

## **Jubilee Arts Archive 1974-94**

*Dave Travis, a local photographer who specialised in covering the music scene, was one of a group of individuals who volunteered to cover the Midlands Campaign for Jobs march in September 1983. He recalls how he came to be involved with Jubilee Arts.*



“I lived in an old sea captain’s house, on Tividale Road in Tipton, which is no longer there. It dated from the 1870s, but it got knocked down and they built some modern houses. There was an old lady down the road who remembered when she was a little girl how the sea captain used to sit on the porch in a rocking chair, smoking a pipe. It was a fantastic house, beautiful rooms. When I first came to the area, that’s where I lived.

I had been to Chester School of Art, then Nottingham Trent Poly to do a course in creative photography. I only did two years as I was already earning money from the music press, so I didn’t really need the degree - well, it wasn’t even a degree, it was a HND - so I left before the last year. When I came to this area, I went to Graduate Records in Dudley and saw Dave Virr. I told him I was a showbiz photographer and he said, ‘Oh, we have a party tomorrow and we haven’t got a photographer so why don’t you come down.’ So I did that it and it was great. I met The Bloomsbury Set and ended up doing their single cover, a photo taken on the roof of Graduate Records. We also made a video on this roof. Dave Virr was going to Midem Festival and wanted this video. We had a VHS but didn’t have editing facilities so it had to be done in one take, planning it all out shot by shot. We did about eight or nine takes while Dave was waiting outside in his Mercedes, then ran down the stairs and handed it to him. It’s ridiculous really; you could do it on your phone now and edit it as well on the way to the airport. And the quality would be better too.



*One of Dave's covers.*

I had some work with the Dudley Herald – they would use some photos I'd taken from other sessions. They didn't pay me anything but it was raising my profile. I needed to print my black and white photographs but I didn't have a darkroom. Someone recommended I try Jubilee Arts over in Great Bridge, who were based in the old Reading Room at Farley Park. It was a bit of a walk but I didn't mind that. The darkroom turned out to be the old kitchen with a kettle and sink and a booth for washing down silkscreen; it wasn't state of the art but it was clean enough and dust free enough. They had a Durst enlarger and you could get some decent results. If you had any dust marks or watermarks, you'd have to paint them out with a fine brush and it would take forever.



*Silkscreen at Jubilee, Farley Lodge, Greets Green, 1980-81.*

What I liked the most though, I thought the building was great and the people were great and it was just a really friendly atmosphere.

I used it from '82 for all my NME and Sounds stuff. Then I used their darkroom at the Community Association of West Smethwick as well. That one was the best equipped and laid out. I'd have a review job for Sounds and the gig finished at 10.30 pm and they wanted the prints by 8 am. These days you'd go to the bar and edit on your laptop and email them off. Back then I had to drive to Smethwick - it was Peter Singh who was in there at that time of night, he was always good company - so I'd process the films as fast as I could, speed dry them with the hairdryer, print five or six photos, label them, package them up, drive to London and get there about 6 in the morning, post them through the Sounds letterbox, then go and get breakfast in Soho.

I had started to manage a band, The Man Upstairs, and we could print poster and flyers at Jubilee too, promoting events at Peacocks in Birmingham. And at Jubilee they had a Gestetner duplicator, which we used for the flyers early on, before they went posh and got a photocopier (which had three colours). You just used what there was at the time, the cheapest possible means to an end. But it was all you needed, some sheets of Letraset and a copier.

I used to enjoy the days down Jubilee Arts with the Letraset and Rotring pens. They had an electronic typewriter but I bought my own eventually. Back then if you wanted something to look good you had to have it professionally typeset, which had a cost, so it worked out better to have your own electronic typewriter to do the details, cutting and pasting the type and spray mounting it, or using Pritt stick.



*Poster printed at Jubilee.*

I was getting a bit sick of travelling round the country covering bands for Sounds or the NME, so I started a weekly club night, then twice weekly, then at places like The Triangle Arts Centre, eventually doing events at all the other venues, working my way up to a 1,000 events a year, from the Jug of Ale to the NIA. Back then it was only me and a stage manager. You couldn't do it now. I look at my old diaries and it's ridiculous. If I have five things on this week now, I think it's busy. Back then you could have five things a day. It was good fun though. I used to have an A4 sheet of



paper next to my bed; I'd do it the night before, and it would tell me what day it was and all the events we had on that day. Your alarm clock goes off and you look at that – there's nothing like that to get you out of bed. You think, if I don't get up none of that's going to happen. Sometimes we'd have a couple of gigs, a club night, a comedy night all on the same night. I still took photographs, but with all the running around needed there wasn't much time left for that.

Jubilee asked me if I wanted to help cover the Midlands Campaign for Jobs. There were to be two people covering each leg of the march, one doing black and white and one doing colour. I covered the Hereford to Birmingham leg of the march. The other legs were from Northampton, Stoke, Telford, Derby. We used Etkachrome, because it was only a 2 hour processing, so someone picked up the film and brought it back the following day for an evening projection and entertainment at the next stop for the marchers. I remember one stop was at one pub, another at someone's cottage, one was at Dudley Mosque where they cooked us loads of food, which was lovely. We didn't do much of the marching though, we drove the route in a Triumph Toledo, back and forth to make sure we covered everything. At Worcester Town Hall, there was a special reception in the Mayor's Parlour, which was fascinating to see. I remember on the wood paneled wall they had this signed photograph of a Canadian Mountie act with performing dogs.



*From the Mayor's Parlour, Worcester*

Looking back it's funny how the most mundane things at the time are much interesting later. When you're winding the film on at the end, and to use up the roll you just snap off a few shots of something like the kitchen or the living room. Or the unposed ones when people are getting ready to pose. They're the ones that, 20 or 30 or 50 years down the line are probably more interesting. An ordinary shot of people walking down the street is historically more intriguing.



*One of Dave's photos from the Midlands Campaign for Jobs, 1983.*

I was always amazed how Jubilee just handed out Pentax cameras to kids and they always came back. I myself used Pentax MX's, for about 30 years. It would be nice to be able to credit who took all those photographs in the archive, but I guess you didn't think of that at the time; you were interested in giving them some experience, trying to grab their imagination with a different medium.

By the time Jubilee moved to their new premises on High Street in West Bromwich in 1985, I was much more involved in events so the photography slipped. I used their new darkroom occasionally but other things took precedence."

*From 1996 to 2014 Dave Travis went onto to run two highly popular club nights at Wolverhampton Civic Hall, Blast Off and Cheeky Monkey. With pandemic wiping out most of his promotional activities, he has been working recently as an events manager with Pat Collins Funfairs.*

#### **Notes:**

Graduate Records started as a record shop in Union Street, Dudley, run by David and Susan Virr. They set up their own independent record label, issuing their first 7 inch singles in 1979. They had great success in 1980 with UB40's debut single, 'King' b/w 'Food For Thought', a double A-side which went to number 4 in the pop charts. The band's next two singles with Graduate also made it into the Top 10.

The Triangle Arts Centre was part of Aston University campus in Birmingham. Formerly known as Birmingham Arts Lab, it was often used by Jubilee Arts as a venue.

'The manufacturing heartland of Britain has become a wasteland of closed factories. The charge that we lay at the door of the Government is factual, simple and direct. We charge them with the total devastation of the employment structure of the west midlands. We sustain that indictment because in practice the Government's policies have been universally destructive of the west midlands. The charge is total, because the destruction of jobs has been universal and indiscriminate, as the figures will show.'

- Geoffrey Robinson, (Coventry North-West), speaking in Parliament, February 1983.



*Community Association of West Smehwick, 1983. Dave, on the left, at planning meeting for the march.*