**Contemporary Music and Hull**

A longstanding British port city, a hugely successful post-WWII musical export, a breakthrough moment for British music in America; it’s an often repeated story, but here it concerns Hull’s David Whitfield – the most successful British singer in 1950s America and the first to earn a gold disc for one million record sales. Whitfield never moved away from East Yorkshire, but later musicians left to further their careers. Mick Ronson and Trevor Bolder, with Driffield’s Mick Woodmansey, relocated to late 1960s London, where they later became David Bowie’s band, The Spiders From Mars. Likewise, Roland Gift moved away in the 1980s to become lead singer with the highly successful Birmingham-based, Fine Young Cannibals. These Hull musicians influenced music around the world.

Other performers and writers from Hull had a significant impact on a diverse array of musical forms. Britain’s first family of folk, The Watersons ­– siblings Norma, Mike, Lal, and their cousin, John Harrison – lived in the Avenues, and, like Whitfield, remained in the region throughout their long and distinguished career. The group’s formative years coincided with a fellow Avenues resident, the poet and Hull University librarian, Philip Larkin, becoming one of Britain’s most astute jazz critics. Larkin covered jazz for *The Daily Telegraph* from 1961-1968 and was a habitué of the jazz clubs of Hull and Beverley.

There is also a strong tradition of musicians moving to Hull. Singer and songwriter Paul Heaton moved from Sheffield in 1983 and formed The Housemartinswith Hull’s Stan Cullimore. The group readily promoted their Hull allegiance in the title of their debut album: *London 0 Hull 4.* Maintaining the barbed humour, Heaton named his next band The Beautiful South*.* Like The Housemartin*s,* they were comprised of Hull-based musicians and enjoyed significant commercial and critical success, from their inception in 1988 until 2007, when they disbanded due to “musical similarities”! Another widely acclaimed group formed by newcomers to Hull was Everything But The Girl. This 1980s duo, named after the slogan of a furniture shop in Beverley Road, consisted of Tracey Thorn and Ben Watt, both former students at Hull University, as were, before them, *Throbbing Gristle* front man Genesis P-Orridge, and, after them, *Foals* guitarist, Jimmy Smith.

Hull’s student population, coupled with other music fans in and around the city, has sustained a healthy music scene. This supports well-regarded independent record stores, accessible recording studios, and a boisterous live music scene, exemplified by the New Adelphi Club – a legendary venue for new bands since 1984. Hull also boasts an increasingly influential club scene. This makes use of previously vacant buildings, especially around the Fruit Market (home to the world’s only Museum of Club Culture) and, more recently, beside the River Hull where Gate Nº5, for example, attracts DJs and clubbers from across the North. Finally, Hull is also becoming increasingly well-known for its festivals, ranging from dedicated folk and jazz festivals, to the rock and dance orientated Humber Street Sesh and the Freedom Festival with its eclectic range of music. Hull’s emerging reputation, as a place from which musicians emerge from but also move to, is one likely to be reinforced by the 2017 City of Culture celebrations.

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