the theatre so there were 2 stacks on each side of the stage. LS were really good too and made GE play even better.

Kevin Carlyon....Bloody hell. I printed these at Berfort Reproductions and used to go out fly posting with promoter Joe Morowski! Karen Sweatman Was Blackman.....Radar Love was the first song I ever sang at karaoke – trouble was I forgot there was about half an hour in the song where there is no singing and I was standing in the pub looking like a twonk for the duration. On a lighter note, I did win a bottle of wine. Think it was for the karaoke, not looking like a twonk!

Lauren Gower... My Uncle Simon roadied for them. Chris Giles... I think this was the loudest band I ever saw on the pier....I was deaf for days after....brilliant though.

Phil Thornton... An excellent gig!!!!

Eric Cawthraw... Yep at this one – stood by the mixing desk to enjoy the quad sound. I remember the guitar sounds circling in one direction and flute going the other way. It made you go boss-eyed! Mick, I seem to remember our mate Simon Pont helping to get all their gear on the Pier – he got given a very glittery Golden Earing t-shirt. When wearing it – it looked like he'd got shiny dandruff. Didn't a wheel of their loader go through the pier – or an I mixing this up with someone else?

Dave Nattress... Yes, went to this one. Golden Earring had a great couple of years on the back of Radar Love. They are STILL going.....

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