

TUXEDOS WERE IN DEMAND

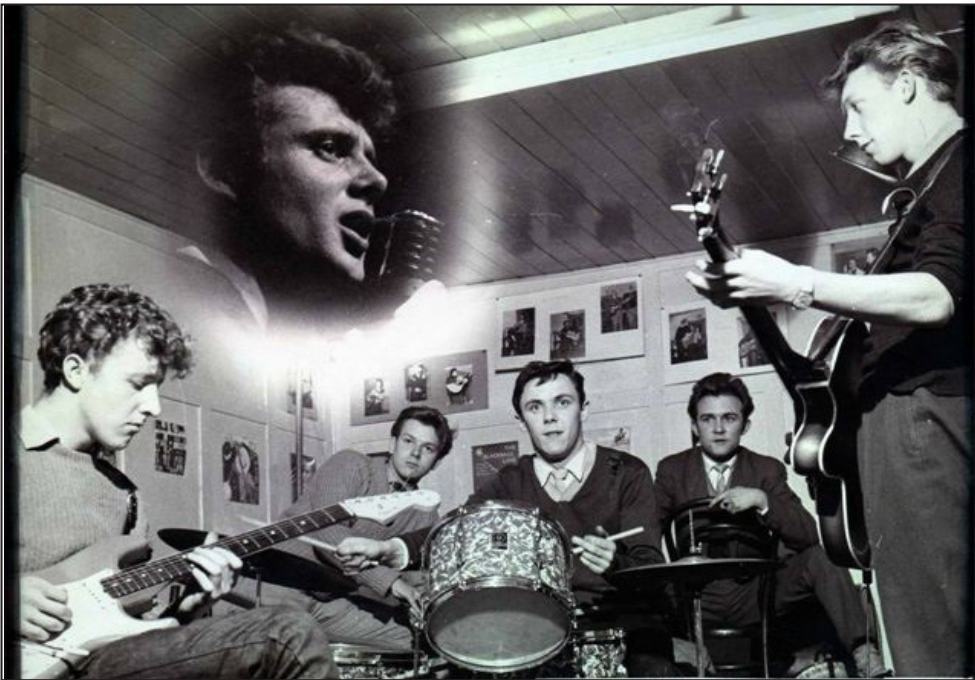
REMEMBER WHEN

IN the latest of his profiles of leading figures on Bradford's rock 'n' roll scene, DEREK AJ LISTER looks at The Tuxedos:

The Tuxedos were formed on the back of the skiffle craze and originated from Highfield Secondary School and the East Bierley/Birkenshaw areas.

At the Christmas 1957 school concert Martin Cook, trumpet, Ian (Jungle) Smith, guitar, George Minchull, guitar, and others did an Elvis Presley song, and continued to practice after the event. Much teenage activity in those days centred around youth clubs and Martin, Ian and George gravitated to Holme Lane Methodist Club. There were many who fancied their chances in the cut and thrust of those early rock group days, but eventually this thinned out to Dave Mortimer, drums, Martin Cook, Ian Smith and George Minchull, all on guitars, and various singers, including John Dowson. Calling themselves the Skiff-Rocks, the name of a chord book used by Ian and George, they played at various youth clubs.

Ian and George met up every Saturday morning at Morley's Corner in Bradford. In those days sheet music for the Top Ten was available at Hayden Robinson's music stall in Kirkgate Market, where you could browse through the sheets and memorise the chords for your practice sessions. They



also wandered over to Moore's music shop in North Parade, and sometimes if things were quiet they could play various guitars. The most coveted were the solid rock guitars, which produced the bright treble sound of lead guitars. It was during one of these visits that they first saw a solid guitar that was

black and white, called Tuxedo. From that day their group became known as The Tuxedos.

The group now had a new name and a revised line-up: John Dowson, vocals, Martin Cook and Ian Smith, rhythm guitars, George Minchull, lead guitar,

Dave Sunderland, bass guitar, and Dave Mortimer, drums. The year, 1960, was the start of a very successful period, playing regularly at the Majestic and Gaumont in Bradford and at Yorkshire's many dance and town hall events. A manager was required and their roadie Trevor Lever, whose job it

The Tuxedos in action

had been to make sure they arrived at venues on time, took over this role. He obtained many bookings and controlled the finances. In those halcyon days a night's earnings could be all of £10, minus 10 per cent agent's fee.

In 1961 Martin Cook, rhythm guitarist, left to go to college in Hull and a year later Dave Sunderland, bass guitarist, and Dave Mortimer, drummer, also left, causing a major headache. Relief came unexpectedly when The Dingos broke up and talented pianist Spike O'Brien and drummer Irvin (Smudge) Smith became available. Ian Smith transferred successfully to bass guitar, allowing Spike's superb piano skills full rein. His solos included B Bumble and the Stingers' Nut Rocker, an arrangement of Tchaikovsky's March of the Wooden Soldiers; Smudge on drums and George on lead guitar. John Dowson's vocals led from the front in powerful interpretations of Shaking All Over and Spanish Harlem. The group was in demand, even playing on the same bill as Sounds Incorporated and Johnny Kidd.

In 1963 Spike and Smudge left, as did bass guitarist Ian. John and George did a few bookings with a reduced band, with stand-in bass guitarists and drummers, but after a relatively short time they called it a day.

* Derek and collaborator, musician Reuben Davison, profile singers, bands and musicians from Bradford's 1950s and 60s music scene in their website: www.whenbradfordrocked.co.uk

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