

# Arts In Leicestershire

Online magazine for the arts

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## Jazz and blues in Leicester and Leicestershire 2012

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### *Jazz, blues, jazz bands, jazz singers, bands in 2012*

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### Introducing - blues band The Beeliacs

 blues band the beeliacs

Take one helping of mellifluous vocals by Claire Shortland, throw in a good pinch of magical keyboard playing from Steve Billau, stir in the unique guitar sounds of Adrian Manise, blend with the driving bass guitar of Paul Coulson, amalgamate with the Chicago-style harp playing of Carlos Stein, add a good kick of solid drumming from Dave Ives and you have the arrival of The Beeliacs - a six-piece blues band from Leicester. Blues has never been so well blended.

[Find out more about The Beeliacs on Facebook](#)

### New web site launched for Jazz in Leicester

The Y have launched a site which holds comprehensive jazz listings for the whole county.

[Leicester Jazz](#)

### Interview with Henry Lowther

 **Henry Lowther**

Jazz trumpeter Henry Lowther was born in Leicester in 1941. In our interview, he talks about his early days in Leicester, playing at Woodstock, The Leicester Jazz scene and his advice to today's young jazz musicians.

### **What are your earliest memories of Leicester?**

I was born and spent the first years of my childhood in Boundary Road, adjacent to the old Aylestone Road gas works and some of my earliest memories are of the coal heaps behind the red brick wall across the road from our house and of the Victorian gasometers. As a child I was fascinated by these

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and also by the little pannier tank railway locomotives that pulled the wagons of coal about. Another early memory is of a lounge area by the toilets in Lewis's department store where my mother used to take me. There were two rose coloured mirrors facing each other on opposite walls and these created reflections that stretched images to infinity.

### **When did you get into music? Did you come from a musical family?**

I grew up in a Salvation Army family and from an early age was surrounded by music and musicians. There were brass instrument players on both sides of my family and I was taught to play cornet by my father. I was so young when I learnt to read music that I can't remember a time in my life when I couldn't. My mother also enjoyed listening to opera. My first jazz playing was also in Leicester, playing with students in the Queen's Hall at Leicester University.

### **I'm told you played at Woodstock. Which artists do you remember most from that?**

I played at the famous Woodstock festival in August, 1969, with the Keef Hartley Band. We played on the Saturday afternoon. Whether you played or not depended on whether you could manage to get on a helicopter. We were never included in the Woodstock film because our brilliant (sic) manager wouldn't let them film us without money up front! What a genius! During the two or three hours we were there I saw Santana and the compere, John Sebastian. The Incredible String Band were playing as we were leaving.

### **What do you think of today's Jazz Scene?**

It's often said that jazz is dead but won't lie down! In many ways this is true but it is also true that jazz is having a harder time than ever these days. There are a number of reasons for this, not the least of which is a lack of interest and therefore a lack of exposure in the media. One possible effect of this is that, with some exceptions, the average age of the jazz audience is now about my age (in my 60s) and young people are not being attracted to the music. Jazz has always been a bit maverick in the sense that neither the media, the music industry, the broadcasters or the Arts establishment can decide what to do with it. Is it high brow art music or low brow light entertainment? Of course it's neither or both, some of it is and some of it isn't. The present Government has not been supportive either, even obstructive, with it's insane and irrational Premises Licence Act which came into force in November, 2005. I know of a number of venues that no longer host live music events because they couldn't be bothered with the red tape or weren't prepared to meet the extra costs involved. On a more optimistic note there are dozens of wonderful and many outstanding young jazz musicians emerging and they all do it for no other reason than love of the

music. In London there are now one or two venues which these young musicians run and organise themselves and, indeed, they are also attracting a young audience. I wish them all well! They deserve to be supported as much as possible.

### **Did you play any memorable Jazz concerts here in Leicester?**

I've played in Leicester many times over the years, right back to my teen years, in Salvation Army halls, in the wonderful De Montfort Hall (playing violin with the Leicester Symphony Orchestra), the old Granby Halls (with Manfred Mann), in pubs and in recent years in the Y Theatre. Perhaps the most memorable gig was 30 odd years ago when I played in the Queen's Hall in Leicester University with a band called the BBC Radio Leicester Big Band. This was led by Roger Eames, who at the time was a BBC Radio Leicester producer. I was a guest soloist along with saxophonist Alan Skidmore and the brilliant drummer Tony Oxley. We were actually the support band for a quintet led by the legendary American bassist and composer Charlie Mingus.

### **Your band was called "Still Waters" - are they still playing? What happened to them?**

Still Waters is still in existence even though we haven't been doing a lot recently. We do have a couple of gigs in London in May and will be appearing at the London Jazz Festival in November. This latter gig will be also be with the Royal Academy of Music's Big Band which will be featuring compositions by myself and two other members of Still Waters, saxophonist Pete Hurt and pianist Pete Saberton.

### **Do you have a message for young jazz players in leicester starting out on their musical career?**

Perhaps the most difficult question, particularly after my earlier comments! My advice would simply be to be determined to play, don't give up, practice and above all to love and live the music. I'm not a romantic about jazz but Charlie Parker said it when he said, "If you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn!" Also don't play only for yourself but remember that there are other musicians on the bandstand with you. Listen, learn from and play with them! On a practical note, at one time I would say go to London because that's where all the musicians are but now an additional problem is that many musicians can no longer afford to live there so they are now scattered all over the place so there is, sadly, less of a community than in the past.

[More about Henry Lowther](#) | [Henry Lowther on Wikipedia](#)

### **Jazz in Leicester**

Here are some useful links:

Details of Jazz concerts are given on our [events listing](#)

Find out what's on at the Musician

**Cafe Bruxelles.** 90-92 High Street, Leicester. Tel: 0116 224 3013. Monday and Thursdays

### **Priory Jazzclub .**

Nanpanton, Loughborough, LE11 3YD. Mainly Trad Jazz - every Thursday at 8.30 p.m. £6 admission. Food served until 9.00pm. Tel. 01509 216333 (pub) or Dave Harmer 01509 503745

### [Jazz at the Priory](#)

If you know of any Jazz concerts taking place in Leicester or Leicestershire please let me know - go to our [contact page](#)

### **Experimental edge**

Bands making their mark with experimental music

#### [Black Carrot](#)

Three ultra-talented musicians are demanding, intimidating, frenetic and mental. Frankly, you wouldn't dare make them up. A crisp and sharp trio, comprising drums, both double and electric bass, electric piano and tenor sax and assorted woodwind instruments. Dedicated to the virtues of improvisation, it is hard to actually categorise them easily - which is to the good. This is music that has the rigour of improvisation done well but also is accessible via the jazzy rhythms, at times they reminiscent of a New York-style band like Defunct or James Chance and the Contortions from the punk jazz/loft side of the no-wave days. Check out [www.blackcarrot.net](http://www.blackcarrot.net) for more information, free music, gig news and a shop.

#### [Alto Stratus](#)

**Alto Stratus** is the duo of **Alan** and **Steve Freeman** , from Leicester, spent much of our spare time during the early 1980's experimenting with synthesizers, sound collage, etc., and during that period we recorded some 30 odd cassettes as Alto Stratus (and under other guises: as Vrije, Q.S.O., Electric Junk), also as soloists, and the trio with sound artist Nigel Harris in ZBB (aka Zircon & The Burning Brains). After a lengthy hiatus, establishing the Ultima Thule shop, Alan got into playing music again becoming the synth effects and weird noise maker in Maureen Anderson's Shapeshifter. Later Alan and Jim Tetlow left Shapeshifter, joining up with Alan's brother Steve to form Endgame, an improvising trio, now with over 50 releases. Alto Stratus also continued as a duo, reissuing the classic "TACHYON" after which we named our home studio.

### **Other pages you might like:**

[Pop music in Leicester](#)

[Acoustic and open-mic gigs](#)

