



Backstage and offstage encounters

Transcription of excerpts from interviews with
Alison Gunson, Julie Kenwright, Mary Simcox, Pat Grizzell,
Persefoni Salter and Phil Williams

Alison: I was staying with a friend in Malvern and we were going to go and see, I'm sure it was Jethro Tull. Because I can remember going up Church Street in Malvern, the band were walking down the road and we were, they came into the same café we were in, and they were writing all over our history books, and we all got into trouble [laughs]. And our history books contained things about Jethro Tull and the seed drill, which they thought was highly amusing [laughs].

Julie: My friends that I went with were glass collectors at the Winter Gardens. Because it was a way for them to earn money and free entry, obviously. Because they were glass collectors they knew that you could go backstage afterwards. So, if you just waited after the concert - so the concert was fantastic. I loved the Rich Kids because it was, erm, because that was Midge Ure and, erm, that's right, 'cause that was the guy that was the group that had Glen Matlock in from the Sex Pistols. So these friends had said to me, "If you stay after the concert they'll let you in the back, in backstage." So, I stayed after the concert, and I had my blue trench coat on, and I had a badge of Eddie and the Hot Rods with the, it has like a, they have like Mickey Mouse ears on them. So I had a Eddie and the Hot Rods badge. And I remember going round backstage at the Winter Gardens and I met Midge Ure, I met Rusty Egan, I met Steve New, met Glen Matlock, and even, just as exciting, Mick Jones was there from The Clash, 'cause he's a big mate

of Glen Matlock. So Mick Jones was there with his feet up, and we went round getting their autographs, and I remember Steve New saying, "Oh, what's your badge?" And I was going, "Oh, I've hid it so no one will know it's, it's, obviously, Eddie and the Hot Rods" [laughs]. But I thought he was lovely, Steve New. Interestingly, he wore more of a new romantic type stripy jumper thing, so, and he had longer hair, so he wasn't very punk. Really they weren't very punky, but I just loved it. And Mick Jones, I had to step over his legs to get round the backstage, so it was just, yeah it was just, it was really exciting because you're there, who would know that a girl, what was I in '78? I was 15. Who would say a girl of my age would have that experience at 15? In my mundane existence it was, wow, how exciting is this? It was a bit of rock and roll wasn't it, in my quiet life.

Mary:

Once the gig had finished you could hare round to the stage door and you could get in, and they would sign your ticket for you, or sign your records that sort of thing. I remember one day some guys saying "We've got to leave school early" because Iron Maiden were playing. I didn't go that time, and I said, "Why are you leaving early, they're not on till like eight o'clock?" They said, "Yeah, but they'll be in town, the tour bus will arrive and they'll be walking round town." Of course, it hadn't occurred to me, so what did I do after that? When I got tickets to see a band, or there was a band in town that I hadn't got tickets for, or whatever, yeah go into town. We soon learnt that they always stayed at the Abbey Hotel. You knew what time they'd arrive, you knew they'd do a sound check, and after that they'd be loafing around and finding somewhere to have dinner. So I can remember one day the Undertones arrived, so we hung around until they'd finished the check, the sound check. It never crossed my mind, it was not my idea, but I soon went along with it, was go and tell them it was sold out and we couldn't get a ticket, and we really wanted to get in. I can't remember why I hadn't got tickets, it wasn't sold out. I mean, I think that time the Undertones were quite sweet innocent boys as well, and they immediately put us on the guest list. We all got on the guest

list, and we spent all afternoon with them in Priory Park just hanging out. And then when they came back again we were really naughty and we did the same thing, they didn't remember us, and we did exactly the same thing. But it's the only two gigs I'd done that for.

Pat: I was walking down Avenue Road, I got to Barnards Green and a very battered kind of like camper van pulled up and this guy jumped out and said, "Where's the Winter Gardens love?" And I said, "If you go up there," and it was Jet Black from The Stranglers.

Phil: Ian Curtis of Joy Division, I was lucky enough to meet him that night backstage, I went backstage and got a couple of things signed. And it was only literally a month or so later when we'd heard that he had took his own life that it transpired that he'd tried to take his own life previously by taking a drugs overdose, and that was the day after the Malvern gig, the Sunday, so the following day. The Malvern gig was on the Saturday night, the 5th April, on the 6th he took a drug overdose and tried to kill himself. So when I look back and see, you know the chap who was sat there, you know friendly, chatting away, you know it was, er, and that was poignant.

Persefoni: We were actually helping out at Cherry Red at that time. We used to sell tickets for the bands at our school, which was Hanley Castle High School. I'd got into the gig early because we, obviously, were working there, so we used to be there before anyone else was allowed in, and we were stood in the bar area and I turned around and there was Billy Idol right behind me, who was someone that I was, who I thought was brilliant at the time. And yes, it made my knees go quite weak I must say 'cause he was so beautiful. And I just remember the white skin and the white hair, and he looked stunning.

Phil:

I met the base player of The Cure, who was kind enough to take my records backstage and get them signed. That's another thing about Malvern, which sticks in my mind, it was always the case, but there never seemed to be any security as such, but there always seemed to be a row of interlocking, kind of like school chairs, and that was a kind of makeshift guest area, I suppose. It was just down the right hand side of the room. So, you know if you stepped over the chairs people would say, "Oi, mate," you know, "Get back your own side," kind of thing. And often when a support band had played you'd sometimes see members of the support acts, erm, you know behind that row of chairs. And if they were nice enough, or at least if you recognised them in the low light you could go and talk to them, and that's exactly what I did after The Cure had gone off. I saw this guy walking not very far from where I was, and it was Mike Dempsey, the bassist for The Cure. And I'd got a couple of records with me and I said, "Hello Mick, would you mind signing these for me?" But anyway, he took the records backstage and got the other two members of the band to sign the records.

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