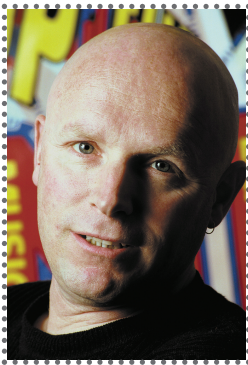


SOUNDBITES

Steve Sutherland reflects on a life of rock and roll



Steve Sutherland lives in Stretton on Fosse. He was Editor of the iconic music magazine NME during the Britpop era. (The NME coined the expression 'Britpop'). He is Editorial Director for special projects at IPC Media, and is the proud dad of Molly, Syd and Mery, whose primary school in Ilmington produced an inspirational Olympic anthem, which has spread far beyond Warwickshire.

What were the highlights of your time on NME?

I took over the paper in 1992 and stepped down in 2000, so I was lucky enough to preside over the Britpop era when the UK, and especially London, was the most happening musical place in the world. It was all Blur, Oasis and Pulp around our place and, during that time, I revived the NME Awards - which had disappeared in the early 1970s - to give a higher profile to the exciting up-and-coming acts that were being ignored by the likes of the Brits. Great fun, and a piece of business that flourishes to this day.

Which artist impressed you most?

David Bowie's an extraordinary guy because he's genuinely interested in lots of stuff apart from himself (unlike most rock stars). We made tapes for each other for a while of music we thought would turn each other on. He was excited about technology too... and fashion... and history... and architecture.

Who was the biggest Diva?

Stevie Nicks of Fleetwood Mac was a bit stropky with the hired help and mad as a balloon - thought she was Cleopatra reincarnated and all that. Phil Lynott of Thin Lizzy was quite unpleasant in an arrogant, very out-of-it sort of way, Axl Rose threatened to have me killed, Paul Weller issued a Mod fatwa against me and Eddie Van Halen cried a lot when he didn't get his own way (ie, couldn't take the brandy AND the vodka back to his hotel).

Best 'rock n roll' party you went to?

I was once lucky enough to be invited to dinner with Michael Hutchence at the lovely villa he rented with

Paula Yates in a vineyard outside Cannes. We sat on the terrace and watched the sun go down. The other guests were Bono (who told lots of tales about meeting Frank Sinatra and working with Pavarotti), Bono's wife, Kate Moss and Johnny Depp, who was her boyfriend at the time. Kate did a lot of dirty dancing to a pre-release of Black Grape's debut album which I'd brought over, while Johnny strummed along on an acoustic guitar. Jet trash in excelsis, obviously.

If you could have joined a band, who would it have been?

I grew up in awe of the 1960s scene in Los Angeles - Love, The Doors and the whole Sunset Strip/ Whiskey-A-Go-Go scene, so to have been a member of the original Byrds alongside Roger McGuinn and David Crosby would have been, quite literally, fab.

Of all the artists/bands you've interviewed, who would you most enjoy as house guest?

You've got to be joking. Have you seen the state of our house?!

What are your best venues for live music locally?

Molly's bedroom when the guitars are cranked up. The O2 in Oxford attracts good bands and I like the little unsigned gigs that NCCR (North Cotswold Community Radio) arranges around Chipping Campden. I do a show for NCCR every Sunday afternoon called Theme Time. Check us out on www.northcotswoldonline.com.

Favourite pub?

My local, The Plough in Stretton on Fosse and, for grub, the Horse & Groom in Bourton on The Hill and The Fox in Oddington.

Favourite pint?

Hooky.

Favourite Olympic song?

My children Molly, Syd and Mery go to the brilliant primary school in Ilmington where all the pupils made a CD called Rings Around The World to celebrate the Olympics and promote "A message of peace and hope for 2012... and beyond." The funds all went to the school and to an African aid project so it was all in a very good cause and the kids had top fun doing it. ■

Interview by Andrea Mynard. Find her new blog at www.shabbychick.me.uk
To hear Ilmington's children, visit www.ringsaroundtheworld2012.co.uk