RETRO DUNDEE

A WEE LOOK BACK AT DUNDEE - 1960's, 1970's & 1980's.

saturday, 7 february 2009

TECH COLLEGE UNION AKA BOWLING ALLEY

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RETRO DUNDEE
United Kingdom

Originally from Dundee - moved down South to my castle in the Cotswolds in the mid 80's and now making a living as a Cartoonist. GG

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THE WELLGATE STEPS - mid 70's

LAST LOOK AT THE OLD WELLGATE

1963 AD #3 - D.M. BROWN'S

1963 AD #2 - CAIRDS HAIRDRESSER

1963 AD #1 - DRAFFENS

THE PULLMAN LOUNGE - WARD ROAD

AVERAGE WHITE BAND IN 1979

THE ODEON - COWGATE

THE PALAIS - SOUTH TAY STREET

JOHN MENZIES - MURRAYGATE CORNER - 1982

HOW TO WEAR YOUR SCARF IN THE 70'S

DUNDEE GANG KARAOKE - 1973

DUNDEE GANGS IN THE 1960'S

PANDA CARS AND BLACK MARIA'S

ROYAL HOTEL (Teazers etc) - 70's & 80'S

STEELEYE SPAN - CAIRD HALL - 1972

QUICKIES - EXCHANGE STREET

JIMMY DEUCHAR - JAZZ MUSICIAN

SLICKERS - SOUTH TAY STREET - 1980'S

BOOTS RECORD DEPARTMENT - 1970'S

POTTERS SHOE SHOP - MURRAYGATE

TECH COLLEGE UNION AKA BOWLING ALLEY

BE BOP DELUXE - CAIRD HALL - 1977

WHAT'S THAT IN OLD MONEY?

THE GALLEON BAR - INTERIOR

THE GALLEON BAR - EXTERIOR

THE BUZZ AT MR BEAUJANGLES - LATE 70'S

CHESTER ABC Theatre: MAX BOYCE
CHESTER-LE-STREET Sombrero Club: GENO WASHINGTON BAND
CHORLEY Lancastrian Room: McCALMANS
COLCHESTER Essex University: MOON
COVENTRY College of Education: RACING CARS
CROMER West Runton Pavilion: J.A.L.N. BAND
DARTFORD College of Education: PEKOE ORANGE
DONCASTER Bay Horse Hotel: MARTIN SIMPSON
DORCHESTER The Tavern: ANGEL
DUBLIN National Stadium: GONG
DUDLEY J. B.'s Club: SUPERCHARGE
DUNDEE Technical College: LEMMY'S MOTORHEAD
DURHAM University: JACK THE LAD/SPLIT ENZ
EDINBURGH Triangle Folk Club: THE LAGGAN
EDINBURGH University: CASPIAN/CLEAN SLATE
FISHGUARD Frenchman's Motel: LITTLE BOB STORY
GRIMSBY Birdseye Club: RIP IT UP
FALKIRK Maniqui Club: TRAIN
GLASGOW Queen Margaret Union: RENAISSANCE
GLASGOW Third Eye Centre: JOE'S DINER
HERTFORD Balls Park College: TRUSS & BUCKET

XTC ON TOUR

JANUARY		
20	ENFIELD	Middlesex Polytechnic
21	HITCHIN	College of Education
22	CROYDON	Greyhound
25	WOLVERHAMPTON	Lafayette Club
26	DONCASTER	Outlook Club
27	DUNDEE	Technical College
28	GLASGOW	Queen Margaret Union
31	CARDIFF	Top Rank
FEBRUARY		
1	SHEFFIELD	Polytechnic
2	LEEDS	Polytechnic
3	EDINBURGH	University
4	NEWCASTLE	University
6	PLYMOUTH	The Fiesta
7	BRISTOL	Locarno
8	READING	Bryan's
9	BARNSTAPLE	Chequers
10	NOTTINGHAM	University
11	LIVERPOOL	Eric's
11	LONDON	Lyceum

MONKEY BOOTS - EARLY 70'S

EARLY 1970'S CARDIGAN

AUSTIN THE TAILOR - WELLGATE - 1960'S

THE ASSOCIATES - FAT SAMS - 1985

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aroond dundee

This building on the corner of Marketgait & Guthrie Street, once had a real tenpin bowling alley in the 60's. So later, when it came to be a Students Union in the 70's, us lot who went there still generally referred to it as the "Bowling Alley".
The students in this case being from the College of Technology rather than University.
It's heyday was the mid 70's to mid 80's period, and was always a really good buzz.
Card carrying students got in free and they could each sign in 2 paying guests.
I remember you had to be signed in before 11:00 pm - then the doors closed!
This often lead to a rush of people vacating the pubs between 10:30 & 11:00 for a mad dash along the Marketgait to make it on time, otherwise they'd be locked out.
The rooms were upstairs, 3 areas all on the same floor.
A wee recreation room with darts, pool table & table football to chill out in.
Then the main hall itself that had the disco and bar (see 2nd photo above).
Finally, a back room with a stage area where bands played.
The DJ was Brian Wilson, who played a diverse range of music, an aspect that made visiting the Bowling Alley such a big draw. The original name was Deepwater Disco and then it later became known as Brian's Disco.
The Bowling Alley also had the comfiest seats in town, so much so that sometimes you were reluctant to get up off them to dance!
Quite often at the end of the evening there would be an amusing beer fight.
Typical student fun really, never any trouble.
Along with the disco and cheap beer, the other attraction was live music.
Like the University circuit, this was a good place to catch an act at the beginning of their career...
The Sex Pistols, Dire Straits, Simple Minds, Motorhead are just 4 of the acts who performed there before going on to greater things.
Rock, punk, pop & new wave were all represented, with the likes of Saxon, 999, Joe Jackson, XTC... too many to mention really.
Needless to say it was a hot venue for local bands too, e.g. Colossus, Friction, Skeets Boliver...and on it goes.
Examples of the venue cropping up in the music press back then are displayed in the above cuttings...
The first one is from an NME and shows Lemmy's Motorhead there on Saturday 9 October 1976.
The one under that is from the Melody Maker and the date XTC performed there was Friday 27 January 1978.
The last one is from an NME and has the Dire Straits gig dated as Wednesday 21 June 1978.
The place then had a bit of a make-over (UV lights etc) in the early 80's which is shown on the 3rd & 4th photos above.
Although the building is still there today, it has since gone through further transformations - but not necessarily an improvement made to it!.

- McCROW PHOTOGRAPHY

dundee folk music

- DUNDEE FOLK CLUB

a blast from the past

- THE MCMANUS

the living deadbeat

- DEADBEAT FANZINE

flick through these

- DUNDEE IN THE 80'S

photos old & new

- PHOTOSHOP SCOTLAND

treasure chest

- DUNDEE PHOTOSTREAM

Thanks to DJ Brian Wilson for first interior photo.

Thanks to David Pentland for the other two interior images.

The Bowling Alley now has its own website - go visit Bowlin' Alley

Posted by RETRO DUNDEE at 01:06

Labels: 1970's, 1980's, alley, bands, bowling, college, culture, dance, Dundee, gig, history, Marketgait, music, past, pop, punk, rock, student, union, youth

33 comments:

Anonymous 7 February 2009 at 10:34

I remember the "snowballs" all nighters with bands on in every level, and it was a sh*t venue for a roadie, i'm sure they had a service elevator that was broken more than working :-) and that was a lot of stairs to fall down when drunk !!!!

Reply

Replies

Unknown 15 December 2014 at 17:43

I loved the Snowballs that we had during my time there 1984 Onwards

Reply

Anonymous 7 February 2009 at 10:39

I was a fervent regular of The Bowling Alley between 1981-1983.
I can still remember every inch of the place including the aforementioned comfy seats...am I right in saying that, at one point, there was a huge photo mural of some alpine scene on the wall opposite the long bar and a massive mirrored back wall which made the already long room look positively cavernous ?
For about 2 years I spent every Friday and Saturday night there...Fridays it stayed open til 3am.
Yaaay, happy days.

Reply

Anonymous 13 February 2009 at 05:17

999, The Skids, The Revillos... Ah the memories!

Reply

Brian DoonTheToon aka Brian Wilson 14 February 2009 at 02:32

.
Hi GG.

I must admit I liked your opinion, "It's heyday was the 1975-1985 period" as I was the resident DJ there from November 1976 until March 1987, possibly one of the longest DJ residencies in the world in Dundee.

My pal Pete the Camera and I had started up a mobile disco (Deepwater Disco) at the tail end of '75, after I had done two years at the Palais ('72-'74), playing the sounds before the Wichita Showband went on stage and during their break - and yes, on occasion, you could have heard Hawkwind's "Master of the Universe" and The Sweet's "Blockbuster" on the same half hour playlist! I always claimed the best talent a DJ could have was no taste!

We kinda fell into the Bowlin' Alley gig by accident. We had joined a loose grouping of DJ's and mobile discos which shared out bookings. For the evening of 12th November, 1976, we had no booking and were third on the rota for any booking that came up for that night. The night before, a booking came in for a disco for the Bowlin' Alley. The first two discos on the rota had gigs for the 12th, so we got it. The featured entertainment that night was the Raymond Froggatt Band.

http://www.raymond-froggatt.com

Jim Thompson was the VP Ents in those days but the Union Treasurer, Ian Mackie, had, by choice, been delegated to book the discos, Jim dealing with the bands. At the end of the night, Ian told us that he, Jim and the Union President, Ross, were well impressed with what we done and offered us more gigs. We pointed out that further gigs would have to be passed on to be shared out but they said that they didn't want any other discos (Ian had just been booking up discos as he came across their phone numbers) - they wanted us. So we were in.

The first Snoball we did was early December '76, six bands and two discos spread across two rooms, 9pm till 6am. It started snowing around three in the morning and because one of the bands had let off smoke bombs, all the windows in the 'downstairs' hall were open, the snow was blowing in and it was freezing! That was some weekend. Working at my day job in Claude Alexander in the Overgate on the Friday, finishing at 6, then to the Bowlin' Alley for 9 till 6 in the morning, an hour's sleep, working at Claude's on the Saturday from 9 till 6, then a kiddies' party at Brackens School from 7 till 10. Knackered wasn't the word...

Our philosophy was to play whatever requests we got and we managed pretty well. I very quickly realised that "student music" as a genre didn't exist, particularly in Dundee, where around 60% of students at "the Bell Street Tech" were homegrown, with their own peer groups and music preferences.
Most requests, initially were for various kinds of rock, interspersed with a smattering of disco, chart, soul, pop and reggae with punk beginning to rear its head - "New Rose" by The Damned and "Anarchy" were floor-fillers. As the years went by, the requests kinda followed what was going on chartwise. There was always a rump of heavy rock but punk, new wave, power pop, new romantic, indie and pure pop all had their day, as the 80s progressed.

Personally, I would say the heyday was 1975-'79, as, up to that time, any kind of student from any college/Uni got in with their two guests. I know for a fact that many day-release hairdressers were regulars at the BA, along with plumbers, sparkies, and other apprentices from Kingsway Tech.
Unfortunately, during a Christmas break in the late 70s, an elitist decision was made by the Union Management Committee that only their own students and NUS-affiliated students would be allowed in, which meant, in Dundee, only Bell Street and the Art College, Dundee Uni, College of Commerce and Kingsway Tech being non-NUS. On restarting after the break with the new rule, from regular Friday night crowds of 400-600 (depending on the status of the headline band), over four weeks, the attendance dropped to below 30. The daft thing was that the Saturday nights were still free and unregulated so there were more turning up on the disco-only Saturdays than on the Fridays. Disco was on 8-11 on a Saturday, after which, we all toddled off down to the Ferry Bar, latterly Junction 9 for the rest of the night. Wee Andy Pearson was the DJ down there at that time. There are some photos, including Andy, yours truly and some Bowlin' Alley regulars, including Zeek and Giz (see below) at:-

http://www.doonthetoon.ukf.net/5skenker/skenker15.htm

and the "nexts" up to skenker23.htm.

Must mention "The Snap-Ons". They were a bunch of around 25 regulars, kinda 'led' by Zeek and Giz, aka Steve Smith and Dave Mann. Zeek and Giz had a couple of party pieces - they could mime and act out all the words to Meat Loaf's "Paradise By A Dashboard Light" and "Do You Like My New Car/Happy Together", from The Mothers of Invention's "Live at the Fillmore East" album.
At this time, the disco was in "the wee hall" and the bands were "through the room" (the downstairs big hall). When the band started at 11 in the big hall, we took a break for half an hour or so, to encourage the punters to go through to give the band a audience. After that period, we played non-dance type stuff (Pink Floyd, ELP, etc) until the band finished.
Onnyhoo, this particular night, Zeek and Giz asked me for "Paradise" in that non-dance period so they could do their stuff. The wee hall was almost empty at that time. The record went on, Zeek doing Meat Loaf's part and Giz doing Ellen Foley's part, on the floor in front of the disco. As you know, that track lasts for over 8 minutes. Around 5 minutes into it, the band finished a wee bit earlier than expected and people started coming back through from the other room. Zeek and Giz were so engrossed in their performance that they didn't notice the audience building up around the dance floor. As the record started to fade out, Zeek and Giz almost filled their breeks when they got a chorus of cheers and applause from the crowd! Steve swore that they would never do that again... this is the same Zeek who now leads a lunatic band in Holland. See:-

http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?
fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendID=8556232

Pete has piles of photos that he took at the BA and, one of these days, we're gonna put our brains together and write as much of an illustrated history of the BA during that period that we can remember and stick it on the 'net. Pete's at an advantage here; as he did all the driving, he was always sober. I was known to partake of a bottle of DC or three so my memories are a tad hazy.

Some other bands who appeared include, Saxon, Samson, Motorhead, Girl's School, Girl, Druid, Chas & Dave (three times-excellent!), Supercharge, After The Fire, Pallas, Gordon Giltrap (brilliant concert!), Krazy Kat, Fischer Z, Joe Jackson, the Pirates, Flamin' Groovies, Dire Straits (to a crowd of 30 on a Wednesday night, which included the humpin' squad, the bar staff, me and Pete and the jannie!) and, of course, Skeets Boliver...

Anonymous typed,
"...and it was a sh*t venue for a roadie, i'm sure they had a service elevator that was broken more than working :-)"
The Students' Union actually employed a "humpin' squad", led by Robin Patterson. I think there were around six of them, including Derek Robb and 'Joe 90'. Their job was to help the bands' roadies to get the gear upstairs, by lift or stairs. Druid had this huge crate about eight feet long, referred to as "the coffin", which they couldn't get in the front door and into the lift or round the corner to get up the stairs. So it was manhandled by the roadies and humpin' squad up the rear fire escape and through one of the big windows, almost directly onto the stage!
An addendum to the humpin' squad story... The night that Dire Straits played was just before they were due to go to the US for their first tour. They were so impressed with the squad that they offered Robin the chance to go with them to the States as one of their road crew. Because he was at college, he, reluctantly, declined. He's still wondering today, "What if...".

The Historian mentioned "Revillos". I assume Historian meant "Rezillos". The fire limit for the whole complex was 600 spread across the various rooms. The Friday night that the Rezillos (just about) played, there was more than a full house; around 800 I believe.
Almost everybody was squeezed into the big hall for the start of the Rezillo's performance. Unfortunately, after no more than five minutes, some numptie threw a can of beer at their drummer and they stormed off stage. Fin. Period. When the crowd realised that the band weren't coming back on stage, they began to get a wee bit perturbed as they drifted back to the wee hall (the one with the long bar and queue). I was told that they were going to close the union in half an hour so I was to "do what you can".
I hauled out my Rezillos album and singles (I think they had released four singles up to that time) and played non-stop Rezillos to a full floor for half an hour. The crowd eventually left without any major trouble. Quite chuffed I was at that... Neither the Rezillos nor the Revillos played the BA again, in my time there.
Norrie McGrath, the VP Ents after Jim Thomson, booked the Rezillos off his own bat for a gig in the Marryat Hall, at which Deepwater Disco was the support. I'm sure I've still got a ticket somewhere...

There's one more thing I'll mention before I finish off:

For the annual students' charity parade in 1977, Pete and I offered the use of PA equipment for the Bell Street float (Bell Street always had one float in the parade of around 30.)
It was decided that the theme of the float would be the TV programme "Happy Days". I recorded, repeatedly, the theme from "Happy Days" on both sides of a cassette so the song would continually play as the parade moved through the town. The back of the lorry was kitted out as the cafe from the series, complete with pinball machine from the BA. The usual procedure at the end of the parade was for the floats to go down to the Coup to dump the constructions and stuff off the back. Pete was in the lorry's cab - I was working that day but joined them as they went up Seagate and along High Street.
On their way back from the Coup to the Dundee Uni Union for the after-parade party, as the lorry turned from Riverside drive into Magdalen Yard Road, the pins holding up the side of the lorry gave way and everybody sitting on it fell onto the road, followed by the pin table.
One student, Alison Jeffries, was killed and at least two others had serious injuries that kept them in crutches and bandages for months.

This incident resulted in the cessation of the annual students' charity parade until just recently. What annoys me is that neither on the 25th nor 30th anniversaries of the incident, nor when they started the charities parades again, was the tragedy publicly remembered by either Abertay or Dundee Uni, nor their respective Students' Associations. Like it never happened.

Those of us who were involved at the time will never forget.

Brian Wilson, DJ Marketgait Union, 1976-87.
PS: Hello Bridie! Long time, no type... 8=)

Reply

Replies

Anonymous 15 December 2014 at 17:27

Just found this page as I was feeling a little nostalgic! On Friday the 20th of December 1984. in a few days that will be 30 years ago! It was the night I met someone who was to become an amazing friend and 20 years later we would have actually figured out how much we cared for each other and got married in 2004, 10 years on we now live in Southern California, we come home often and Mike is a frequent guest lecturer at The University. But on that first night we met, I was led by the hand by my new group of friends (Well a knew a couple of them from Perth High School) We were now all students in Dundee.. We would always meet up in Foreigners have a few drinks.. (My Fiends had to order for me as if you were under 18 you had a pink line through your student ID) after a few weeks of being there so much they Mary knew my face and no-one asked to see I never got OTT (Well unless we were having a peanut throwing war!) LOL! We all had brillient times at the Marketgait. Mrinking Green Monsters and Dancing to the best DJ around..At the Marketgait or "Down The Junction"With it's blood red walls and sometime slippy sometimes stick dance floor! As Long as Brian was playing we would be there! :)

Anonymous 15 December 2014 at 17:37

One of best nights was very first red nose day and the cream-pie fights!
Only really scarey night was when was at the front of crowd when The Sweet started playing and the crowd at the back began pushing forward and For a scarey few minutes I was Crushed across a barrier and could not get a breath until my friend Womble saw what was happening and managed to get our boys to push back enough and form a human tunnel so we could escape to the side!

Kat2512 5 February 2019 at 23:38

Hi

I'm aware this is an old post so not sure if anyone will respond.

Alison Jeffery was (would have been) my aunt.

I know that there is no ill feeling that her death is not remembered. We prefer to hold onto happy memories.

I also recently discovered that the students created a trust fund to provide to the mkst socially involved student and that my grandparents received an annual invite to the prize giving. At their request, this was added in to other funds after a period of time.

Thank you for remembering her. I recently started a post on Real Dundonian History on Facebook to find out more about her and your description of the union is amazing! Can imagine her enjoying a great night out there.

Kat

Thanks again

RETRO DUNDEE 6 February 2019 at 01:13

Kat, there is an article about Alison on the Bowlin' Alley website.
Here's the link to scroll down to the item - https://bowlinalley.weebly.com/scrapbook.html

GG

Reply

Brian DoonTheToon aka Brian Wilson 15 February 2009 at 03:47

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Hi GG.

Something I forgot. You typed,
"Apart from the cheap beer, the other attraction was live music. Like the University circuit, it was a good place to catch acts at the

the University circuit, it was a good place to catch acts at the beginning of their career. The Sex Pistols played there in 1976. Simple Minds in 78."

The Bowlin' Alley was so highly regarded by the national promoters that they would jiggle bands' tour dates so they could do the Bowlin' Alley gig on a Friday.

A wee urban legend(?) about the Sex Pistols' gig; apparently, Frankie Vaughan was on at the Barracuda next door the same night and Johnny Rotten got to hear of this. At some point, he decided to go next door "to see my pal, Frankie". He got as far as the steps at the entrance to the "Big Fish" before, as they say in court circles, he was 'summarily dismissed", which meant that the bouncers took one look at him and threw him down the stairs.

Further trivia; The Bowlin' Alley gig was the original Sex Pistols' only ever gig in Scotland. Their fee was £250. According to the Pistols' web site, it was on 12th October, 1976.

BW 8=)

Reply

RETRO DUNDEE 15 February 2009 at 12:29

Wow, excellent stuff, Brian. Thanks a lot for all that "behind the scenes" info. Very useful to have such a clear account of events and very amusing in places too!
Yeah, your broad range of music styles played a big part in it, one of the many pluses about the BA. I, personally found that playing the likes of Black Sabbath's "Paranoid" followed by Donna Summer's "I feel love" followed by Orange Juice's "Rip it up" was just the kind of blend that had me going back every week.
I used to hang out with Zeek & Giz. Not just the BA but in Foreigners, Tay Centre/Ferry Bar. They also used to crash out in my city centre flat after the binging. Ultra mad days!! Zappa meets Devo, that sums it up!!
I think you & Pete doing a Bowling Alley site would be great. Seems like you have plenty material for a book! Dunfermline's Kinema and Glasgow Apollo have great sites, so I'm sure a lot of Dundonians would love something similar that they could relate to. Most of this kind of stuff gets overlooked and whizzes past undocumented, so it's up to the likes of yourself to tell the story. You wont find any of this stuff in Dundee Library!
I'd give it some serious thought and I'm sure everybody who read and write the comments would give the idea a big thumbs up too.
Anyway, many thanks again for the time you spent on all the extra details and links. Fantastic. Cheerz GG

Reply

Anonymous 26 February 2009 at 17:05

Great stuff Brian. Loved reading all of that on the Bowling Alley and the memories came flooding back. I mentioned The Rev/zillos gig and I also remember the can whizzing past my head and hitting the drummer full on the face - ouch! To be honest, for past few years Ive wondered, did that really happen or was it just in my mind! The Bowling Alley deserves a plaque outside, no question. The Bowling Alley at that particular period in my life, saved me. It introduced me to punk and live music, something that I continue to follow to this day. Thank you!

Reply

Michael 24 May 2009 at 15:54

Played there in 2004 towards the end of its time as Abertay Student Union, and can confirm that we had great fun carrying all the gear up to the top floor and back down again after...ahem.

I think by that time everything was taking place on the same floor (top), gigs were in the big room with the bar, seated area and sunken dancefloor. I remember seeing bands there a couple of times where they had been set up to play on the dancefloor, so of course no-one sat down (ie the majority) could see them.

Reply

Brian Wilson 25 May 2009 at 16:13

.
Hi Michael.

The actual union premises were always only on the top floor. The way that the building had been converted from a jute mill meant that the actual floor of the top floor in the entrance area and 'wee hall' was above the level of the original floor by around three or four feet.

Hence the references to the "downstairs" hall at the back (which was converted to a gym hall, going by an earlier comment); it was on the same top floor but you went down a few steps to enter it. As you left the bar hall at the other end (to the south), through the door at the end of the bar, you went down a few steps to access the "quiet lounge" on the left and the games room on the right (which, latterly, had a opening cut through the dividing wall to the 'wee hall'), then onward to the darkroom (photographic club), band rehearsal room and offices.

The jannie's buckie was halfway down the stairs at the south end of the building, the opposite end from the main entrance with the dodgy lift.

This explains how they were able to install a "sunken" dance floor in the 'wee hall' when they refurbished. The bottoms of the windows were, more or less, in line with the floor level in the 'wee hall' but were a few feet up in all the other areas of the top floor.

From my memories of spending enjoyable evenings on the top floor around 1967-68 when it was the Skyline Bowl, I would assume the top floor was built split level so that you went down four or five steps from the central area, which had the pin tables, arcade machines, 'American Pool' tables, refreshments counter, etc, to the two sets of tenpin lanes at either end.

Incidentally, the middle floor, between the union and the garage on the ground floor, was, in the 70's and probably well into the 80's, full of working jute mill equipment which was used for one of the engineering courses at the time.

By the way, the last time I was in the building was around 1995, invited by Ken, one of the ex-Presidents, to see The Sweet. Brian Connolly looked seriously ill but they still did a stonkin' set.

8=)

Reply

Anonymous 26 June 2009 at 11:32

Went to Bell Street Tech in the early 80's and spent many nights in the BA. Remember two nights in particular. First was a Beatles Disco night, playing , of course, only Beatles music. This was dire and managed to put me off the Beatles for the next 10 years. Second night was the Pirates gig which was brilliant. Went to the gig expecting nothing much and was blown away by a brilliant gig. 'We're all in it together'

Reply

Ewan 6 February 2010 at 19:57

I always though the beer can incident happened at the Pistol's gig. I knew the guy that threw the can!

Reply

Malcolm Macnotellin 22 March 2010 at 11:44

I was briefly and not terribly successfully involved in the Executive Committee of the Students Union back in the 1990s. By then, things had changed quite a bit, and it was strange reading about some of what I'd heard as ancient history and rumour. It's good to have it confirmed that the sunken pit had been originally used as a dance floor, that confirms one of the tales I heard. It was of course a strange place to put a dance floor, where no one could see it! By the time I was there, a new dance floor and very small stage had been built up at the other end of what you call the 'long bar'.

The reason for the sunken pit, so I was told, stemmed back to the place's original use as a bowling alley; as some of you pointed out, the whole place was on a false floor above the original mill floor; the pit was where all the bowling alley equipment to line up the pins and return the balls had been. From what you also said about going 'downstairs', yes now I remember there were stairs down to the back hall.

'Downstairs' as you called it, or 'the back hall' as we knew it, was sadly completely disused apart from the occasional exam or AGM. The bar in there had been long closed and there were no active beer lines going into there. Brian, your original DJ booth was still there, but all the equipment was gone ... the lighting gantry was still up but with virtually no lights on it! Can't remember now if the console to control the lights was still in the booth. I only poked around in there once or twice...

One of the problems of course with putting the dance floor at the other end of the long bar was the fact everything was on a false floor ... dance too hard and the decks bounce up and down! I remember Paul, a fellow student and the main DJ by my day, took me behind the desk once and showed how the whole lot was built on a brick foundation that went all the way down to the original floor below; that was the only way they'd managed to solve that problem...

When I joined as a student in '91, the place had been through a refit a few years back and though it was broadly the same place some elements of it might be hard to recognise. I'm trying to persuade a friend to let me upload some pics of his somewhere, for you to see (once I've found the less embarrassing ones - hah... You can't see much in most of them anyway alas).

For instance, there was a new bar fitted in the 'long bar' that wouldn't have been there back then ... the games area is, I think, pretty much as you describe. It was in between the long bar and downstairs, and sort of off to the side? Had some pinball machines, etc [and for a while an original Atari Star Wars cabinet, which I eventually managed to master and complete!]

There was a whole bit, just off to the right of the door as you came in, that had been walled off and that was where the beer store and goods lift were ... plus some odd little wooden offices; never did find out what they had been used for.

[continued in next post]

Reply

Malcolm Macnotellin 22 March 2010 at 11:46

Bands, by then, had become a rare occurrence at the Bowling Alley. I remember once getting a bollocking for letting a band travel up in the goods lift (they asked :D) ... not realising it was as unsafe and unreliable as hell!

Fridays and Saturdays were still well busy back then, even though by then the door policy had become even tighter - no guests could be signed in by students from other unis/colleges at all, and everyone - male and female - got frisked and searched on the way in. Couldn't see them standing for that back in the 70s ... :D

By the time I was there, the uni had wrested commercial control of the bar etc away from the students union and placed it in the hands of a bar manager called Audrey ... I never did find out why that had happened? Various rumours abounded, like the Union had gone bust, or had lost its licence, or something. No one ever knew why. Kinda weird... If anyone does know the reason it'd be interesting to know. She controlled all the bars and security, we never got a look in on the commercial end of things ... whatever had happened it must have been pretty bad...!

As for the jannie's office being downstairs ... occasionally while on duty I'd sneak down there to spend a quiet half hour with the jannie on duty that night, and bring him a drink [non-alcoholic of course ;)]. Used to have some good chats with him; he got well bored down there sometimes!

Of course, now the Bowling Alley is a Travelodge and nothing's left but memories. Occasionally I drive past the old entrance and remember the good old days.

A few weeks ago I was actually in the new student union, which is just across the road from 'Bell Street Tech'. It's all very nice and modern, but doesn't look like it even has a dedicated dance floor anywhere. Do they all just go to nightclubs nowadays? I dunno...

Reply

Malcolm Macnotellin 22 March 2010 at 13:20

I did an attempt at a floor plan of the place, as it was when I was there, best as I could from a) tracing the building out in Google Maps; b) using my memory from there on ...

http://www.clumpton.com/malcolm/images/marketgait_labelled.jpg

Reply

Brian Wilson 2 May 2010 at 12:48

.
Hi Malcolm.

If you see this, have a look at:-

http://retrodundee.blogspot.com/2010/05/original-bowling-alley.html

Further info re your sketch can be had by emailing me at:-

web.BUMFgaffer@virgin.net
(Remove BUMF to give correct address.)

Reply

jackieme 15 June 2010 at 08:04

Hi Brian - think I know you. Did you used to live somewhere around Dens Road? Do you remember a mad wee lass from Whitfield? 78 -79ish?
if that's you, then I still have fond memories of times with you....

Reply

jackieme 15 June 2010 at 08:22

Oh, and I was also in the crowd the night the Revillos drummer got smashed in the face with a can.

Also remember seeing the Skids there, and 999. Heh. I had forgotten about those days.

Reply

Brian Wilson 15 June 2010 at 12:57

.
Hi Jackieme.

How could I forget 79/80? My email's above if you want to compare notes on memory retention...

8=)

Reply

jackieme 16 June 2010 at 05:01

Ooops, yes - 79-80. Will drop you a line.....kind of nervous now! You seem to have some kind of super dooper memory thing going on - sure you aren't related Derren Brown?

X

Reply

Brian Wilson 12 September 2010 at 04:05

.
Having found my diaries from the time, I admit that I had totally forgotten that The Revillos also played at the BA.
I can now confirm that both the Rezillos and the Revillos played the BA. Rezillos was Friday 3rd March '78; Revillos was Friday 28th September 1979.
Long time no hear, Jackie...
8=)

Reply

Anonymous 18 January 2011 at 13:26

oh those were the days! 78-81 i think was when we were there. Never was a student but never had any trouble getting in either - at least twice a week, sometimes more. We saw Saxon who were awful and i seem to remember tell that Siouxsie had been there. there was an amazing beach party at some point too! Brian i like your posts - more info that i ever knew but also brings back memories. You were always asked for Burlesque, Miss You, Come to the Sabbat, or maybe even a little Ozark Mountain Daredevils - specially for us. I'm the blonde one of the two! Ring any bells?

Reply

Brian Wilson 20 January 2011 at 03:23

.
Hi Jackie Blonde.

"Burlesque, Miss You, Come to the Sabbat, or maybe even a little Ozark Mountain Daredevils"

An eclectic mix! Even if you'd only mentioned Ozark Mountain Daredevils or "Jackie Blue", I would have guessed you were Jackie B or Jackie Blonde! How's things?

The Beach Parties...

There were two organised by Deepwater Disco; I think they were '77 and '78. Pete and I put forward the idea to the VP Ents, the idea being that the beach party would be held on the very last night of the summer term in June, we'd supply the disco for free, it would be free admission (by invite ticket, I recall), there would be NO admission unless you were wearing beachwear and it was stipulated on the invite that "rolled up jeans are NOT beachwear"!

Pete was on the door (I think part of his outfit was a snorkel mask) and the dress code was vigourously enforced. People were turned away at the door (even if they had an invite) if they weren't wearing beachwear. Quite a number disappeared, then returned some time later, duly adorned with beachwear. One guy had flippers and a diving suit! I guess eyebrows must have been raised all over town as people went home after those parties, 'on a hot summer's night'...
I remember Sheila and Angie from Chalmers and Joy had got themselves yellow and orange crepe paper and made themselves Hawaiian 'grass skirt' outfits. Looked stunning!

The Gordon Douglas Band, AKA The Heroes, also played for free and they were all dressed in beachwear as well.

As I said, there were two beach parties, organised by ourselves, highly successful. The side benefit of having them on the last night of term was that the bar had to get rid of all the keg beer/lager so I seem to remember that prices were reduced towards the end of the night to finish them off.

So, the management committee, seeing the success, decided that they could organise them better and took control for '79. The first thing they decided was that the beach party would take place in October, at the end of Freshers' Week. October weather is just SO suitable for the wearing of beachwear...
They also made a charge for entry and there was no incentive to wear beachwear, like free entry. Result? Only around half a dozen people turned up in beachwear.
BUMMER! 'A camel is a horse designed by a committee...'

Onnyhoo, the last time I saw Jackie B was around '83; she had moved to Edinburgh. You still in touch? If you want to email me, you can get me at:-

brianBUMFLUFFwilson.discotheques@virginmedia.com

(Remove BUMFLUFF to get correct address.)

Catchya anon,
Brian 8=)

Reply

Anonymous 5 May 2011 at 15:59

I saw her the other day and we got reminiscing and i suddenly remembered my post. Had forgotten completely - old age! We loved the first beach party, same as we loved most nights spent in the BA. I def remember it was 4 bacardi n cokes for a pound! Wish I could find somewhere these days like that and with the quality of music played then too. Am I really forgetful, or what's with the beach boy name?

Reply

Brian Wilson 7 May 2011 at 00:10

.
Hi anonymous Jackie Blonde.
Email me at the address I gave above or find me on Facebook - "Brian Doonthetoon" - or through the Foreigners Reunion page.
BTW: Wilson is my middle name. I started using it when I created "Brian's Disco" in the Bowlin' Alley around '83.
8=)

Reply

Brian Wilson 7 May 2011 at 00:33

.
BTW: checked my diaries. The Beach Parties were on Saturday, 24th June, 1978 and Saturday, 9th June, 1979.
In 1978, between January and the Beach Party, bands at the Bowlin' Alley included,
Jan 13 - The Heroes (Gordon Douglas's band)
Jan 20 - The Valves and Dan's Band
Jan 27 - XTC and The Secret
Feb 03 - Deke Leonard's Iceberg
Feb 10 - Krazy Kat
Feb 17 - The Alternators

Feb 24 - Skeets Boliver and Ignatz
Feb 28 - The Rezillos
Mar 10 - Five Hand Reel
Mar 17 - No Dice
Mar 31 - Cafe Jacques and The Heroes
Apr 21 - Supercharge
Apr 28 - The Young Ones
May 19 - Skeets Boliver
Jun 17 - The Flamin' Groovies
Jun 21 - Dire Straits
Jun 23 - Cado Belle

A fair old selection...
8=)

Reply

Unknown 29 May 2012 at 17:41

Wow - that was a brilliant slice of history for me - I'm a current Executive Officer at Abertay Students' Association, sounds like I missed some great times.

Can't fill in many of the blanks historically but I think some of our current staff might be able to help, although for the record the new Union does have a dedicated nightclub/dancefloor in the basement - it still doesn't see as much use however.

Brian, I'm not sure how you can have Hawkwind's Master of the Universe and 'no taste' in the same paragraph to be honest. I'd love to get in touch though, especially regarding the incident at the Annual Students' Charity Parade - which I'm not sure anyone in the current executive is aware of, see if we can't manage something for the 35th Anniversary.

Anyway I could chat here forever but it's late and I'm trying to get over my addiction to ranting but drop me a line at briBUMFzee25@gmail.com - I do love that way of getting around bots ;) (Get rid of the bumf)

Reply

Brian DoonTheToon aka Brian Wilson 28 October 2015 at 13:33

In case anyone's still following this, my current email is:-

brianBUMFLUFFwilson@doonthetoon.plus.com

Remove BUMFLUFF for correct address.
Happy to discuss any matters further.

Reply

stewart l 3 March 2018 at 01:32

one for the oracle brian wilson. btw many thx for taking me back to 75-79 period when I was an engineering student at DCoT as it was then and the union was a place to get a piece of action. I signed in a couple of mates during a boozy friday night maybe around feb/march time during that period and remember what could have been the pistols or simple minds gig but do vaguely remember the floor being awash with beer and thinking of billy connolly's welly boot song! All 3 of us were stocious yet Danny decided to drive back! we hit a lampy along the coast going thru monifieth and decided to ditch the motor and hitch hike back to arbroath!

Reply

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