

ROCK 'N' ROLL HEROES

REMEMBER WHEN

WE'RE taking a look back at the music career of our regular writer, DEREK AJ LISTER:

Dal Stevens and the Blue Jays was formed in 1959 with Derek Lister, aka Dal Stevens, on vocals, Michael Farrell, bass guitar; Sam Flaherty, rhythm guitar; Dougie Lamb, rhythm guitar; Alan (Keg) Grainger, drums, and Terry Moran, piano. Derek, as well as being the vocalist, became the group's manager. They decided to call themselves the Blue Jays because they decided to wear blue ties ('Slim Jims'), which gave them an identity. Adverts of the time spell their name 'Jays' and 'Js'. The leader's first name came from Derek's initials, DAL, but Stevens was picked at random.

Through the kindness of Dougie Lamb's parents, the group practised in their house in Alice Street, Lumb Lane, and there was a piano for Terry. They produced quite a repertoire, including popular numbers of the time such as Be-Bop-a-Lula, Blue Suede Shoes, Whole Lot of Shaking Going On and Teenager in Love. With these and other hits they were hopeful to take Bradford by storm, to be discovered and to play at Sunday Night at the London Palladium. Some of the venues played in 1959 and early 60s were Young Conservative dinners at the Connaught Rooms on Manningham Lane, the Majestic and



Gaumont ballrooms, the Aim For Fame competition at the Alhambra, the Co-op Hall, a six-week booking called the 2s Hop, the Students Club. They played to audiences of all ages, mostly teenagers. Although they weren't making profits, just covering expenses, they were becoming well known: they made a

record at Excel Records in Shipley and spread further afield, when suddenly the group began to fold.

The Dingos had been approaching Terry to join them and early 1960 he parted company from the Blue Jays. This left the group in disarray as most

of their numbers had been adapted to include a piano; a complete re-appraisal was required. It was not to be, as within a week Dougie left then Sam, then drummer Keg.

Within six days the only two left were Dal and Mike Farrell. Dal was now

Dal Stevens and the Four Dukes. Image: Derek Lister
Derek and collaborator Reuben Davison, profile singers, bands and musicians from Bradford's 1950s and 60s music scene in their website: www.whenbradfordrocked.co.uk

manager of a totally defunct group. But their luck turned: within a week they had a lead guitarist, Eric Holroyd, rhythm guitarist, John Lund, and a drummer, Keith Artist. The new group was Dal Stevens and the Four Dukes. Soon Mike had to leave, but a 16-year-old bass guitarist, Dennis (Duane) Oliver, stepped in. The group practised at Storr Hill Baths in Wyke, Unity Hall in Rawson Square and the Gaumont through the hospitality of manager Mr Wilcox. They were soon back on the circuit, with Gaumont and Majestic rock 'n' roll nights, the Students Club and a Saturday morning teenage show at the Gaumont.

Christie's at Selby was a good rock 'n' roll venue, most local groups had bookings - as did the Four Dukes. Dewsbury Town Hall was remembered because the group was paid an extra 5 guineas for continuing to play while a fight took place among 1,000 patrons. The group was becoming popular, but after a few months they amicably split up.

Recalls Dal: "A week later I went to the Gaumont's Sunday night Big Beat Night, three weeks since my last performance with the group. Whilst standing at the bar the manager, Ray Moore, came over. He asked if my group would like another booking, and was surprised when I told him we'd disbanded. Out of the blue he asked if I'd like to be a disc jockey for him. The rest is history! Top Rank DJ for five years at the Gaumont and the Majestic."

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