Time Tunnel project traces town's pop music past

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But all that is about to change thanks to the Hertfordshire Music Service and Youth Connexions backed up by a £7,300 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

In recent years a group of young people from the Bowes Lyon Centre calling themselves the Music Development Group has refurbished and re-launched the venue as a platform for young performers under the After Dark promotions label.

Supported by the Hertfordshire Music Service, Stevenage Youth Council and Youth Connexions and with additional funding from The Big Spend they have been able to refurbish the venue with a new stage, new sound and lighting equipment and an acoustically treated room.

Now, thanks to the HLF Young Roots grant, they will turn the corridor linking the main stage and nearby acoustics lounge into a chronological ‘Time Tunnel’ with photographs, newspaper articles, old posters and other memorabilia as a permanent record of the venue’s rich musical past.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Bowes Lyon Centre (formerly known as Bowes Lyon House) was the largest youth centre in Europe. Bowes encouraged new talent including 999, John Mayall and the Blues Breakers, The Troggs, Caravan, Simon and Garfunkel, Status Quo and The Who. In the 1980s and 1990s The Bleach Boys, UK Decay, Bad Brains, Scum of Toytown (recently reformed to perform at Rhythms of the World 2011), Johnny Thunders (New York Dolls),The Cranberries and Johnny Cooper Clarke also performed there. Memorable promoters included Alternative Muzik and Thee Klub Wiv No Name.

Up to 350 young people attend the restored venue on gig nights and the Time Tunnel will give audiences a feel for the centre’s distinguished musical heritage. An exhibition open to the broader public will also be held at the Stevenage Museum featuring key artefacts, a recreation of the BLC stage and a listening booth to rediscover music that was played at Bowes in the past.

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said: “This project will help instil in the young people a sense of pride that they are playing in the same spot as so many famous names. But more than that, they will gain a range of skills in researching and assembling the information to create their exhibition while at the same time stirring some fond memories among the town’s older music lovers.”

Three of the young people taking part in the project, Emma, Hannah and Kelsey, comment: “This sounds like an exciting project to be involved in. We hope that by creating an exhibition of the history of Bowes and the famous bands that performed here we will inspire more bands to come and play here.”

The young people are requesting anyone who has a story about attending gigs at the Bowes Lyon Centre in the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s or have any memorabilia:- tickets, photos, posters etc to contact Chris Strong on 01438 202 806 or by email: christopher.strong@hertscc.gov.uk.

Notes to editors

Hertfordshire Music Service, a team within Hertfordshire County Council's Children's Services is the largest music service in the country. It is also one of the best, having won awards from the National Music Council on five separate occasions.

Further information

Vicky Wilford, HLF press office, on 020 7591 6046 / 07973 401 937, vickyw@hlf.org.uk or Phil Cooper, HLF press office, on 07889 949 173.

Suzanne Rider, Hertfordshire Music Service, on 01438 202 806.