



WAS LONDON REALLY SWINGING IN THE 60's



Carnaby Street late 60's

by Paul Brett

Were the 1960's Britain's most creative years as far as music, fashion and the arts were concerned? After all, it gave the world



The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, David Bailey, Twiggy, Jean Shrimpton and the Offshore Pirate Radio stations that were based on ships moored outside the UK's territorial waters, pioneering all kinds of new and wonderful music.

Was it as great a period as everyone makes out? In terms of freedom across the creative spectrum, yes it was, absolutely. It was a time when the average person in the street could express themselves as individuals without having to adhere to the 'norm' expected by the establishment.

The most remembered TV Pop Shows of the 60's were Ready Steady Go, Thank your Lucky



The Who on Ready Steady Go

Stars, Juke Box Jury and Top of the Pops. These were the main 'Star Makers' of the media circus along with various TV Specials hosted by name artistes. And then of course there was the yearly Royal Command performance bash,

which has survived in various formats over the years, even the Beatles did that show. Alongside all this great music, was an equally exciting fashion industry. Young designers like Mary Quant, Bill Gibb and Ossie Clark, went up against the established Paris Fashions of Yves Saint Laurent and a host of other brands. There was a whole new scene of boutiques opening up in London's Kings Road and the most famous street of 60's fashion was Carnaby Street. Girls wore mini skirts and see through blouses. The 'A-line'



Mary Quant



Ossie Clark dress

styles were the cornerstone of colourful psychedelic outfits. The iconic Black and White pop art styles were also proving popular with the young girls of London. Biba was the in boutique and it was started by Barbara Hulanicki as a mail-order operation in 1964. Her styles were ultra modern and propelled Biba to the top of the fashion shopping list. Whilst men's

clothes were still a little more conservative than ladies, with Lord John being a leading store, there was also small outlets selling all sorts of mix and match gear, with Victorian Military uniforms starting to gain in demand amongst fashion conscious males. Sure, they're were still



Teddy Boys around from the 50's but The



'Mods' emerged in the 60's with their twenty four hour, dance till you drop lifestyles, aided by those little purple pills for extra pep ! There was a major clash of clans between the Scooter rid-



mods rockers Brighton

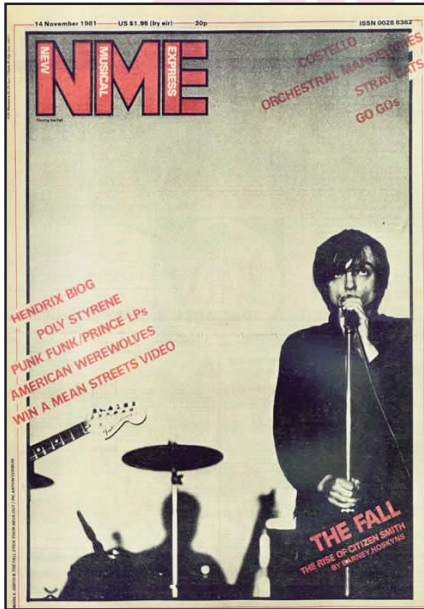
ing **Mods** and the Motorbike riding **Rockers**, which led to large street battles, especially on Bank Holidays for some unknown reason.

Popular Music Clubs in the 1960's Swinging London were strewn all over the Capital. All nighters at the Flamingo in Wardour Street, where Georgie Fame and the Blue Flames played their own form of Reggae, Blues and Ska, The Marquee Club, also in Wardour Street, was possibly the most popular nightly venue for presenting all kinds of music. The 100 Club in Oxford Street was the popular haunt for Jazz enthusiasts along with Studio 51 which ran a mix of traditional jazz with Ken Colyer's band and rock groups like The Downliners Sect. Folk was well served by the all night sessions at Les Cousins in Greek Street which was a stones throw from the world famous and still running Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club, which has always presented the very best in Jazz from around the Globe. I saw many performances there in the 60's, none more memorable for me than the fantastic jazz guitarist,

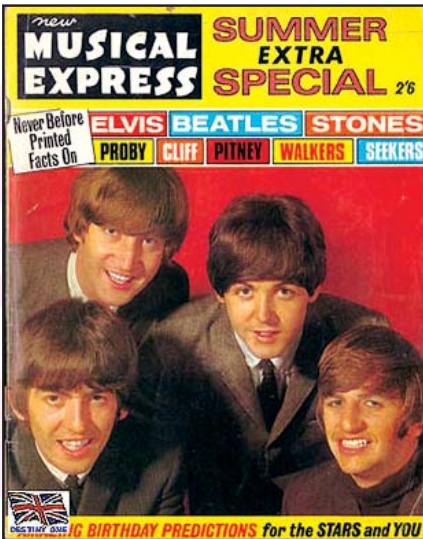


Wes Montgomery and equally, none more entertaining than the host, Ronnie Scott's brand of very dry humour. Yes, there were all sorts of drugs available and yes, many people experimented with them. Most musicians were on some kind of substance or another. Some became addicted and others passed through the phase. Alcohol was always there and like today, tipped the odd nutter over the edge. The salvation Army was giving out soup to the homeless and the Soho Strip clubs were open for business!

Mainstream Music papers in the 60's were



Melody Maker and *New Musical Express*



(NME). The later is still on the shelves today. With the emergence of Psychedelia in the mid 60's, clubs like Middle Earth in Covent Garden became popular. Although regularly raided by the Police for drugs, it didn't stop people from going. International Times was the main paper covering and promoting this scene and along with the more anti establishment OZ, were pop-

ular with psyche fans. For the Pop teenies, there was Jackie and Boyfriend with Record Mirror being a halfway house for teeny boppers into music. Probably the big dance sensation of the 60's was The Twist. This really caught on an propelled US singer Chubby Checker to the top of the UK Charts.

Most pop and rock musicians in London hung around the Tin Pan Alley area. This was situated in Denmark Street, just off Charing Cross Road. This street was full of Music Publishers and Music Shops. there were many small recording studios attached to these publishers and you wouldn't believe the amount of hit records that came about from sessions in these studios. Many have now gone, but Denmark Street still has a few and some music shops are still selling all kinds of instruments.

There was some fantastic and original artwork being produced for LP Covers. That's the one thing that I miss these days, CD's just don't have the artwork to compare with it's vinyl predecessors. Sure, that's down to size, but there were some classic and iconic covers produced which sold the LP's in some cases, as much as the music. David Bailey was the working class lad who took the photographic world by storm. From frugal beginnings in London's East End, he went on to be one of the world's most in demand photographers. He did LP covers for The Rolling Stones, 60's film icon Terrence Stamp, The Beatles and even a portrait of the infamous Kray Twins featured as part of a Swinging London scene box of poster-prints of 1960s celebrities and socialites.. Royalty however objected to the Krays being part of the set in the form of fellow photographer Anthony Armstrong - Jones (Lord Snowdon), the former husband of Princess Margaret. Because of Snowdon's objections, no American edition of this set was released and no second British Edition was either. Was this an example of the old school still exerting oppression on the working class or just a jealous photographer! Whatever Snowdon's reasons for his objection, Bailey produced an historical and truly representative photo of the Krays.

Like all good things that happen once in a while and if you were lucky enough to travel through the 1960's, you will always end up in a controlled enviroment, engineered by Politicians to keep their flock in very distinctive fields. They hate any kind of free expression, especially when it involves the masses, who they rely on for their daily bread, revolting against their flawed and unscrupulous morals. Get the bastards back into their boxes, can't have them running wild now can we. One things for sure, the 1960's was a unique time for London and for Britain. We were truly, the envy of the World, for one brief moment.

