

CLUBSPOT

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Well-travelled keyboard player teaching others

TODAY WE FEATURE PIANIST PAUL RODGERS

BORN in November 1960, Paul Rogers grew up down Ackland Street, off Albert Avenue, west Hull. One of Paul's early influences was his mum Margaret, who was an entertainer who worked on the local clubland circuit.

Many will remember her by her maiden name, Margaret Creasey, and Paul's grandad, Len Creasey, was also a big influence on his career in music, spending many years as a soprano cornet player for the Hesse Brass band. Paul said: "I started piano lesson aged seven with piano teacher Harold Lillford who was also the conductor of the Hesse Brass band and as I progressed I had a further two teachers over the years, May Lawson and Eddie Wildman. They taught me well and set me down the path as a musician and musical arranger."

"My first public appearance was at the Hull City Hall for a music festival and it gave me a taste of what was to come later in life."

"While still at Sydney Smith High School I joined my first band, the Seedy Gees along with the late Dave Wilkinson, Chris Norfolk and Graham Stamp."

The band lasted for about a year

before Paul went onto his first of many club residencies, playing keyboards at The Ritz Club in Holderness Road, east Hull, with Kevin Corbitt on drums and the well-respected compere Johnny Vi.

From there he briefly moved across the city to The Albert club in Hesse Road with Mike Spencer on drums and Phil Tebs on guitar and then onto the St Andrew's club in West Dock Avenue.

It was around this time that Paul gained a place at the Leeds College of Music working towards a diploma in jazz and light music and to fulfil his residency commitments he travelled home every weekend to play at the Springfield club, in Anlaby Common, along with Pete Watson on drums and the excellent Margo West on vocals. Paul said: "I joined a band called the Choir boys, playing original music, which led to me being invited to be resident keyboard player at the famous Stork Club in London with the late Gary Burrows on drums and Andy Shillito on bass."

"We stayed there for six months before we went on a tour of America with Simon Townshend, the brother of Pete Townshend from The Who."

"I loved it and got the chance

to work with some famous names like The Pretenders and Duran Duran and on returning to the UK we worked alongside the legendary Mick Ronson."

"We did pre-production work for Simon's new album called Simon Townshend's Moving Target with me on keyboard, Andy Shillito on bass, Dane Morrell on Drums and Simon playing guitar and computer sequencing. We went on to record it in the Hit Factory studio in New York."

When he returned home Paul started teaching the piano for a while and took a couple of brief residencies at The Calvert Club and The New Grange Club before going on a UK tour with The Hot Ice Show.

It featured some of the best Ice Skaters in the world and Paul said: "When that ended I joined an Eagles tribute band called Hotel with Howard Jennings, who until recently owned a music shop in Hesse and following a summer season as resident keyboard player at the Butlin's holiday camp in Pwllheli, North Wales, I started teaching again at the old Gough and Davey premises in Saville Street."

At around the same time Paul was asked to join the band at the



Paul Rodgers at his piano

Birkhome Country Club in Hedon alongside musicians Dane Morrell, Cath Porter, Mally Hunt and Bernie Dalman.

In the day the Birkholme was one of the biggest nightclubs in the North of England and they regularly worked with the likes of Jim Bowen, Lionel Bart, Duncan Norvell and Joe Longthorne.

When the Birkholme closed Paul had a spell with the house band for Hulljazz and had a couple of years working with the top function band The Casablanca Boys. Paul said: "In the early 1990s, I started playing keys for the musical theatre classes held by Hull College, as well as being the MD for Northern Theatre and by early 2000 I was the resident keyboard player at the Humber St Andrew's club in Anlaby Road."

"This is where I played my longest residency, which lasted 12 happy years and I worked with some great people like drummers Charlie Nic and Wayne Porter and compere-vocalists Mike Angelo, Rena Jordan and Steve Larkman. When Humber St Andrew's closed (now reopened

as The William Gemmell Social) I found employment playing keyboards on some of the largest cruise ships in the world, working for the likes of Ted Olsen, P&O and Saga cruises."

In recent times Paul recently passed jazz piano in FCLM, electric keyboard DipLCM and worked a season at The Warner's Hotel in Summerset.

Looking forward to the future, recently Paul has been searching for new challenges including working with local musicians Leo Batt and Rob Phoenix on recording some of their original material and he also has his own website www.paulrogerspiano.co.uk

On reflection, he added: "I really have been blessed. I've had the chance to travel around the world doing what I loved, as well as help the next generation of musicians to achieve their goals in music."

"Musical Theatre is massive at the moment and one of the things I really love is playing for the musical theatre classes at the local State of the Arts Academy in High Street, Hull, that is Covid-19 permitting".



Paul Rogers, Andy Shillito, Gary Burroughs, and Simon Townshend on tour in America



Simon Townshend's Moving Target