

A ROCK N ROLL PIANO GENIUS

REMEMBER WHEN

DEREK AJ LISTER, who was resident DJ at Bradford's Gaumont and Majestic dance halls, profiles rock 'n' roll pianist Spike O'Brien:

Brian Holt, aka Spike O'Brien, (1940-2000) was born in Bradford and attended Hanson High School. He learned to play the piano from the age of four through his father, who was a classical pianist.

Leaving school in 1956, Spike was employed by Listers' Mill as an office boy, because his mother wanted him to have a steady job! Music and playing the piano was Spike's main interest and most of his thoughts were on other things (rock n' roll). This resulted in the office manager saying to Spike that he "could have a good career in office work or go about being a 'pop star'." He therefore asked Spike to make a decision. Spike did make a decision - and gave in his notice.

For a while he drifted from job to job, at one time driving a small flat pack wagon for the BDA (Bradford Dyers Association), and was now playing the piano at many venues in Bradford. It was about this time that Spike acquired his stage name Spike O'Brien. His real name was Brian Holt. At one venue some girls asked him "What's your name?" as they'd heard him being called both Spike and Brian.

"Which is it?" they asked. 'Spike or



Brian?' Hence the name Spike O'Brien was born.

In 1959 Spike became a member of the Dingos, on piano. At this time the Dingos were probably the most prominent and professional local rock n' roll group. However, after a short

period of time he left and joined another local group, The Tuxedos. Spike had begun to adapt himself as a proficient rock 'n' roll pianist who was becoming very popular in his own right, so he decided to get together some other local artists in 1963 to form a new group called The Rattlers.

After three successful seasons with The Rattlers in Douglas on the Isle of Man he joined Don Partridge (the one man band) in his backing group The Wild Fowl. In 1973 Spike recorded Poor Little Fred, a skit on the popular Big Bad John, which had moderate success. Later in the 1980-90s he was still touring

The Rattlers - Spike O'Brien is in the centre. Spike, a proficient rock 'n' roll pianist formed the group with other musicians in 1963. Image: Derek AJ Lister

Bradford circuits with local groups, especially The Dingos and was as popular as he'd ever been. Later, probably Spike's highlights was playing at the rock n' roll reunion dances at the Pile Bar and Bradford's Midland Hotel. Spike was a piano genius, pure rock n' roll, embodying its most reckless and high-spirited impulses with such piano-pounding rockers from the late Fifties as Whole Lot of Shaking Going On and Great Balls of Fire. Add to this, Spike's larger than life personality and pure energy-driven performance and you would have the crowd shaking, shouting, rocking and rolling!

When he passed away in 2000, the rock 'n' roll world lost a truly great artist and a friend of many fellow artists who held him in high esteem. Spike is sadly missed and fully deserving a place of honour of the 'Who's Who of Bradford's Rock n' Roll era'.

The last time I spoke to Spike was on the phone a few days before he passed away. It was at this time that he was waiting for a lung transplant. During our conversation I said: 'Is there anything I can get you? With that wonderful sense of humour, back came the reply: 'Yes Dal, a new pair of... lungs!'

* Derek AJ Lister and his friend and collaborator Reuben Davison have profiled singers, bands and musicians from Bradford's 1950s and 60s music scene on their website, When Bradford Rocked. Visit www.whenbradfordrocked.co.uk



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Sat 15th	Alton Towers	£19.00	Sun 7th	Scarborough	£17.00
Sat 15th	Bridlington	£17.00	Mon 8th	Pickering, Thornton Le Dale & Whitby	£19.00
Sun 16th	Llandudno - Father's Day	£19.00	Thurs 11th	Cleethorpes	£17.00
Sat 22nd	Lakes Zoo Safari	£34.00*	Fri 12th	Northumberland Coastal Tour & Holy Island	£21.00
Sat 22nd	Bridlington	£17.00	Sat 13th	Southport Airshow	£20.00
Sun 23rd	Liverpool	£18.00	Sat 13th	Bridlington	£17.00
Tues 25th	Settle & Hawes	£18.00	Sun 14th	Knowsley Safari Park	£35.00*
Sat 29th	Scarborough Armed Forces Day	£19.00	Sat 20th	Lincoln 1940's Weekend	£19.00

Mon 5th	Victoria Quays Heritage Sheffield Canal Cruise with Tea & Scones	£45.00*
Tues 6th	Cleethorpes	£17.00
Tues 6th	Fleetwood Market & Cleveleys	£17.00
Wed 7th	Bury Market & Boundary Mills	£17.00
Thurs 8th	Scarborough	£17.00
Fri 9th	Birmingham / World's Biggest Primark	£21.00
Sat 10th	Bridlington	£17.00
Sun 11th	Blackpool Airshow	£18.00
Sun 11th	Twycross Zoo	£39.00
Mon 12th	Scarborough	£17.00
Mon 12th	Mablethorpe	£17.00
Tues 13th	Chorley Market & Barton Grange Garden Centre	£17.00
Wed 14th	Llandudno & Conway	£19.00
Thurs 15th	Hawes & Leyburn	£18.00
Thurs 15th	Trentham Gardens & Monkey Forest	£41.00*
Fri 16th	Southport	£17.00
Fri 16th	Southport Flower Show	£45.00*
Sat 17th	Whitby Regatta	£19.00
Sun 18th	Lytham 1940's	£18.00
Mon 19th	Sundown Adventureland	£17.00
Tues 20th	Settle Flowerpot Festival & Hawes	£19.00
Wed 21st	Knaresborough & Harrogate	£17.00
Wed 21st	Kendal & Windermere Cruise	£33.00*
Thurs 22nd	Beamish Museum	£20.00
Thurs 22nd	Durham	£20.00
Fri 23rd	Chester	£17.00
Fri 23rd	Chester Zoo	£17.00

Sat 24th	Bridlington	£17.00
Sat 24th	Lincoln Steampunk Festival	£19.00
Sun 25th	Skegness	£19.00
Mon 26th	Scarborough - Bank Holiday	£19.00
Mon 26th	Alton Towers - Bank Holiday	£20.00
Tues 27th	Blackpool	£17.00
Wed 28th	York	£17.00
Wed 28th	Eden Camp	£17.00
Thurs 29th	Bicester Shopping Village	£21.00
Fri 30th	Bury Market	£17.00
Sat 31st	Bridlington	£17.00
September		
Sun 1st	Scarborough & Filey	£18.00
Wed 4th	Richmond Market & Leyburn	£18.00
Sat 7th	Beverley Market & Bridlington	£18.00
Sun 8th	Skegness	£19.00
Mon 9th	Llandudno	£19.00
Sat 14th	Liverpool	£18.00
Sun 15th	St. Anne's Kite Festival	£17.00
Mon 16th	Bakewell Market & Matlock	£18.00
Wed 18th	Bury Market & Oswaldtwistle Mills	£17.00
Sat 21st	Blackpool	£17.00
Sun 22nd	Grassington 1940's Weekend	£18.00
Mon 23rd	Pickering, Thornton Le Dale & Whitby	£19.00
Tues 24th	Northumberland Coastal Tour & Holy Island	£21.00
Wed 25th	Northallerton Market & Barnard Castle Town	£18.00
Sun 29th	Morecambe	£17.00

* Includes admission

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