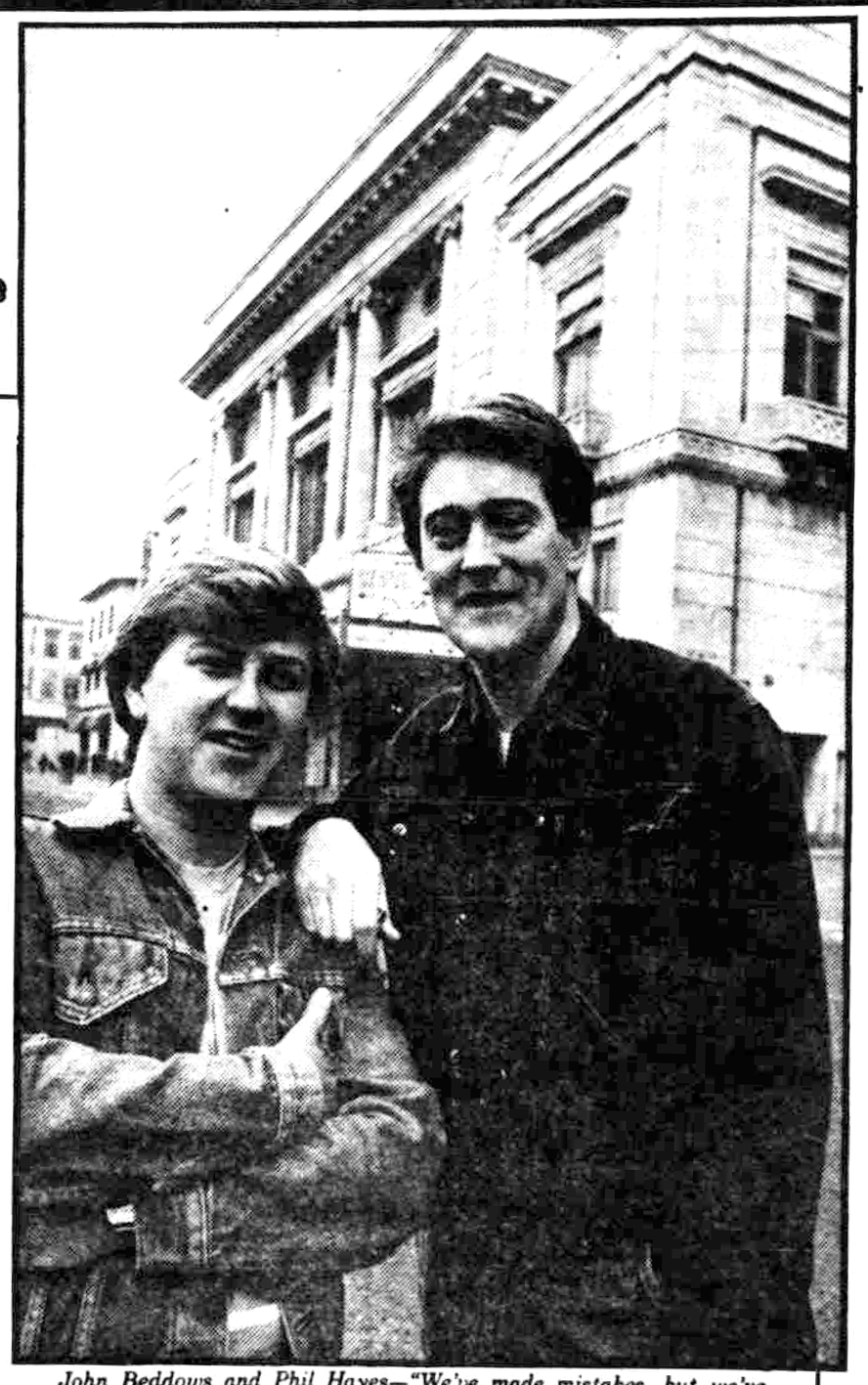
Concert of concern

By Peter Trollope

'Centre will be a place where kids on the dole can go and make music'



John Beddows and Phil Hayes—"We've made mistakes, but we've learned a lot."

A WICKED wind whistled along Lime Street carrying with it an empty beer can turning and clanking its way along the gutter like tumbleweed in a bad Western.

The chill wind was a bleak reminder that these are doleful days to stand around on street corners wondering when the next job might pass by.

The can clanked its way to a halt at the feet of two young men. They used to hang around on street corners and wonder about jobs, now they no longer have time.

John Beddows is 23, Phil Hayes is 24. Both are statistics somewhere on a Job Centre's chart. They would both like a job, but for the moment they are motivated by a peculiar desire. They are the unlikeliest and the youngest impressarios to be found in a city that has many street corners and many young people to occupy them.

Next Monday after months of Churchillian blood, sweat, etc., the Empire Theatre becomes theirs for the night. For John and Phil are putting on a show to help the young unemployed of Merseyside.

Thus they are in Lime Street, outside the theatre, picking the empty beer can, disposing of it, and smiling because as John says: "It's better to be doing something positive than just sitting or standing around doing nothing—even if it is all voluntary and you don't get paid a penny for it."

On Monday their names won't be up in lights outside the theatre. There is no room for egos in their cause. The names of several local rock groups—Black, Ex Post Facto, to name two, and special guest stars The Higsons—will be there, however.

The explanation for the show and their activities comes out at full throttle over cups of coffee.

"What we're doing is putting on the show to raise money so we can convert part of the old police station in Hardman Street into rehearsal rooms and a recording studio, which will be specifically a place where kids on the dole can go and make music." says John.

He met Phil at the former police headquarters, now being run as the Merseyside Trade Union Community and Unemployed Resource Centre.

"We got together to put on another show at the Empire on Mayday, when we got Paul Weller, who had just left The Jam, to make his first-ever appearance with his new group The Style Council," says Phil, offering his explanation to anyone not au fait with Weller's pop prestige, and likening it to Kenny Dalglish turning out for one of the teams in the Liverpool Sunday League.

That was when they both realised that they could put on shows and raise money to help other people.

"We'd never done anything like that before and we made plenty of mistakes, but we've learned a lot," says John, adding, "The thing is that this time it will be a lot easier."

"I think when we first went to see Chris Bullock, administrator of the Empire, he must have thought we were a couple of right wallies, because we had our jeans on and kept our notes in a plastic carrier bag. But he was great and very enthusiastic, in fact he couldn't have been more helpful. It was through him we got this date.

"Not only does it give us the chance to raise money—although we're keeping ticket prices as low as possible at £2, and £1 to those unemployed—but it also means that we can give people an enjoyable night out too."

Phil agrees. They have spent many hours of hard work since being introduced by a mutual friend to get the show "off the ground". They both care passionately about music. Phil plays in a group, and John is just a fan. They have both been unemployed for over a year.

"Some people forget what it's like to be young and to not have a job. I used to spend my days in a daze, just like a zombie. I would sit there all day in front of the television," says Phil.

"I watched so many episodes of The Sullivans and Young Doctors I think I could go on Mastermind answering questions about them. When you don't have a job it's hard to have any pride left in anything. You just withdraw. I never used to speak to anyone. It drove my Dad crazy. I just felt numb, totally dead.

"It was only when I realised that I could do something about it that things got better. I started thinking, well may be I can do something positive. May be I can help other people like me. "It's like a vicious circle, isn't it? If you don't have a job you don't have much hope and a lot of kids just tend to look for shelter in drugs or just in drinking themselves stupid as soon as that Giro cheque arrives."

Phil and John are adamant that through music they can help find a way for what they see as a lost generation.

"Liverpool already has loads of bands mostly because of the jobs situation. The thing is that for a lot of the bands there is just nowhere for them to go, or for them to get experience through practice, or to listen to practical advice," says Phil.

"A lot of talent is going to waste. Our rehearsal rooms and studio will be something of a focal point for people to come in to."

The rehearsal rooms are to be converted from a garage at the former police headquarters.

"It's the ideal place," says John and Phil agrees: "It's big enough to take in a lot of equipment and there's still enough room for us to also convert it into a recording studio when we get more money and equipment."

They wander around the old high-roofed garage that once housed Black Maria's. "If the walls could speak I bet they could tell some stories couldn't they?" Phil leaves the question unanswered.

They return to a "loaned" office within the building to continue writing letters.

"We're writing as many as we can to people who might be able to help. One thing we've learned from all this is that you don't get anything if you don't ask. At first we were very wary of approaching some of the big names in the pop world because we thought they would think we were just couple of idiots or something, but everyone's been great. We haven't spoken or had a reply from anyone yet who hasn't tried to help."

Their appeals have already struck a direct chord in the hearts and wallets of some of rock music's most influential figures.

Pete Townshend of The Who, the original sixties angry young man and dubbed by some as the godfather of punk, was so impressed he wrote to them offering studio equipment.

"Pete has said he wants to come to Liverpool and look arouud what we're trying to do. He has some equipment which he may be able to give us and he's trying to decide exactly what to do."

Joe Strummer of The Clash didn't hesitate when he read their letter. A cheque for $1,000 immediately followed.

"Joe was great. The cheque came just like that. He's very sympathetic to what we're trying to do. You couldn't ask for anything more, could you?"

Other cheques followed. "Suggsy of Madness sent us a lovely letter of support and a cheque for £200, it was the same with New Order and we've had lots more like that.

"It wouldn't have been the same show without their support. Many groups have sent us loads of albums and sweatshirts and things like that, so we're going to have an incredible raffle on the night which should also bring in more money.

"Without the Merseyside Trade Union Community and Unemployed Resource Centre, though, nothing woud have been possible. They loved our idea of opening rehearsal rooms and have backed us all the way," said John.

"Like we said, neither of us is getting paid for any of this, but we're not worried about that. If this show goes well, and the signs are already looking good, then we hope to put on a lot more shows throughout Merseyside and open up more rehearsal rooms and places where young people can go and feel a part of something. It beats hanging around on street corners doesn't it?"

A TALE ROMANTIC

According to... BILLY BUTLER

□ **A LOVELY moment on the radio last week. On my "Where are you now?" spot a lady named Bridie asked me to try and locate an old boy friend she last saw 46 years ago.**

"We courted for one year and then broke up," said Bridie, "but I have never forgotten him. Time is getting on and I would love to see him again."

Within a few hours Bridie had had a few phone calls and knew the phone number of the sweetheart she had never forgotten. A phone call and a meeting was arranged.

"I met him at the corner of my road said Bridie. "He drove up in a lovely car and even though he is now 70 he still looked exactly as I remember him.

"When we were courting he always brought a box of Milk Tray for me and he apologised for not bringing a box as he wasn't sure if I had given them up or not. Went for a meal together and had a lovely time reminiscing."

Isn't that a lovely story?

□ **IN these days of automation and microchip technology it has always been a comforting thought that there are some things that cannot be replaced by machines.**

The good old postman and milkman are two such institutions. They turn out in all weathers, holidays and all to provide us with their friendly personal service.

But now we find the milkman's job threatened by imported milk — this must not be allowed to happen. Our milkmen not only deliver milk, they keep their eyes on the old for warning signs such as milkbottles left out for days etc.

Can we get service like that from old imported milk? No, leave them on the shelf and stick to our own good fresh milk.

I'm sick and tired of the things we have forced upon us by the Common Market. Oh, how I wish we had never entered and become involved in decimal connage (no, I didn't spell it wrong).

When Spain enters, just watch. That'll be the end of cheap holidays!

□ **THE subject of Sunday markets is a very touchy one. Mrs. Almond of Walton is incensed at attempts by Wirral Council to close down the market in New Brighton, quoting the Sunday Trading Act — that says you can buy a girlie magazine but not a Bible.**

How's it, says Mrs. Almond, that big firms like M.F.I. and Orbro can trade?

Myself, I love markets — not the new starched indoor type — but the great bawdy junk and upwards markets, with traders who are showmen themselves.

One has to take into account the shops that do not trade on Sunday and who's business can be badly affected by market traders.

I'm sure that somewhere a happy medium can be found, but until then I say the only people that should be allowed to protest are the shopkeepers it affects and not some fuddy duddy councillors quoting an act that is blatantly out of date.

□ **HERE are some more of those hilarious answers to the question on a car accident claims form "Say in as few words as possible how the accident occurred."**

"To avoid hitting the bumper of the car in front, I struck a pedestrian."

"My car was legally parked as it backed into the other vehicle."

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