



(wolverhampton//)



Wolverhampton

FOLLOW US (<https://twitter.com/WhatsOnWolves>)

(<https://www.facebook.com/WhatsOnWolverhampton/>)

What (Please enter your keywords)

Where

When

WOLVERHAMPTON'S ESSENTIAL ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

The Halls Wolverhampton are alive!

Posted on Thu 27 Apr 2023

Share



After being closed for seven years, The Halls Wolverhampton reopens next month following an extensive refurbishment. Steve Homer - CEO of new operator AEG Presents - talks to What's On about the challenges and excitement of relaunching the iconic venue...

Seven years after it closed for what was supposed to be a six-month refit, the newly refurbished, and slightly renamed, The Halls Wolverhampton finally reopens next month.

The project to upgrade the iconic Civic Hall - a Grade II-listed building - and its Wulfrun Hall neighbour has faced a catalogue of delays and setbacks, including the discovery of asbestos, major structural issues and even the original contractor going bust. The issues saw costs spiral from an original estimate of around £10million to more than four times that amount. Work is now virtually complete, with the City of Wolverhampton Council handing over running duties to new operating partner AEG Presents. A subsidiary of AEG, the world's leading sports & live-entertainment company, the international organisation operates tours, live shows and venues across the globe, including California's famous Coachella Festival, BST Hyde Park and London's O2.

It's a pretty big deal for such a global giant to be running the venue - on a 25-year lease, no less - but one that has been prompted by a very local connection. AEG Presents' CEO, Steve Homer, hails from Stourbridge and attended dozens of gigs at the venue as a youngster, including his first.

"It's incredible to be able to bring an iconic venue back to life," he says, "and as a local lad, this is all the more special. I saw The Clash perform here in 1978, and it was an event that forever cemented my love of music. We can't wait to open the doors of The Halls Wolverhampton and bring the world's best artists to the West Midlands stage."

Steve says he jumped at the chance to work with the venue as soon as the opportunity arose, but admits he had to convince his American colleagues that it was worthy of their support.

"Most of them couldn't pinpoint Birmingham on a map, let alone Wolverhampton, so it was starting from a very basic level in terms of familiarity and knowledge of the site."

That familiarity spans five decades for the lifelong music fan, who admits he still proudly displays old concert tickets on his wall. During our conversation, he reeled off an array of bands he's seen at the Civic and Wulfrun over the years, from the likes of Stiff Little Fingers, OMD and Elvis Costello while he was still at school, to grunge and Britpop acts in the 1990s - a time when it wasn't even his local venue.

"I was living in Sheffield in the '90s and I was coming down to see the likes of Offspring, Nirvana, Primal Scream and Oasis. I always used to come back to the Civic to watch them because you knew you were going to have a good gig. I could've gone to Manchester, as it was easier to get to, but I knew the Wolves gig would be better.

"There's something in the DNA of the venue and the audience which means that Wolverhampton Civic has always been a good gig."

That reputation is true for artists as much as fans, and it's something Steve says he's already capitalising on, with many acts keen to return to a favourite hunting ground.

"One of the things I've found since we've reopened the diary is the amount of artists that say this is one of the best gigs they've ever had.

"We had a stab at putting on a headline show by Siouxsie and The Banshees, because she's doing a festival in LA with our company, as well as Latitude and a few other things in Europe. When I put in an enquiry, they came back and said she's going to do it because it's her favourite venue she ever played with the Banshees." Tickets for that show sold out within an hour of going on sale. A cursory glance at other upcoming shows - June is packed with big names such as Leftfield, McFly, James, Sparks, Sugababes and comedy-magicians Penn & Teller - reflects the appeal of the two venues as well as the ambition of the promoters. By the end of the month, Steve expects to have had more than 50,000 people come through the venues, now officially titled 'The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton' (capacity 3,404) and 'The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton' (capacity 1,289).

"We've got every recognisable promoter involved in our opening month. The shows are all selling really well, and some incredibly well. Selling tickets also gives us confidence to put other shows in place. We're comfortably and confidently seeing a great uptake in acts, but it's obviously only a start - we have to maintain that and then start taking things away from Birmingham."

The latter is clearly the nature of the business, but Steve's under no illusion about the initial challenge of getting people to come to a venue that's been shut for so long, whether that's returnees or first-time visitors.

"Being closed for seven years means you've got a hill to climb," he admits, acknowledging that people familiar with the venue will need to be re-educated and re-energised, and that there's a generation gap to be bridged for those who have never been.

"If you were 14 when you went to your first gig, you're now sat there as a 21-year-old and you've never been to a show in Wolverhampton."

With that in mind, Steve is keen to book more pop and urban acts aimed at younger audiences.

"That's a real challenge for us - to try to get younger, contemporary artists to come and play in Wolverhampton.

There's no resistance from agents or managers, but you have to be able to convince the audience that it's something that will be a great event.

"In some ways parents who were familiar with the venue will feel comfortable with their offspring going to Wolves Civic or the Wulfrun as they know it's a safe environment."

Ultimately it's all about the quality of the acts and the overall experience, and Steve expects the refurbished venues to deliver on both fronts. As well as being able to attract bigger and better shows, he says the two halls will offer visitors a vastly improved experience, with better seating, more bars, more areas to socialise, improved toilet facilities, enhanced wheelchair access and more accessible viewing points.

Both venues have also had additional balconies installed, with the Civic now looking more like a theatre than a concert hall from the stage - something which Steve believes adds a new and different dimension without detracting from its longstanding appeal.

"I think audiences are going to be very pleasantly surprised when they return to both venues. They're going to see an improvement in the facilities, and a re-fresh of what was a successful operation before. It's going to feel quite special."

by Steve Adams

To find out what's happening and when at The Halls, check out the website: thehalls Wolverhampton.co.uk
(<http://thehalls Wolverhampton.co.uk>)

Share

More Music News



(/news/scissor-sisters-bring-new-uk-tour-to-birmingham-in-2025/59879)

Scissor Sisters bring new UK tour to Birmingham in 2025 (/news/scissor-sisters-bring-new-uk-tour-to-birmingham-in-2025/59879)

Posted on Thu 31 Oct



(/news/jeff-lynnes-elo-bring-over-and-out-tour-to-birmingham-in-2025/59857)

Jeff Lynne's ELO bring Over and Out tour to Birmingham in 2025 (/news/jeff-lynnes-elo-bring-over-and-out-tour-to-birmingham-in-2025/59857)

Posted on Tue 29 Oct



(/news/ghost-bring-new-world-tour-to-birmingham-in-2025/59848)

Ghost bring new world tour to Birmingham in 2025 (/news/ghost-bring-new-world-tour-to-birmingham-in-2025/59848)

Posted on Mon 28 Oct

What's On

- About Us (/wolverhampton/about-us/)
- Subscribe (/wolverhampton/subscribe/)
- Privacy Policy (/birmingham/privacy-policy/)

Contact

- Advertising (/wolverhampton/advertising/)
- Editorial (/wolverhampton/editorial/)

Regions

- Birmingham (/birmingham/)
- Warwickshire (/warwickshire/)
- Worcestershire (/worcestershire/)
- Wolverhampton (/wolverhampton/)
- Shropshire (/shropshire/)
- Staffordshire (/staffordshire/)



(https://issuu.com/wolverhampton_black_country_what_s_bb3fb24953016d)

black-country-whats-on-november-2024.pdf

(https://issuu.com/wolverhampton_black_country_what_s_bb3fb24953016d/docs/wolverhampton_black_country_what_s_bb3fb24953016d)

(/wolverhampton/subscribe/)