

ROCK 'N' ROLL WALK OF FAME 'N' SHAME

OXFORD STREET

IN THE LATE 60S, 70S AND 80S

OXFORD STREET WAS THE VERY HUB OF AN EMERGING ROCK 'N' ROLL SCENE THAT CHANGED THE FACE OF ARTISTIC SYDNEY FOREVER.



**RADIO
BIRDMAN
BLITZKRIEG**



**MENTAL
AS ANYTHING**

ON THIS ROCK AND ROLL WALK OF FAME AND SHAME WE TAKE YOU UP OXFORD STREET - FROM DARLINGHURST ALL THE WAY TO PADDINGTON - TO VISIT THE VENUES AND SOUNDS OF THE PAST DECADES, WITH A PODCAST FEATURING RADIO BIRDMAN, MENTAL AS ANYTHING, THE MISSING LINKS AND MANY MORE

**“REMEMBER THE FAME, ‘CAUSE THE SHAME
LASTS FOREVER!”**

OXFORD STREET



1 SQUARE BEGINNINGS TO HIP STREET...

Oxford St Darlinghurst really begins at Whitlam Square, itself a name redolent with memories of happy, often excessive times.

2 ART + MUSIC MEET ON OXFORD...

Travelling up the left hand or northern side of Oxford St, we pass the Burdekin Hotel and, opposite Pelican St, we find some contemporary music spaces including Spectrum at number 34 and the Oxford Art Factory at number 38-46. On our podcast, arts and music maestro Mark Gerber explores these venues.



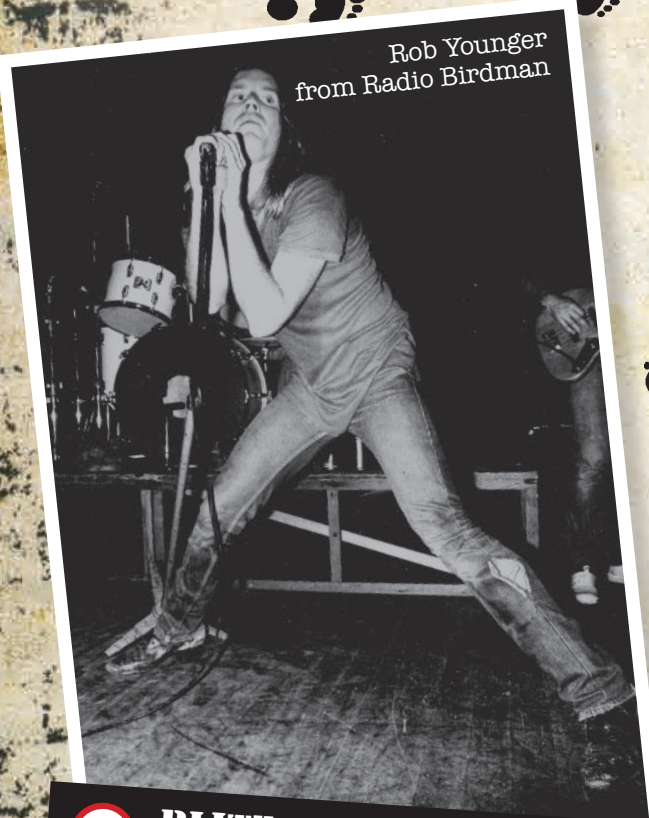
3 THE HAUNT OF HIPPIES AND HIPSTERS...

As we walk up past clubs like the Q Bar, across the road on the south side, on the corner of Oxford and Riley St, sits the music store called Hum. It was above that store that some of Australia's most imaginative musicians used to gather and play. The venue was Adam's Apple, a so-called disco that became the haunt of hippies, hipsters, jazz crossovers and folk leftovers.

More about that particular scene later when we get to Whitty's Wine bar. Although there's nothing left of the Adam's Apple venue, one of the key bands to listen to from the era was Tully: a progressive and psychedelic gathering of musicians featuring Michael Carlos, who went on to become one of Australia's great musical directors and arrangers.



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Rob Younger
from Radio Birdman

6 BLITZ BLITZ BIRDMAN BLITZ...

As we near Taylor Square, at number 134 to be exact, we find The Oxford Hotel, a venue devoted for many years to the often sordid, sometimes exalted rock'n'roll experiences that have entertained Sydney for decades. Today it's the more sophisticated Supper Club or sometimes called Will and Toby's.

But back in late 1976 members of one of Australia's most extreme, and now most legendary bands, approached the owners of the Oxford Tavern as it was known then.

They wanted to take over the venue on weekends on the basis that the hotel keep the bar takings and the bands keep the proceeds of the door entry.

Radio Birdman named the Oxford Tavern venue the Funhouse - with a name inspired by Iggy Pop and it became the most memorable and revolutionary venue of the era. And the cost of admission? Between 75c and a dollar at most.

Our podcast talks to Birdman's Rob Younger about the wild first days at the Funhouse.

4 IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS FRENCH'S...

Moving up Oxford St towards Taylor Square, and crossing Crown St, we come to Betty's Soup Kitchen at number 84, a building that housed French's Tavern, a wine bar that gave so many bands a paying gig early on. Midnight Oil, Cold Chisel and The Reels were there early in their careers, even Ol '55 played their first gig there. A dark, sweaty venue with a strong blues influence it boasted resident bands such as the Foreday Riders and the Mangrove Boogie Kings.

5 MISSING LINK EXPLAINS ALL...

Many of the venues of the day were dry zones or alcohol free environments. The most notable of them was unimaginatively named Beatle Village at 124 Oxford St, now a gay venue known as Palms.

Although supposedly a dry zone, Beatle Village featured many of the wildest bands of the 60s including The Creatures, The Throb, The Showmen, The soon-to-be world famous Easybeats - and the wildest of them all: The Missing Links.

The Missing Links were really wild. They have been described as the Missing Link between rock'n'roll, blues, R&B, punk and psychedelia. More dangerously they were also described as too loud, too outrageous, too unstable, too dirty, too scary - just too much entirely.

Our podcast features lead singer Andy Anderson (then Andy James) recalling their manic and crazed performances at Beatle Village.



The Missing Links

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7 A FREE HOUR TOUR... OF FAME AND SHAME

Crossing Taylor Square our walk of fame and shame takes us past what once was Gilligan's Island, an isolated traffic island outcrop which became a second (or sometimes only) home for the delirious, the drunk and the down and out.

We also walk past the home of justice of the Darlinghurst Court House building where Australia's national poet Henry Lawson once spent a weekend, dubbing it Starvinghurst Jail.

But in the late sixties there was nothing very legal about a lot of activities in this area. It was Sydney's own version of San Francisco's hippie locale Haight Ashbury. Musically folk music was giving way to more hybrid forms of blues, folk, jug and rock all fusing into a healthy and really vibrant live scene.



8 WELCOME TO (MRS) WHITTY'S...

At 207 Oxford St is the well-known Bookshop Darlinghurst. In the sixties and seventies number 207 was (Mrs) Whitty's wine bar, the real heart of this musical scene featuring bands such as the Starving Wild Dogs and the Original Batterseas Heroes. Terry Darmody talks about the scene at Whitty's on our podcast.



9 NOTHING STAYS THE SAME...

Once the elegant Albury Hotel, now a sports store, this pub was famous for its status as Sydney's top gay pub. The Albury put on drag shows galore to entertain Sydney and international visitors throughout the eighties and early nineties.

Earlier on it was also a music venue of note, remembered particularly for the resident band The Mangrove Boogie Kings and Ian Rilen's X, who were also longtime Oxford St and Sydney favourites.



10 MENTALS SHARE THE SECRET OF THE UNICORN

This section of the walk is opposite Victoria Barracks, at the beginning of a gentle climb up Oxford St and towards the main retail area of Paddington - the trendier sister suburb of the more worldly Darlinghurst stretch of Oxford St.

The Fringe Bar remains one of the area's popular bars and back in the seventies the pub was called The Unicorn, a 1930s, fully tiled, good old fashioned P&O style public house.

The Unicorn became the launching pad for one of Australia's continuing and most popular musical successes - Mental as Anything. Singer and guitarist Martin Plaza shares their collective memory on our podcast.

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11 MOVING ON UPSTAIRS...

Further up the road at number 182-184 (and now fully redeveloped) was The Paddington Green Hotel which operated upstairs as Brownies.

During the eighties in particular there were great shows from local and overseas artists including a gig described as "mayhem" from The Gun Club, as part of their only Australian tour. It was perhaps best remembered as a venue for post punk local bands such as Makers of the Dead Travel Fast, Sekret Sekret, Teeny Weenys, The Severed Heads, Voigt 465 and Scattered Order.

12 STILL STANDING?

Walking up towards the Paddington Town Hall, still on the northern side of Oxford St, there's the still-standing Paddington RSL - a venue of extraordinary popularity for mid-sized touring acts such as the first ever Henry Rollins/Rollins Band tour; an oh-so-charming Jonathan Richman; and The Chills from New Zealand.

For local heroes Died Pretty there was a famous show in January 1991 which included a free and now very rare, giveaway 45 single record - only available at this Paddo RSL show.

13 THE KING & QUEEN OF POP...

And across the road is Oxford Street's King, or Queen, or at least long-reigning monarch of venues: the Paddington Town Hall.

This was the venue for the April 3, 1977 double bill with Radio Birdman and The Saints as well as Radio Birdman's final Australian show on December 12 before heading to the UK. It was to be their last before their mid 90s reunion tour. The April show saw both bands' sets tear the house down; with Birdman's appearance in their "uniforms"; and the banner bearing their symbol as a huge backdrop - causing some unknowing observers to accuse them of Nazi leanings.

Rob Younger of Radio Birdman downplays any talk of bad blood between The Saints and Birdman even though Deniz Tek of Birdman and Chris Bailey of The Saints did not get along well. Listen to our podcast for his revealing chat about these times.

The December farewell show of Radio Birdman was a pretty strange affair. The crowd was probably three times the size of any other gig they had played with the majority of the audience seeing the band for the first time. The crowd was in a frenzied state: there was damage caused to the building and cars outside after the show and blood splattered



over walls and down the banisters.

Nobody who was there can forget their rendition of Kraftwerk's "Radioactivity", or lead singer Rob Younger jumping into the crowd to punch out a heckler who'd been spitting at him. It was the last hurrah from perhaps the country's greatest live band of that period.

During the sixties the Town Hall was also a venue for UBU, filmmakers and pioneers of the psychedelic lightshow in Australia alongside their contemporary, Ellis D. Fogg.

During the eighties there were the RAT parties. The core of the self-styled Recreational Arts Team was Jac Vidgen, Billy Yip and Reno Dal. Vidgen, an energetic party-thrower who had come to Sydney from Brisbane, became the de facto promoter and organiser of these RAT parties which were the forerunners of the dance parties and raves of the 1990s. The crowd were a mix of old and young, gay and straight, rocker and disco queen - a time when cultures melded and gave birth to a more tolerant inner city community

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