

Long Loan to the British Music Experience in Liverpool

The V&A Department of Theatre and Performance has a history of lending objects to Liverpool museums and galleries. These have included the Tate, the World Museum, and recently a Long Loan to the Museum of Liverpool of a Japanese scrapbook covering The Beatles' visit to Japan in 1966 and a pair of John Lennon's spectacles.

So when the British Music Experience announced plans to open in the old Cunard Building opposite Liverpool's Pier Head, the V&A was very happy to lend objects from the Department of Theatre and Performance's Rock & Pop collection.

The Cunard Building was formerly the headquarters of the Cunard Line. Nowadays a Grade II listed structure, it was designed by William Edward Willink and Philip Coldwell Thicknesse and built between 1914 and 1917. It stands alongside the equally iconic Royal Liver Building and the Port of Liverpool Building, together known as the 'Three Graces', which make up the centrepiece of Liverpool's UNESCO designated 'World Heritage Maritime Mercantile City'.



The objects on loan to the British Music Experience include a jacket worn by Ringo Starr (knighted in 2018 for services to music under his original name as Sir Richard Starkey) when he was the drummer with legendary Liverpool pop group The Beatles. The jacket, S.140-1977, was designed by the tailor D. A. Millings and Son in grey worsted material, with a velvet collar, and rayon taffeta lining. Millings made many of The Beatles' jackets and suits in the group's early years.



Another of the loan objects that comes from The Beatles' early history is S.4721-1995, a poster for the Star Club in Hamburg, Germany, in April 1962. The Beatles appeared there with other bands and singers from the U.K., including on this poster fellow 'Merseybeat' group Gerry and the Pacemakers who, like The Beatles, were managed by Brian Epstein.

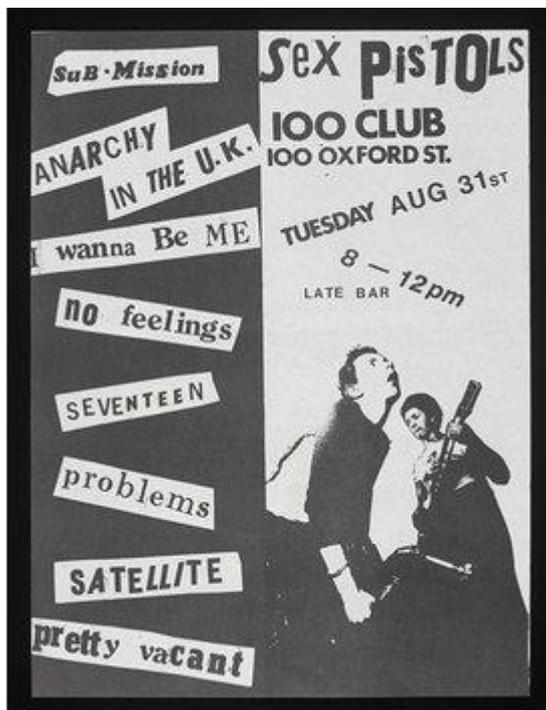


Sandie Shaw was a contemporary of The Beatles and a very successful singer, in 1967 performing the first British entry to win the Eurovision Song Contest with *Puppet on a String*. S.858:1&2-1997 is one

of her dresses, on loan to the British Music Experience, and is typical of the outfits that Sandie wore on television at that time, made of light synthetic fabric and decorated with sequins.

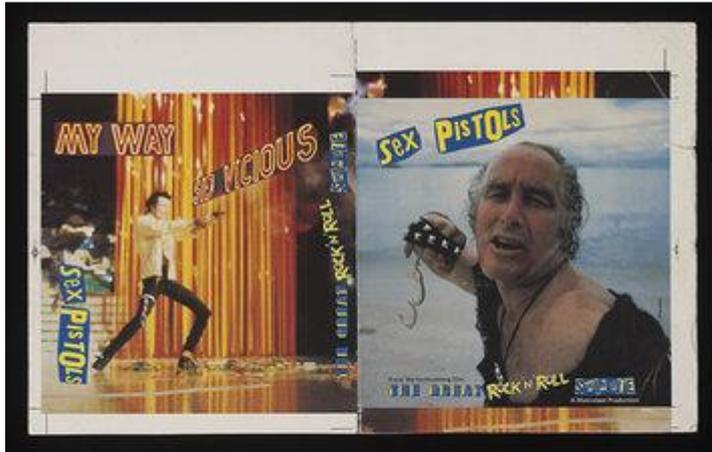


The V&A Department of Theatre and Performance Rock & Pop collection covers a wide range of music types, and the loan to the British Music Experience reflects this. S.829-1990 is a small poster designed and produced by the graphic design artist Jamie Reid, whose archive of work promoting the British punk rock band the Sex Pistols is part of the Theatre and Performance collection.



The poster advertises a gig by the Sex Pistols at the 100 Club in Oxford Street on 31 August 1976. The venue was mainly a jazz club but early punk bands played there throughout 1976 until September of

that year when violence and disorder at Malcolm McLaren's Punk Festival resulted in their being banned from the club. Jamie Reid had known McLaren (manager of the Sex Pistols) since they both attended Croydon College of Art in the late 1960s. Reid's poster was produced using photocopying, mixing images of Johnny Rotten, singer, and Steve Jones, bassist, of the band, and cut-and-paste 'ransom note' lettering including a list of songs by the Sex Pistols.



Also from the Jamie Reid archive is S.804-1990 a proof print for the single record sleeve of *My Way*, as recorded by former Sex Pistols member Sid Vicious for Julien Temple's 1978 film *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle*. By this point the Sex Pistols had split up, but Malcolm McLaren continued to use the name hoping to find a new frontman to replace Johnny Rotten. On the left-hand side of this proof is Sid Vicious, on the right Ronnie Biggs a member of the gang that undertook the 'Great Train Robbery' in 1963 and who had escaped from Wandsworth Prison, London in 1965. By the late 1970s, Biggs was living in Brazil, which had no extradition treaty with Britain, and McLaren and Temple used him in the film as vocalist on the recording of the Sex Pistols' song *No One is Innocent*.

In 1983 the singer Adam Ant (Stuart Leslie Goddard) donated a large collection of his costumes from his band Adam and the Ants to the V&A Theatre Museum (forerunner of the Department of Theatre and Performance). The British Music Experience loan includes this costume, S.138&AtoK-1983, designed by John Mollo, which was worn by Adam Ant at the time of the group's album *Kings of the Wild Frontier*. The costume was worn in three videos for the singles *Antmusic*, *Dog Eat Dog*, and *Kings of the Wild Frontier*, and also in later live performances. Adam Ant acquired the jacket from a costumiers in London, where he was told it had previously been worn by the actor David Hemmings as Captain Louis Edward Nolan in the 1968 film *The Charge of the Light Brigade*.



Often performers are directly involved in the design of their costumes, and S.1086-1997 is such an outfit, worn and designed by Jimmy Page, lead guitarist with the rock band Led Zeppelin.



A wide sleeved, knee length tunic, it is decorated with hanging beads and blown glass tendrils, floral patterns, a small fabric doll, and an imitation Martini glass formed from plastic. Elastic suspender belts have been attached to the hem.

Also on loan to the British Music Experience is a pair of snake-skin boots worn by Jimmy Page – S.1087:1&2-1997.



Elton John, the celebrated singer/composer has also donated costume and accessories to the Department of Theatre and Performance. The loan to the British Music Experience includes three pairs of his spectacles, each uniquely designed for him and expressing his enthusiasm for creative and innovative costume ideas for performance.



S.529-1989 Spectacles worn on the 1981/82 British and World tours; blue frames with folding fabric shades over lenses.



S.530-1989 Sunglasses worn on the 1981/82 British and World tours. Made by Mikli, France, ca.1970s. Red asymmetrical frames with diamante studs.



S.531-1989 Black and white plastic asymmetrical frames with metal hinges. Decorated with coloured diamante studs.



The physical demands placed on performers and musicians often require costuming that has similarities with sportswear. The loan to the British Music Experience includes a costume that exemplifies this. It is a jumpsuit, S.919-1985, and was worn by Keith Moon the highly extrovert drummer with The Who. Made in white cotton with short sleeves, it has a zip front and applique Esso motifs, giving associations with the stylish world that surrounds sports car racing.

The Long Loan of V&A objects to the British Music Experience is a celebration of the diversity found in the UK's National Collection of Performing Arts and held by the V&A Department of Theatre and Performance. It is also a wonderful opportunity for the British Music Experience to exhibit iconic artefacts associated with the great names of British popular music. And where more appropriate to do this than in Liverpool, birthplace of The Beatles and a city famous across the world for its unique place in the history of pop music.