

Re: A Pier is an independent documentary about Hastings Pier.

What's special about Hastings pier? Plenty. It's important in the pantheon of 55 piers pinpointing our seaside towns because (a) it was constructed using a method pioneered by Eugenius Birch, the Michelangelo of Victorian pier engineering; (b) it's been the focus of a hard-fought political battle over ownership, funding and restoration; and (c) it's a site of special cultural significance re: Britain's pop music heritage.



Yes! Because from the 50s onwards, Hastings' end-of-the-pier ballroom hosted cutting edge concerts that now define every decade of rock 'n' roll development: **Gene Vincent, Rolling Stones, Who, Jimi Hendrix, Pink Floyd, Kinks, Sex Pistols, Clash, Specials, Motorhead, Elvis Costello, Nick Cave**, superstar DJs, to name but a few... and the details reveal much more.

Syd Barrett's last ever gig with Pink Floyd took place on Hastings Pier. Lemmy made three appearances, performing once each with Hawkwind and Motorhead having roadied for the Jimi Hendrix Experience show way back in 1967.

Mod icons the Stones played there the weekend of the infamous bank holiday mods & rockers 'riots' that raged around the pier; Poly Styrene formed X-Ray Spex after watching the Sex Pistols there; and Joe Strummer was on stage in the ballroom with his Mescaleros just 3 days before he died in 2002.

The use of the Pier Ballroom for gigs reveals still more about Britain's nascent music industry. In the early 60s there was no such thing as a rock venue; bands like the Stones and Beatles regularly played concerts in cinemas and the like. 1500-capacity seaside ballrooms, then, suddenly took on fresh and very alternative uses. Hastings Pier Ballroom was by far the UK's most prolific venue in this respect, and therefore by far the most significant.

In October 2010 Hastings Pier was national news again, but this time because of a fire that nearly destroyed it. But a community-led group, now the **Hastings Pier Charity**,



mounted an impressively sophisticated campaign (which I've followed and filmed all the way) securing its future via Heritage Lottery Funding and the launch of Community Shares.

My documentary will follow the pier's restoration through to reopening and meet the Trustees who've battled to achieve it; the musicians who performed in the Pier Ballroom and the punters who felt the force; and the ordinary people whose lives were, and still are, touched by its peerless magic.



When the pier opens its gates again to the public in summer 2015 its futuristic design and trailblazing community ownership will undoubtedly stir national interest; underlining the impact that piers and seaside towns have had, from Victorian times to this day, on British culture.

Re: A Pier is the documentary that'll explain why.

★ View trailer: vimeo.com/87863421

© Archie Lauchlan 2014