

Over nearly the whole of my professional career, a vast majority of it has been performing at Organ and Keyboard clubs, festivals. Running alongside this also demonstrating on exhibition stands for various leading Keyboard companies.

As you can see from my Organfax players page, this I'm pleased to say still happens, but sadly not at the regularity it once was.

Back late 2015, I quickly recognised that if gigging was to be my main employment, I had to think outside of the Organ and Keyboard world to fill an ever decreasing diary once again.

Having always been a fluent jazz player from having a top jazz pianist teach me for 7 years during my teens, I turned to what was becoming very trendy again, the jazz scene.

This was mainly down to Jamie Cullum, who took the smoke filled jazz club of the 60s image and gave it all a good shake up with modern clothing, contemporary arrangements and presentation.

This brought jazz to where the youngsters and modern live music fans went, the music festivals. This in turn started filling up the old established jazz clubs.

So in April 2016 I had a eureka moment and said I need to get myself involved within this new trendy jazz scene.

I've always loved the classic Hammond Groove made popular back in the day by Jimmy Smith, Jimmy McGriff, Jack McDuff and more recently Joey De Francesco and



Cory Henry.

I purchased a Nord C2D Tonewheel Organ and cherry picked 4 top musicians on Saxophone, Guitar, Bass and Drums respectively to form my Hammond jazz and funk band "The Drawtones".

Over the past five years the Organ in the band has evolved now to the top of the range Hammond XK5 which is an identical clone of the classic Hammond B3.

The Drawtones landed a support slot for a Curtis Stigers concert at the Assembly Hall Tunbridge Wells in the very first weeks after being formed. This all came about by already having a friendship with the Rye Jazz Festival organiser who staged this show. This put us in front of 800 local jazz fans instantly.

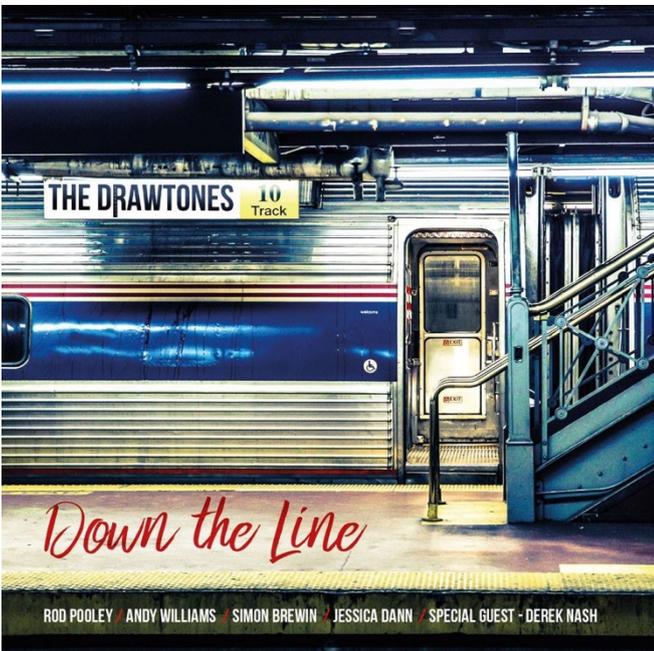
After this was posted on social media the Jools Holland saxophonist Derek Nash, a big fan of Curtis Stigers liked our post.

Me never missing a sniff for an opportunity contacted Derek and an instant collaboration begun. I have to be honest I knew Derek was in the Jools Holland Rhythm & Blues Orchestra, had a

successful Blues Explosion Band that regularly played at Ronnie Scott's and also had a well respected jazz recording studio.



I thought to myself why not record an album featuring Derek and have him produce it. Long shot for a brand new band, but he said yes. In October 2016 we recorded our debut album "Down the Line". This gave us pretty much the perfect start to open up many more doors.



Following the release of the album in Jan 2017 Derek and I organised a series of our own concerts in the London and South East. These were staged in mainly small theatres and Arts Centres. A vast majority of these sold out.

With this phenomenal first year behind us, I still had the overriding ambition of cracking the door down to play the established jazz clubs.

The first opportunity did come early 2018 with an offer from Pizza Express Jazz Club Maidstone. This show went so well an audience member wrote to Pizza Express Live head office demanding they book us for their top venue Dean Street Soho.

In the summer 2018 we did get booked for Dean Street, a London focal point for being seen by the right people and the ever important London press.

This led us to a stream of great gigs which included The Hideaway Streatham where Shakatak play regularly, Bulls Head Barnes, one of the longest traditional jazz venues on the River Thames, Toulouse Lautrec Jazz Club, Boisdale to name just a few.

There was still one venue to land to say you have finally arrived onto the UK jazz scene. On Wednesday 12th December 2018 we played the main stage at Ronnie Scott's. We went on stage at Midnight until 3am to a packed house. Words cannot explain how that night felt. All I can say is I remember and always will every element from the initial booking email, watching the band members jaws dropping to the floor when I told them to travelling up there, the dressing room, sound check, performance, even the traffic jam at 4qm trying to get out of Central London going home. It's one of those lifetime ambition moments that just lives with you forever.



I've often asked myself what sets "The Drawtones" apart from a host of brilliant jazz artists already on the circuit. An attention to detail to ensure every performance is top notch, but I also think a very special mention has to go to our brilliant young lady drummer Jessica Dann. After every gig the first comments always centre around Jess as she is such a focal point on stage, not to mention a brilliant, super talented musician.



In 2019 more of the same concerts as 2018 happened, only with Derek Nash's assistance helping us to secure a plethora of star names to guest with us. These included Martin Shaw - Trumpet

(BBC Concert Orchestra), Jonathan Scott - Trumpet (Jools Holland, Kylie Minogue), Dennis Rollins - Trombone (Courtney Pine, Jamiroquai), Phil Veacock – Saxophone

(Jools Holland) and The London Belles (Award winning vintage vocal trio).

In 2020 we all know what happened, no more to say there.

The current Drawtones line up is: Rod Pooley - Hammond Organ, Andy Williams or Luke Rattenbury - (Guitar), Julian Nicholas (Loose Tubes) Saxophone, Daniel Dotor - Bass and Jessica Dann - Drums.



What's planned after lockdown?

In June 2021 the band are back in Derek Nash's studio this time Derek is just the producer. We are recording a brand new 5 track EP "Groovin Magic" with the legendary multi jazz award winning guitarist Jim Mullen (Brian Auger, Average White Band). Release for this expected early August 2021.

To keep up to date with all of The Drawtones latest news and gigs please visit their website.

Rod Pooley

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