

Musical memories

To celebrate the recent opening of the new Bramall Music Building on campus, alumni have been sharing their musical experiences from Birmingham. Whether this be a concert, gig, performing or studying; many alumni have enjoyed experiences of the musical variety while students.

Visit our [musical memories discussion \(http://www.linkedin.com/groupitem?view=&gid=118866&type=member&item=175188730&trk=group_search_item_list-0-b-ttl&goback=%2Egna_118866\)](http://www.linkedin.com/groupitem?view=&gid=118866&type=member&item=175188730&trk=group_search_item_list-0-b-ttl&goback=%2Egna_118866) via LinkedIn for further alumni experiences and to share your own, or email us at alumnicommunications@contacts.bham.ac.uk (<mailto:alumnicommunications@contacts.bham.ac.uk>).

1960s

David Walton (BA Russian Language & Literature, 1963)

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50 years ago in March 1963 the Birmingham University Sextet won the national Inter-University Jazz Federation jazz band competition.



Pictured from left to right: Dave Walton, Roy Stephenson, Eddie Matthews, Pete York (later joined Spencer Davis), Don Campbell and Denis Wheeler.

It was the first time that a band not from Oxbridge or London had won the competition. The prize for winning, apart from some choice gigs, was to organise the following year's competition!

I also remember that in the same year the Guild Theatre Group won the National Student Drama competition. Stirring times!

I am growing old disgracefully, playing in soul bands, jazz, etc, including Glastonbury 2007. Check out www.groove-a-licious.co.uk (<http://www.groove-a-licious.co.uk>) and www.davewaltonquartet.co.uk (<http://www.davewaltonquartet.co.uk>) for more.

1970s

Janet Thornhill (BA Geography, 1972)

As I approach retirement and have recently lost my Mum, I am donating three seats in the new Bramall Music Building. I sang in the University Choir as an undergraduate so it's great to be able to give back some of the debt I owe to Birmingham.

My son has applied to take Politics and International Relations, so we may be back more often than I thought.

Rosemary Peck (BCom Industrial Economics & Business studies, 1973)

Paul McCartney and Wings played at the University on 21 February 1972 and I remember it well!!

The announcement Wings were going to perform came over a loudspeaker system during the day, I went straight back to our house in Kings Heath to tell my fellow housemates and others. We returned to campus in the evening and the performance was just great. As a Beatles fan, what more can I say - it was an opportunity I couldn't miss!

An opportunity not to be missed.

1980s

Penny Wallington (BA French Studies, 1983)

My most striking musical memory was of my friend Pete Coates' recital in the Barber Institute as part of his music finals, obviously a nervous time for him. The grand piano had to be moved to the front of the stage by a couple of stage hands and as they shifted the majestic grand, one of the legs completely gave way and the whole piano crashed to the floor with an incredible sound. After a few moments of stunned silence, a whole bunch of people ran on to try and pick it up, and also to calm Pete, who, ever the professional, managed to perform as if nothing had happened.

Bob Eastoe (BSc Mechanical Engineering, 1983)

Freshers '80, I got to the venue with minutes to spare and found that there was plenty of room at the front. Great, we thought as we all piled to the front. Big mistake - it was Slade and the first note nearly knocked us over!

1990s

Phil Merrell (BEng & BCom Engineering Production & Economics, 1990)

In 1989 and 1990 I was the Social Secretary for Guild Entertainments. The spring end of term party was to be my last event running Guild Ents.

The permanent member of staff booked the acts for the Deb Hall and I was left to run the Cellar Bar, my preferred venue....

On the 10 March we had Play Dead as the opening act, followed by Blur and the headline act of Salvation. I'm afraid all the bands reflected my passion for indie/goth music at the time!

Blur had been pushed on us at the time by their agent and EMI records as the next great thing – and listening to the demo tape – they did sound good – so we signed them for the event – I think the fee was £150, more than Play Dead who got £25 and a plate of sandwiches, but less than Salvation!

The soundcheck was promising, though the amps in the cellar bar were on their last legs! Blur were due to do on stage at 8.30, but did a disappearing act on me from their dressing room. They were found with Voice of the Beehive in the deb hall changing rooms. After politely dragging them back to get their instruments – they eventually appeared on stage to a half-full room at 9.30. Most people had given up waiting for them and had gone off for a beer!

After one song the room was overflowing – beer sales dropped, because it was impossible to get to the bar! No one cared though as they went through some of their material including future singles like 'She's so high' and 'There's no other way'.

They left the stage to a massive ovation, with knowing smiles on their faces, that they had gone down really well. They did one brief encore, partly because I needed to get the next band on – but I suspect that they had run out of songs anyway!

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