



A time of wonderment

Transcription of excerpts from interviews with
Mary Simcox, David Roberts, Julie Kenwright, John Sanders,
Ralph Titley and Sean Taylor, explaining what Malvern Winter Gardens
meant to them (2018)

Mary: How lucky we were to have a venue in a small town that we could see such good bands. We were lucky with the time, and the music, because it was such an experimental time. We were lucky to be in a small town and not to have to keep travelling to Birmingham or Bristol, to have this venue on, really almost literally on my doorstep. We were incredibly lucky, and that's probably why a lot of people of our generation became musicians I should imagine. For me, I took it for granted, it was normal. I went to school, it was right next to where I lived. I would go there sometimes. And now looking back we were incredibly lucky.

David: I don't think people quite realised how important Malvern was, you know, in the music scene in Britain. It was a known venue on the national circuit, yeah. So people talk about lots of, you know, the Free Trade Hall in Manchester, you know, iconic places to go and see bands, but Malvern was in there, it was on every, a lot of major bands, it was the place, it was a place that you would stop off at. And it shouldn't be forgotten, so I'm really pleased that somebody's putting a project together to do that.

Julie: It was such an essential thing for teenagers in those days. It gave them a place to just go and let off all that energy and enjoy a live experience. Just widen the horizons of people who just lived out in the middle of nowhere. It just brought a bit of excitement into our lives. I can't really describe how it

made you feel. I can't put it into words how exciting it was. Just that energy and vibe going on. 'Cause that era was really exciting, it was the era when just the whole of your cultural stuff was just new. And I don't know whether there's been an era like that where we'd come from boring '70s disco, prog rock, to just, whoa, let's just explode and just set the world alight.

John: It's not like the old days, it will never go back to the old days 'cause you've now got a ten foot gap between the stage and the audience, whereas you used to lean on the stage when you were younger. But yeah, you'll never, I don't think, if you're into music, you will never stop going to see live bands 'cause it's just inbred into you. You know, the records are great, but it isn't the same. You know, you can play the records as loud as you like, it's not even close. Even the live albums, it's not even close. It's too sterile. Thank God to the places like the Winter Gardens 'cause without places like that a lot of people would just be drongos.

Ralph: It was quite weird because in a way it wasn't unusual, you know, the bands just came to Malvern. So, you know, so you think of a famous band and they just, sooner or later, they would turn up at Malvern. And I didn't realise how unusual that was until much later. You know, I was living down in London and, you know, and just chatting to the people who lived next door, and I said, "Oh yeah, I've seen The Undertones. Oh yeah, I've seen Stiff Little Fingers. Oh yeah, I've seen this, I've seen them, I've seen them. I saw them three times," you know. And they would be sort of looking at you going, "You liar!" You know, and it's quite a weird sort of thing. But it was totally normal for us.

Sean: To me it made a lasting impression. It made a lasting impression on me and how you live your life, and what your attitudes are, and how you accept people, and the fact that most people were quite liberally minded. And I think that generation of - preceded the generation - 'cause born in the '60s you were baby boomers or whatever. Stuff was still on ration when my parents were alive, and I think, you know, when you get into the '70s it

actually became liberated. And the bit that I remember from that is with great fondness, and it doesn't matter whether you go and see U2 in a 100,000 stadium, to me it doesn't recreate the atmosphere that they had in the late '70s, mid '70s certainly, late '70s at the Winter Gardens. 'Cause it's part of your life. And I think anybody that went it would be, I don't think anybody would look back on it and think what a dreadful place that was. Weren't those gigs awful? Weren't the people dreadful? I'd fail for you to find anybody that would say that. It would be a time of wonderment and excitement, and almost optimism. I think that's what's missing now, as you get older you turn into a grumpy old swine, and it always looks better looking back, but I strongly believe that it was.

*Transcripts of the full interviews are available from Rock Around the Hills
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