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Lucky break

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THE BRISTOL
LADS WHO HIT
THE BIG TIME
WITH **JOBOXERS**
- ONE OF THE BIG
BANDS OF THE 80s
BRISTOL TIMES INSIDE



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Tuesday, May 3, 2022

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BRISTOL TIMES

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NOT YOUR AVERAGE JOS

Four Bristol lads hit the big time as members of JoBoxers, one of the hit bands of the 80s

Lucky break Bristol boys hit the '80s big time as JoBoxers

Eugene Byrne meets two Bristolian members of a band who were big in the 1980s, and who are coming back to play the city next month

IMAGINE the situation: you're young and male, barely into your 20s. You've had some chart hits, been on *Top of the Pops*... You're going to do some pretty daft things, right?

"Well," says Chris Bostock, "there was this building site on Leicester Square with this massive crane going about 100ft up in the air. One night I climbed up it and then went right out to the end..."

"There were a few occasions when I sobered up very fast," says Chris's bandmate Sean McLusky.

"Like the time I drove a hire car off an s-bend coming down from the side of the Clifton Suspension Bridge."

"I'm not sure if it got into many of the papers, but someone did mention it in the NME (New Musical Express), saying, 'Here's a guy who's not going to make it to his second album.' Ha! Look at me now!"

Chris: "You crashed it into the police training camp."

Sean: "It was the police dog training centre. I knew what it was because it was right by the art college and I'd passed it many times."

Chris: "The front of the car was smashed in and there was smoke coming out, and he thought the car was going to catch fire, and there were these angry dogs outside so he thought 'If I stay in I'll burn, and if I get out I'll be eaten by dogs.'"

But as we can see 40 years later, it all worked out in the end.

If you were to conduct a straw poll of Bristolians as to the most successful musical acts to come out of the city in the past 40 years or so, doubtless most would nominate people from the 1990s – your Massive Attacks, Portisheads and that lot.

The previous decade did not produce many big Bristol bands, right?

Yes and no. Bristol did produce some very big names, but they weren't identified with the city because they went off to London.

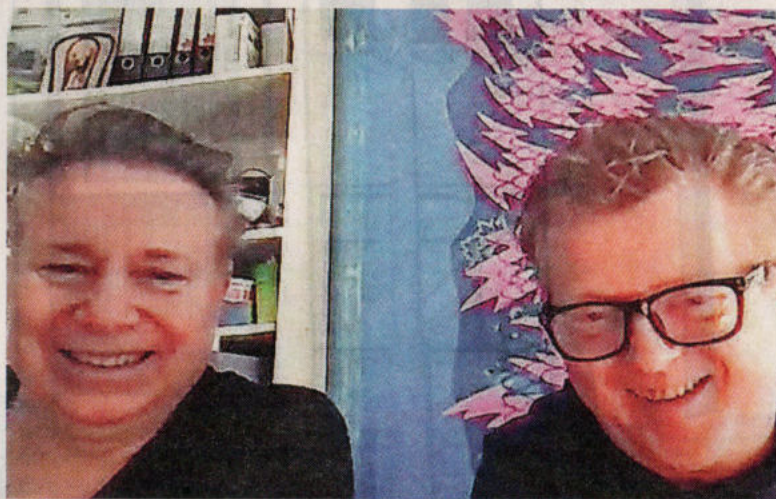
For instance (and many Bristolians don't seem to know this) but Sarah Dalling and Keren Woodward, two-thirds of pop trio Bananarama, one of the biggest-selling all-female acts ever, grew up in Downend.

JoBoxers weren't in quite the same league, but four fifths of them were from Bristol, and for a while in the early/mid 1980s they were very



Above, JoBoxers, 1983. From left, Dig Wayne, Chris Bostock, Rob Marche, Sean McLusky, Dave Collard. Below, Chris Bostock and Sean McLusky in more recent times

PHOTO ABOVE: STEVE RAPPORT



big indeed. If you're too old/young to have noticed them at the time, you'll almost certainly recognise their 1983 Top Ten hit *Just Got Lucky*, a jolly and timeless tune with more than a flavour of Motown to it. It's the sort of thing that crops up on the soundtracks to movies, TV shows and adverts.

Three of the band's members – Chris Bostock, Rob Marche and Dave Collard were from Bristol, while drummer Sean McLusky was an art student at the Bower Ashton site of Bristol Polytechnic (as was). As The Stingrays, they were popular locally.

Sean recalls that even the head of Cotham Grammar School recognised that one of his pupils was trying to forge a career.

"I remember Rob having to go and see the headmaster because they were thinking of expelling him."

"I was a couple of years older

than him, and he came round my flat and we had a couple of large bottles of cider before he went to see the head ... But he got away with it."

The head apparently recognised that his absences were because he was working.

By this time, Chris Bostock, another Cotham Grammar alumnus, was an apprentice at Rolls-Royce, but the music came first and London beckoned.

"We'd run out of places to play in Bristol. We'd done every venue in the surrounding area."

In London they teamed up with Vic Goddard to form the second "version" of his band Subway Sect. Originally a punk band, Subway Sect was now much more rockabilly, heavily influenced by 1940s/50s American popular music.

Subway Sect were in some demand, and toured with the likes

of 80s giants Bauhaus, Altered Images and The Birthday Party. They were also playing a regular slot at a popular London club.

Chris: "It became the Wag Club later, but at this time it was still the Whisky a Go Go, a tatty old 1970s knocking-shop on Wardour Street."

"We did a residency every Thursday for about a year, and we had different guests coming in. Bananarama were one. It felt like the centre of things at the time."

Another guest performer was Dig Wayne, an American singer who had fronted a New York rockabilly band, Buzz and the Flyers before moving to England.

Vic Goddard and the others parted ways and the four Bristol lads teamed up with Dig Wayne and JoBoxers came into being. (The name emerged from someone's observation that so many boxers at the time seemed to be called Joe.)

They were adopted by manager Bernard Rhodes, an influential figure associated with some of the biggest names of the time, including The Clash, Dexys Midnight Runners and The Specials.

Sean: "It was all very quick. We wrote a set living in the Clash's old rehearsal studio in the Camden Stables, Bernie brought a few labels down and we signed. We were propelled into it quite quickly, but we took it in our stride."

The debut single *Boxerbeat* made it to number 3 in the UK in 1983, though it was follow-up single *Just Got Lucky* that made it in the US as well.

The big time lasted for a couple of years, with three more singles and two albums. They were working on a third when the band split.

All subsequently followed

careers in music and entertainment. Sean McLusky became a DJ and club promoter, and now also owns an art gallery in Whitechapel. Chris Bostock has worked with a huge range of big names, including Dave Stewart, The Style Council and Spear of Destiny. Sean and Chris, plus fellow JoBoxer Rob Marche were in Sandie Shaw's backing band for a while. They could still be over-awed by their musical heroes. Sean remembers Chris phoning him one day, saying, "I'm by a swimming pool in LA and Bob Dylan is here playing his guitar."

Subway Sect re-formed for a couple of small tours in recent years, and now JoBoxers are back on the road again for some gigs around the country.

Chris: "We've talked about it for more than 10 years now but there was always someone who couldn't do it or didn't want to do it."

They're hoping a lot of old school and college friends will turn up, to their Bristol date. When Subway Sect played the Thunderbolt in Tottenham before lockdown, says Chris: "About 30 of my mates turned up unexpectedly – and they all paid to get in!"

» JoBoxers play the Louisiana, Bristol on Tuesday, June 28, at 7.30pm, tickets £22 on the door, but advance booking advised – see <https://tinyurl.com/5a669zv2> or www.wegotickets.com/event/530083

» Coinciding with the tour, a new "best of" collection, *Essential Boxerbeat* is released on June 24. For pre-orders, see <https://joboxers.tumblr.com/>