

This Life

Leeds people on love, life & everything

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Hendrix, Batman and Ruby Wax

STILL ROCKING: JEFF CHRISTIE HIT THE BIG TIME IN THE 1970S – HE'S LIVED A ROCK N' ROLL LIFE FOR 40 YEARS AND WILL TOMORROW CLOSE LEEDS J-FEST. NEIL HUDSON MET HIM.

The best thing about Leeds is its ability to reinvent itself.

It's taken years to get a stadium but we still don't have a decent symphony hall like Bridgewater Hall in Manchester or The Sage in Gateshead which can host full spectrum music artists and entertainers.

So many good artists like Steve Earle, for example, bypass Leeds for York, Manchester or Sheffield because there simply aren't places for them to play here. The Town Hall has poor acoustics and there is not adequate space or dressing rooms for orchestras, which is one reason we seldom get top orchestras in Leeds.

The other bad thing about Leeds is the tacky Christmas lights. Also, Leeds United are still languishing in the Championship League instead of the Premier league.

Oh, and one more thing, Leeds lacks somewhere selling decent pecan pie.

My first job was standing. I left school itching to get out and turn pro but had to get a job flogging carpets at modern floor covering in Kirkgate to pay for my keep at home. My dad was old school and no way was he having a bum sleep till noon just because he was in a group.

The best piece of advice I ever received was nobody's better or worse than anyone else - just different. Try to be tolerant. Don't pick on anyone bigger than yourself and be nice to folks on the way up, you may need them on the way down.

My guilty pleasures are Last Night of The Proms (*Land Of Hope And Glory*), Old Peculier and Snickers - when they changed the name from Marathon I felt I'd lost a friend.

My pet hate is loud, obnoxious and judgmental people and those who talk on their cell phones in public spaces where everyone can hear their boring conversations, they need to

show some consideration, get over themselves and give us all a break. And Facebook.

The one thing I couldn't live without is pecan pie.

If I could meet anyone, living or dead, it would be my dad, so I could say goodbye. I was in Los Angeles when I got a call from my brother saying dad had been taken ill. I got on a plane to get back to see him but I had to go through London and he died before I got there. It's something I have struggled with for a long time.

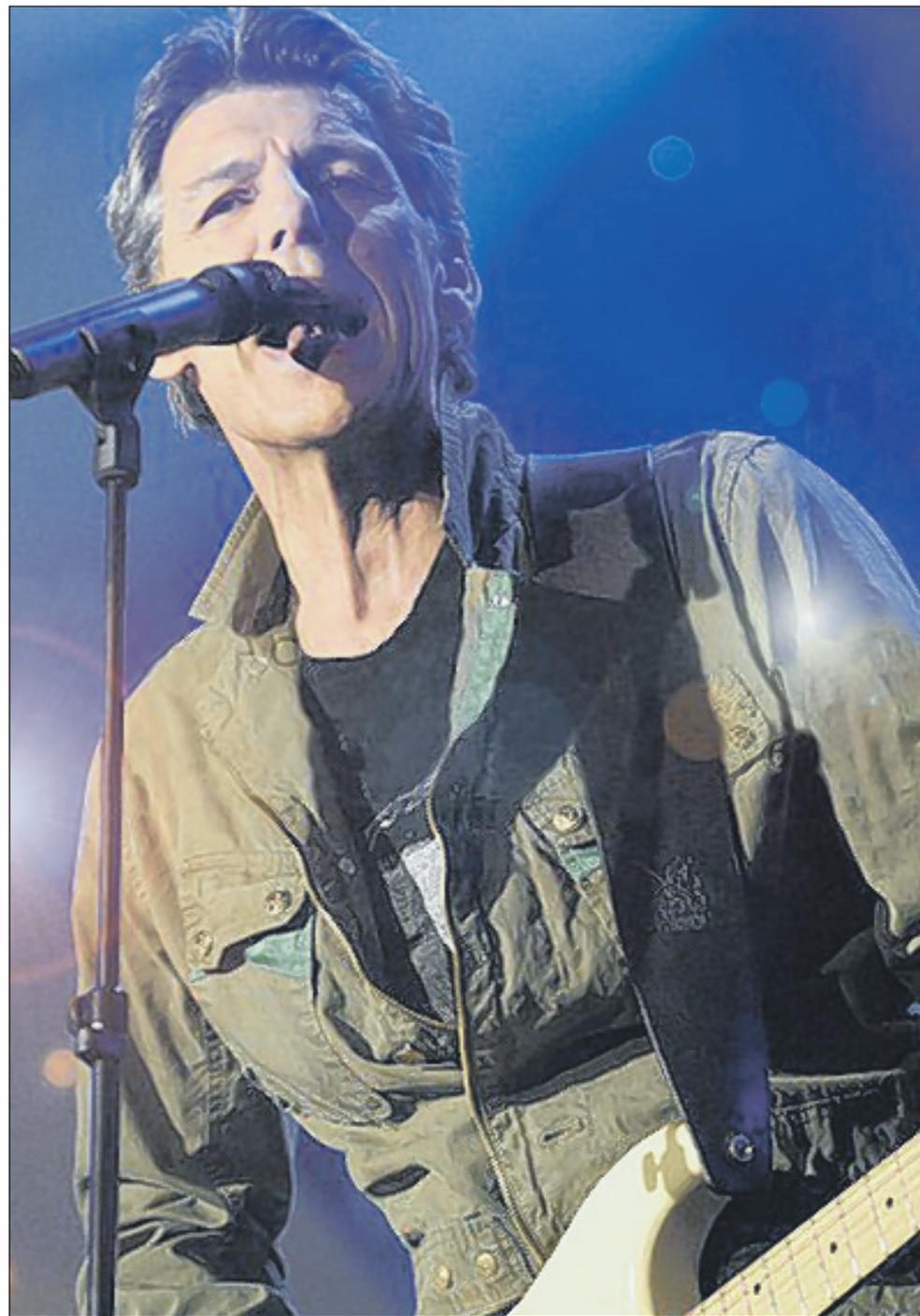
'My dad wasn't starstruck, he just walked up to Hendrix and had a quiet word.'

My dad once came to one of the venues I was playing at - he wasn't bothered by fame and fortune. I remember we were once back stage and Jimmy Hendrix, who was really shy and awkward off stage, was just sat there taking up loads of room and my dad just went up to him and patted him on the shoulder and had a quiet word in his ear and told him to watch out for me, because I was just starting out.

I was once on tour with my band Christie in Australia in 1971. I was in my hotel room in Perth waiting to be collected for a show, one eye on the door, the other on the TV.

I was about to turn it off as the adverts had just come on when I see an advert for Ajax being riffed on by a lad from Leeds who was a real character and who I used to know but hadn't seen for many years.

I jumped out of my easy chair, waking Paul the drummer up in the process, yelling 'bloody hell, it's Lionel Haft'. Within minutes there was a knock on the door and I said to Paul 'they're here, let's



STAGE SHOW: Jeff Christie's showbiz memories stretch back over four decades.

go', only to open the door and see Lionel standing there. It was just so weird.

Once lived with Ruby Wax. We had a flat in Kensington and different people moved in and out and one day this girl came over called Ruby Wax. She was mad as a box of frogs but we got on great and lived together for about 18 months.

In the '60's my group Christie won a 'stars of tomorrow' talent contest in Bradford, judged by Mike and Bernie Winters.

Eventually we were

persuaded to audition for a new group who would front the new Batman TV series with Adam West and Burt Ward. We would be seen on national TV in Batman outfits every Saturday night, performing the Batman theme before that week's episode.

We went to London to be measured for Batman outfits. It was all hush hush but I started having serious doubts about the whole thing, which frankly I just couldn't see being the right career move for us.

Things drifted on whilst waiting for the merchandise

people who were in Australia to make final decision. Eventually word came that there were problems with franchising and they could not get the deal finalised.

Soon after we were told the merchandise men who held the purse strings had backed out. I think it might have been the only time in my life when I was relieved at escaping almost certain success, masquerading as some puppet on the back of someone else's gimmick-laden glory trail.

My instinct told me it was wrong and I would be better

FAVOURITE THINGS

- **FOOD:** "Pecan pie and aubergine, failing that anything purple."
- **FILM:** "Too many to mention but *Citizen Kane*, *Cinema Paradiso*, *Where Eagles Dare*, I could go on, and on."
- **BOOK:** "Tibetan Book of the Dead.... just kidding."
- **LEEDS:** "I love the fact we have an arena now, but I would like to see us capitalise on that and for some us to stage a huge celebration of all the musical artists who come from Leeds - there are absolutely loads of them, it would be such a good concert. I'd like to see more concerts across Leeds, including in Millennium Square."
- **HOLIDAY:** Italy
- **STAR SIGN:** Cancer

making it on my own terms singing my own songs which I eventually did a few years later.

After Yellow River hit big I was interviewed for the YEP by a fledgling young reporter called Mark Knopfler who later became a household name and not for reporting for the YEP.

I remember meeting Freddie Mercury and Roger Taylor in Kensington Antique Market around late 1970 or '71 when San Bernadino was climbing the charts.

My drummer Paul and I shared a flat in South Kensington with some other lads from Leeds and we used to buy clothes there; they were either hanging out or 'working' in Alan Mair's Boot Stall where we used to get our snakeskin boots handmade for an arm and a leg. I remember them saying they either had their own group or were forming a group to which we asked 'what's the name of your band' to which they replied 'Queen'. Nice one we chimed, lit our ciggies, said goodbye and tittered into our hands - little did we know.

● Christie will close Leeds J-Fest tomorrow, performing a string of hits at The Carriageworks from 9pm.