



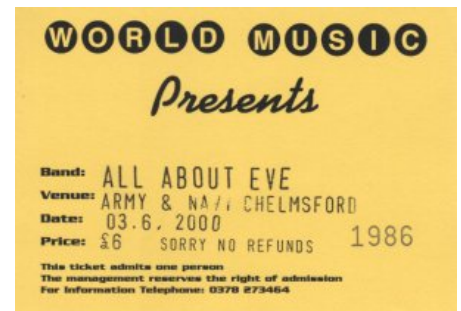
The Army & Navy Chelmsford



I recently met with Sean Hudson former promoter of the Army & Navy music venue in Chelmsford.

What sort of pupil were you at Boswells

I did not care very much for school, I was absent towards the end of the fourth year onwards. I never really cared much for rules etc, my uniform consisted of black trousers, Doc Martins, silk black shirt and an American baseball jacket! (this was the 80s). I sat one exam. I have an older sister who influenced me very much musically as she was very into her music and I have two younger brothers. All my family still reside in Chelmsford.

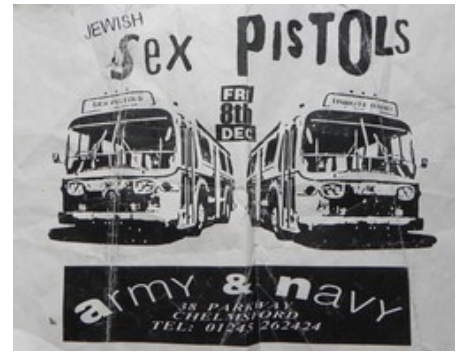


What sort of bands were you seeing before you music promoting days.

Punk really, never saw any other bands as I was at that point pretty blind to other genres. I have always liked rock & heavy metal though.

What sort of albums did you have in your collection in your youth.

Surprise, surprise, punk & skinhead music. I was a massive Oi! fan (still am) and the first record I bought (in 1981) was The Sex Pistols 'God save The Queen' and my second was The Exploited 'Dead Cities'. Although I have to admit to being a big Adam Ant fan and a closet Gary Numan fan!



What did you do when you left school and how and when did you become a music promoter

When I left school I joined a travelling fair but soon came back and became a tyre fitter. I did this for a year before going off the rails for two years, in and out of various jobs and many a run in with the police. In 1990 I started work at the Little Chef in Widford and stayed there for two years. It was at this time (or slightly before) I had been doing mail order records which led me into doing a punk/Oi! fanzine called Welcome To The Real World which ran for 5 issues and was distributed all over the world. I also did a little bit of writing for Metal Hammer magazine who were doing a punk section. Whilst doing this I got to interview all my heroes such as Cock Sparrer, Glen Matlock, Sham 69, The Last Resort, Splodge and also met some great people. I remember interviewing Ronnie Thomas from the Heavy Metal Kids and we went for a meal on Carnaby Street and I felt like I had met royalty. That was one of my best interviews but I could do so much better now.

I started going to the Stick of Rock in Bethnal Green that was run by Steve Bruce, the drummer with Cock Sparrer sometimes I stayed there for the weekend seeing all types of bands. I then thought to myself why was I here in London when I could promote a venue in Chelmsford and bring the bands to the towns so I set to work on achieving this goal. This was 1992 and I originally booked Chelmsford's YMCA for a Heavy Metal Kids, show with their new singer 'Dave Demarco, gig for December 11th 1992 but switched to the A&N and the rest is history! In fact the first band I booked was

a Psychobilly band called the Klingonz about 140 turned up for this gig. Previous to this the so called Kings of Psychobilly The Meteors had played the venue.

Army & Navy Flyer c/o Steve Clark

Can you tell me more about the early days and the Army and Navy became a major venue on the music scene.

The Landlord of the Army & Navy was Martin, at first myself and John Dunn were allocated two nights a week to promote new acts to the venue. I remember booking Glen Matlock a former member of the Sex Pistols the fee was £250.00 and only 120 turned up and we lost money on that gig. Admission was £2.50. He told me the Sex Pistols would never reform! We also booked many other Punk bands including UK Subs, The Exploited, 999, Peter & The Test Tube Babies, The Anti Nowhere League, Splodge etc etc

John Dunn was the former promoter at the Y Club but now we were working together and our 2 nights a week at the A&N had now been increased to include an Indie night on a Thursday. And soon we were booking alternate Fridays and Saturdays and later Mondays & Tuesdays.



I understand you booked in Oasis

No, I didn't, John Dunn did. I turned them down to headline an alldayer. Oasis were booked in 1994 and we sold 350 tickets in advance of the show, the official capacity of the venue was 260. Oasis had just released their first single and by the time they played it had just gone into the UK charts. The support were called 'Elemental Child' there was another band that night but I cannot remember their name, I remember the Gallagher brothers having a massive water fight in the corridor and back room before the gig. So to put pay to all bullshit rumours, 350 turned up, it was sold out in advance and they never played more than once. According to Chelmsford folk lore, there was 20,000 people there on the night!

Around this time we had booked in Canadian band Moist and Scandinavian rockers Clawfinger, in 1995 John had left the A&N and I was booking all the bands myself. Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Wednesday and Sunday night were designated as gay evenings that proved to be very successful. (The gay nights actually kept the venue afloat) We also booked tribute bands and I remember putting the Australian Pink Floyd on, one of their first gigs in the UK. I also booked them in

Southend and it was a joint promotion. The promoters pulled out a week before because they had no confidence and on the day the pier caught fire but the gig sold out and I made a fortune. They are stadium fillers now all over the world!

When did the Brewery first try close the A&N down.

The Brewery wanted to close the Pub in 95 and John went to the Y Club, but a campaign was launched to save the now famous venue. A petition of 6500 names signed and together with the help of the Chelmsford Yellow Advertiser newspaper who headlined the fight, the Venue was saved for now.

What other big name bands did you book in from 1995

Just to name a few Kula Shaker, Sterophonics, Headswim, Super Furry Animals, Idlewild, Elastica, Longpigs, Wishbone Ash, Feeder, Garp, Sleeper, The Mission, and Dogs D' Amour. Midge Ure, In fact the V festival had started in 1994 and a lot of the acts that played here went on to headline or be a major attractions in future festivals at Hylands Park.

In 1999 Martin the landlord left the Army & Navy and I took over the whole venue, that by now was well established, this was a busy time. I had booked in such local bands as The Filaments, The Big, Ac Slater, Thaed, Tellercreep, ISM and created a scene with these bands. The last 18 months of the Navy was the busiest and the local scene was at its best since 1993 when we had great local bands like Garp, The Kites & Vybe Trybe. They were great times.



What was your personal best moment

My best moment was booking in my favourite band from Australia who played their first UK show here at the Army & Navy in 19 years, the band were called Rose Tattoo, the lead singer was called 'Angry Anderson' they had worked with AC/DC the sound was a heavy metal mix with blues and rock. There's nothing like having your own personal favourite band play in your venue. There was lots of other moments but looking back, the A&N could never happen now, you would never get away with what we did, nor would a brewery let it happen. It never turned over fortunes for anyone.

I wanted to book Sham 69 but Jimmy Pursey refused to play here as he thought that Chelmsford was a Fascist town and his band may get targeted.



Did you book bands right across the music spectrum.

Yes we booked soul bands like Junior Jump who played a summer gig and a Christmas show every year, this band always attracted a full house, Ska bands included The Beat, Selecter, and Bad Manners, Reggae bands like Bush Fire and even Judge Dread. Psychobilly bands like the Meteors. Blues bands such as Nine Below Zero and Dr Feelgood. So as well as all the Rock, Indie, and Punk we did have a good mix of music. In 1992 we booked a four band real skinhead gig which included Argy Bargy, no venue at that time was touching such stuff. We tried comedy in the later years at the back of the venue and Tim Vine played there and we did acoustic nights in there as well with the likes of The Almightys Ricky Warwick and Jim Diamond (remember Boon theme tune) who played a blinder with Snake Davies. We did AOR (Tyketto, Magnum etc) Folk metal (Skyclad), tribute bands, thrash, death metal etc etc.



I remember reading in the local press about controversial bands, Rockbitch and Impotent Sea Snakes.

Rockbitch was a female Punk/Metal/Goth type band that were known for performing with their kit off and incorporating sexual acts into the show. The first time we booked them only about 50 people turned up, three of the girls went nude, they would throw out into the audience a condom and who ever caught it would be offered oral sex or more. The next time we booked them word had got out about them and the local Edge Magazine ran with the headline "LOCK UP YOUR SONS, ROCK BITCH ARE IN TOWN" needless to say we had 500 turn up that night. We did book them for a third time and one of the female band members fell over on stage and twisted her ankle that night.

I then booked in a band called The Impotent Sea Snakes they were from Atlanta. America's answer to Rockbitch. They are also known for sexually explicit performances and lyrics, the male member's dressed in drag and the female wore next to nothing. The gig went well and I re-booked them and this time I made a huge banner that hung by the Army & Navy roundabout for all to see. The banner with American stars and stripes said "MOVE OVER ROCKBITCH THE YANKS ARE IN TOWN". Things were going well I had sold 350 advanced tickets but unfortunately the day before the gig the Police turned up with two council officials. I was told if the show went ahead my licence

could be in serious jeopardy, so after considering the situation the concert was cancelled.

Favourite memories

Lots!! Loads of late night drinking sessions with various bands, most memorable being Buster Bloodvessel from Bad Manners who told some great stories. Drinking with various ska faces and the drummer from the Specials telling me they would never reform. The band competitions bringing in huge audiences and big money. The infamous promoters diary which was my chance to sound off about what I really thought. I once said a tribute to Ian Dury called The Blox sounded like Chas & Dave building a shed! It wasn't a popular comment. It got serious hits on the website and I wish I still had it. Even the late Melody Maker magazine commented on it! Making Back To The Planet sell out and then touting our own tickets outside!!



Best shows

The Dogs D'amour were very special to me for personal reasons. Reef were great and Skyclad were very captivating. There was too many really, ten years on my memory is a bit hazy. I still have the diaries from 1992 - 2002, there isn't much missed out of them.

Did any VIPs come to gigs here.

Yes Fergal Sharkey, Gary Numan, members from The Prodigy and Blur could often be seen in the audience and Reg Holdsworth!.

Your Worst Moment

My worst moment was when the Army & Navy closed in Oct 2002 to make way for a new sports bar called Arena Army & Navy. Our last gig was on the 20th October 2002, we had over 800 people turn up. Top of the bill that night was 'The Big' The gig ended a bit sadly really with the entire place getting trashed. Bit sad really and I never got my head around it.

What did you do after the A&N

I brought Colchesters Twist and renamed it the Soundhouse. It was the worst move I ever made! I lost 90K and never got paid for the venue when I supposedly sold it. I nearly had a breakdown because I was going through court cases over trying to keep my licence. Chelmsford would have given their right arm for a venue like the Twist, Colchester never deserved it. I nearly did a year there and again booked some great acts like Snow Patrol etc but by January 2004 I had had the music knocked out of me. Whilst at the Twist, I was running fortnightly gigs at the Marconi club in Beehive Lane Chelmsford. These were stormers in terms of attendance, nearly 800 at each gig just with local bands! I was also involved with Chelmsfords Cave but was only being used for the licence! It was such a shame no venue could be found in Chelmsford full time. Marconis eventually stopped the gigs because of idiots trashing the place. So from Colchester I went onto Ilford's 'famous' music venue The Cauliflower. This venue stood for everything I hated about live music venues. It was full of tribute bands and cover bands just like the Twist was when I took it over but there was no point changing it. The venue and its crowd were so set in their ways. I had death threats from regular bands that played because I wanted to upgrade things etc. I was only a manager and didn't have to pay the bands as the brewery paid them. I tried a bit of alternative but it never really worked. I got sacked!! This was because I had thieving bar staff and I was loved up and the last three months I was hardly there. I deserved it. Believe it or not I do have a few good memories of the Cauliflower and there was some genuine people there. I did nearly a year there. I then went onto run

'normal' pubs before retiring in 2007. I dont miss pubs or running a live music venue.

What music do you listen to now and do you still go to live music gigs.

I still like to listen to range of music from AC/DC. Elvis to Johnny Cash. Also this year I will be attending the Rebellion Punk Festival in Blackpool.

Maurice Hyde

[E-Mail Chelmsford Rocks!](mailto:chelmsfordrocks@yahoo.co.uk)

chelmsfordrocks@yahoo.co.uk

COMMENTS (new March 2010)

Name:

Comments:

[Submit Info](#)

[Home](#)

[Click Here To View Guest Book](#)

[Click here to see Chelmsford Corn Exchange gig listings history, compiled from archive local newspaper adverts and reports. Also comments and memories from people who played at the Corn Exchange and who had attended gigs at the now demolished venue.](#)

