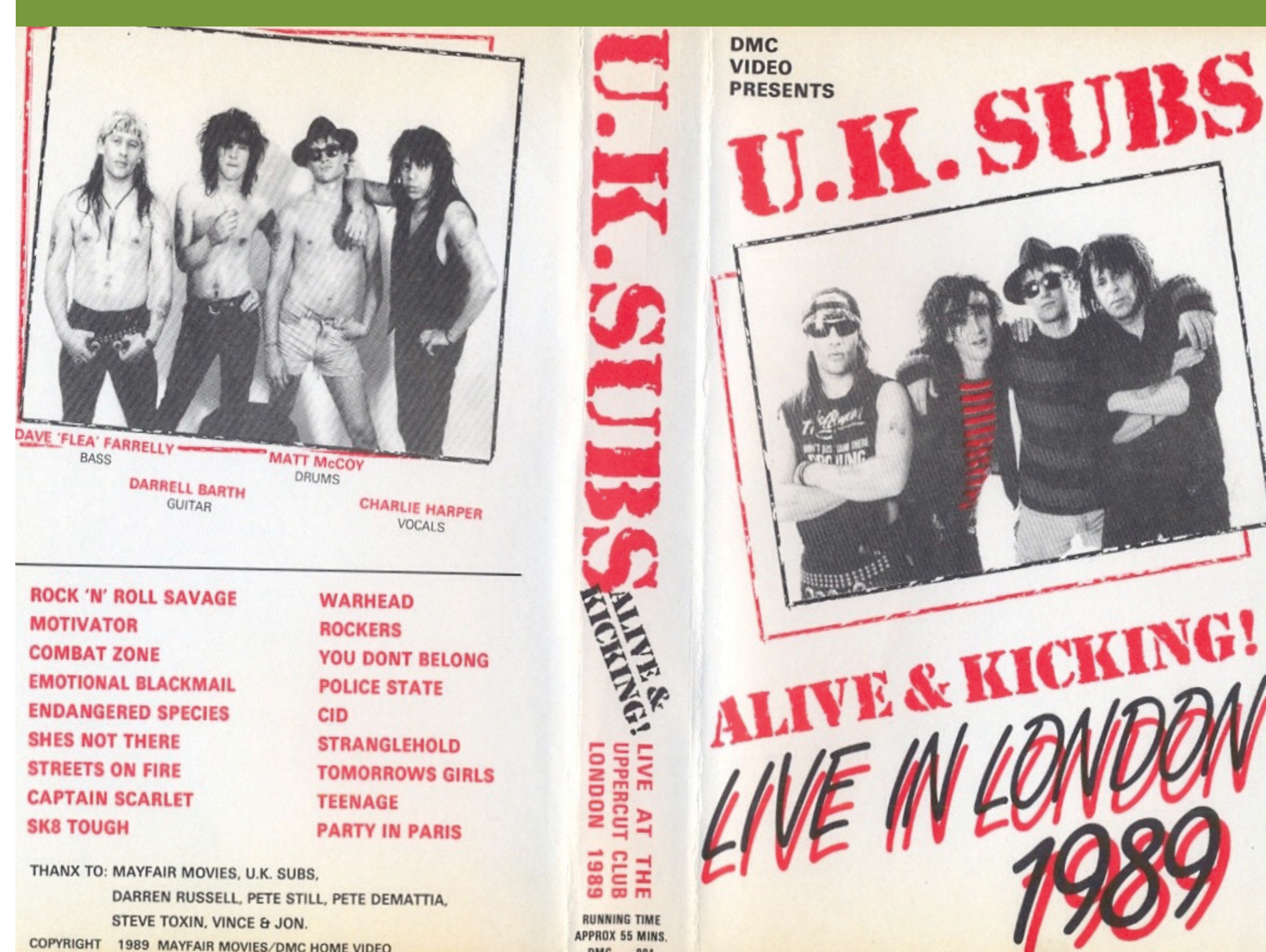


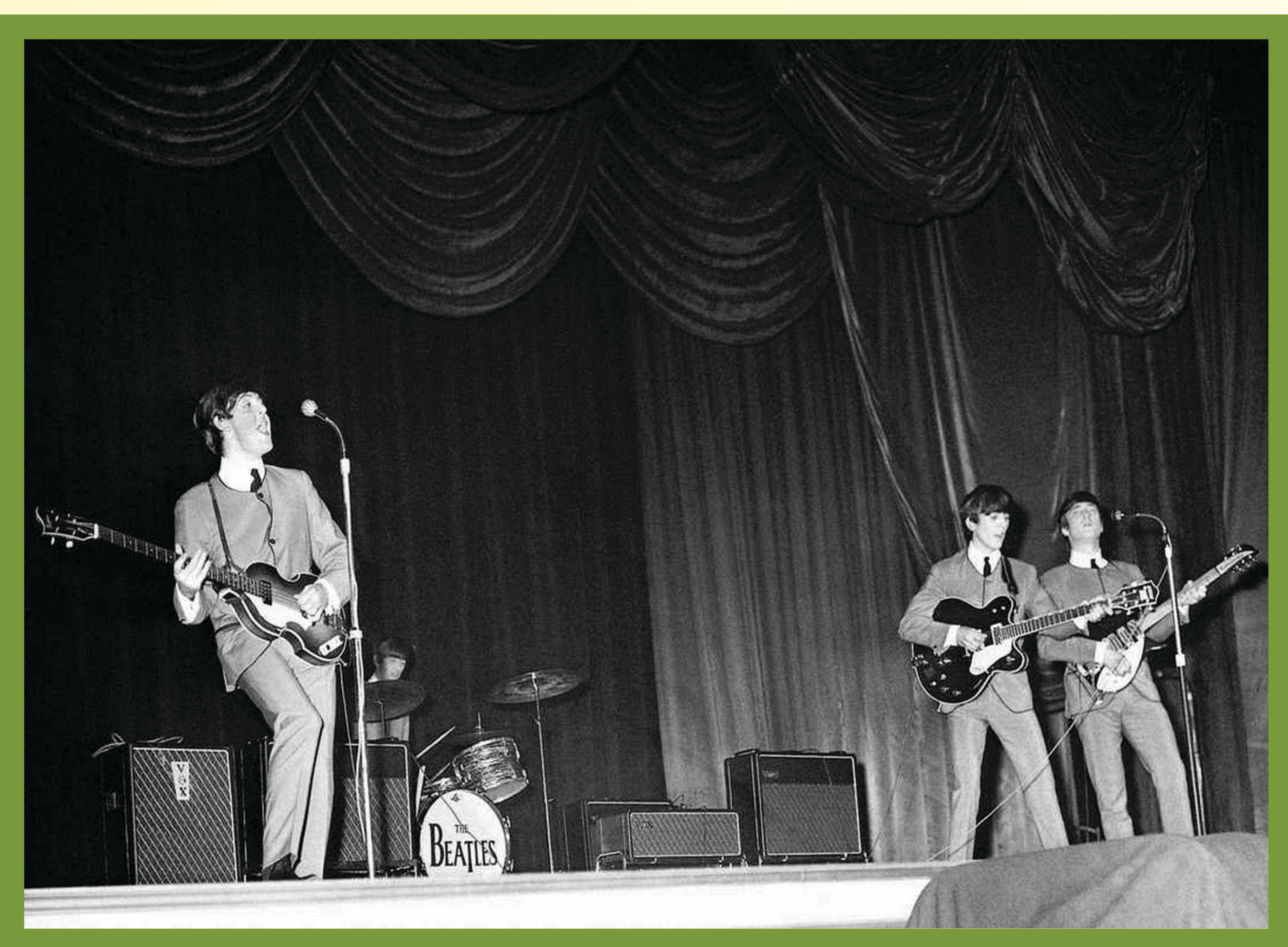
Folk of Forest Gate

MAKING MUSIC



Although the Uppercut closed in 1967, it re-opened during the '80s to host punk and reggae gigs. The UK Subs recorded their performance for video release.

The availability of cheap transistor radios and new, youth-orientated radio stations, drove demand for exciting, new music in the '50s and '60s. Rather than being an occasional treat at theatre variety shows, pop music could be regularly enjoyed in bars and clubs. Although coffee bars were a big draw to the West End, Forest Gate's Uppercut Club (open from 1966-1967 in the old skating-rink) hosted many of the biggest music stars of that era, including two performances by Jimi Hendrix.



The Beatles playing at the East Ham Granada, 1963.

"There was the Uppercut, which I probably didn't go to many times because I didn't have that much money... But I saw Jimi Hendrix... It didn't feel like there were more than about twenty-five or thirty people in the whole place, with go-go dancers in their gold cages. It was Boxing Day and there was virtually nobody there, so you could stand right in front of him... 'Peace and Love' was a very tiny bit. It wasn't like that in Forest Gate. There wasn't peace and love and tolerance in terms of race relations. We hadn't got there."

– Annette Fry

"Up this alleyway there was waste ground you could park the van, and they had this pokey little changing room behind the stage. The stage was really high and kind of stuck out, 'cos it was never built as a music venue. They had a shellfish stall in there as well, real East-End thing: shellfish, cockles... Used to get pretty packed. For some people like Jimi Hendrix that would be really rammed. A couple of thousand I would've thought. We queued right around from the Uppercut, went around the corner past the Princess Alice..."

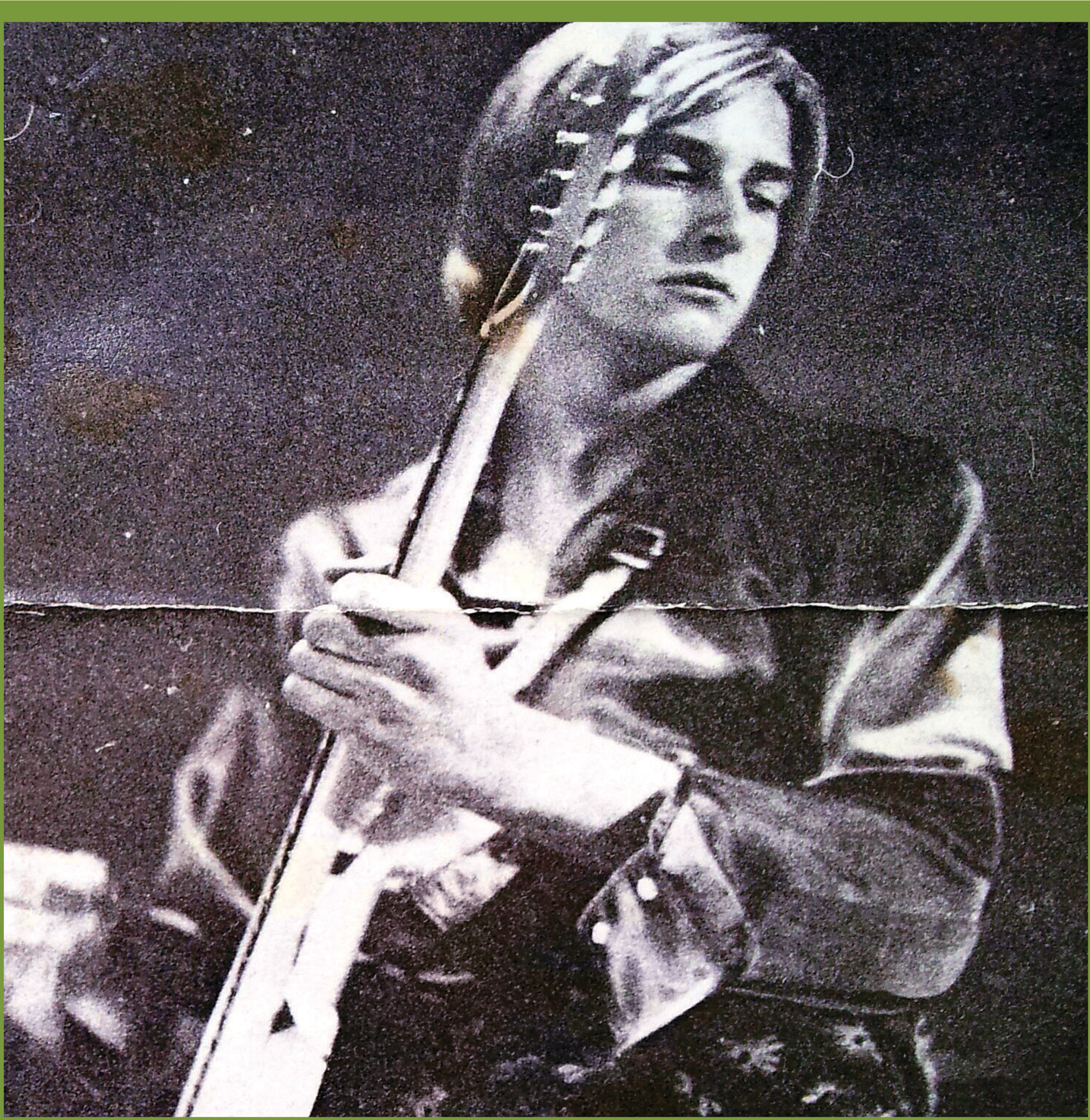
– Kevin Molyneux

"I did hang around in one coffee bar in Plashet Road. I used to like going in there because they had live music, which was skiffle... And it was very amateur. You knew that when you were listening to it... It was just before rock 'n' roll: Lonnie Donegan... Chas McDevitt... Nancy Whiskey... Skiffle more or less took over the theatres. Instead of variety shows, it'd be skiffle shows."

– Keith Green

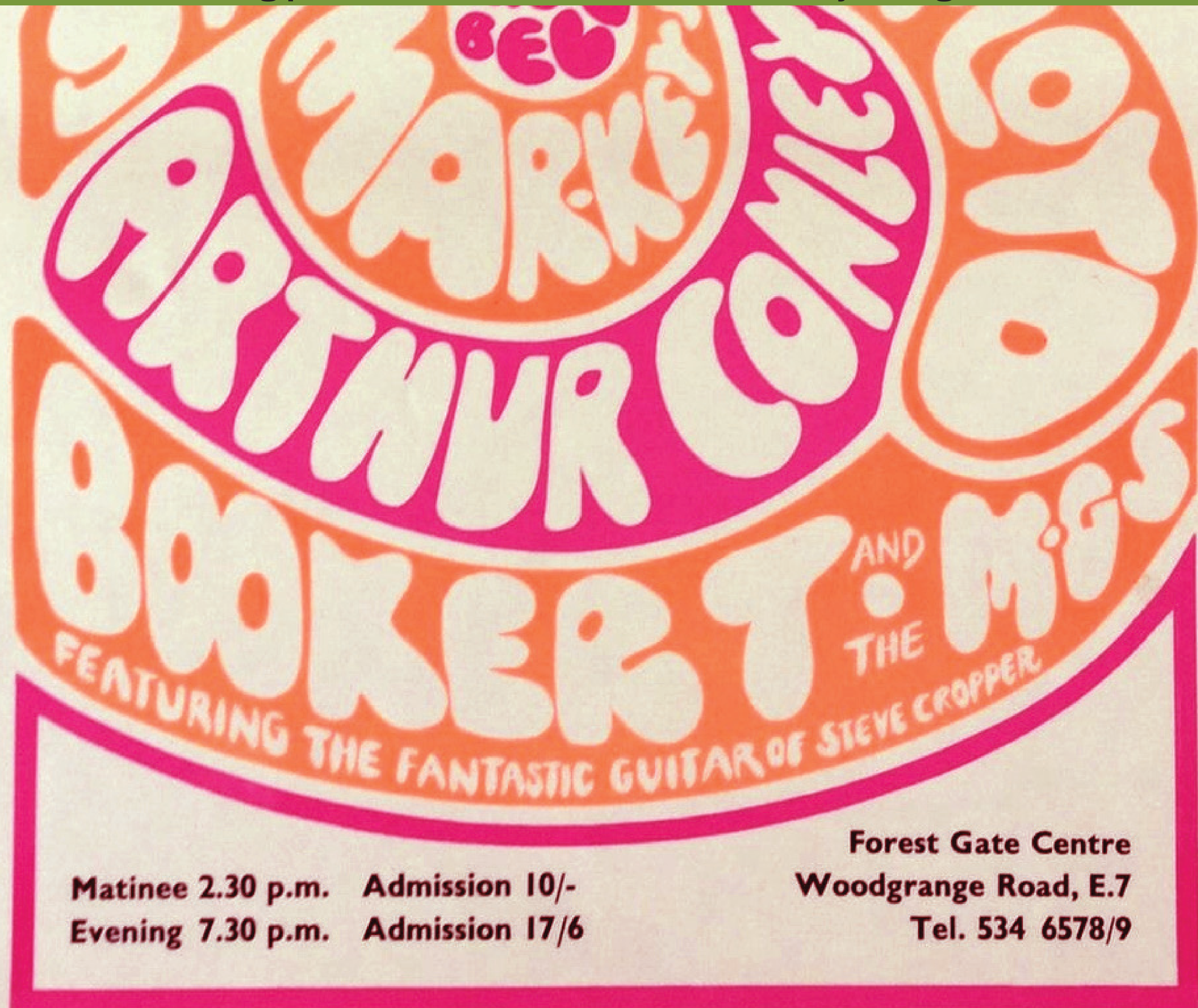
"You had this coffee bar scene that was depicted in films as well, so it was self-perpetuating. Either Cliff Richard was doing something in a coffee bar, or Tommy Steele was. The jukebox in the coffee bar was really the only vehicle you had as a teenager... The world changed so much in the '60s. Do you ever see pictures of Twiggy and the Beatles in coffee bars? When did the homosexual law change? There was so much liberation."

– Geoff Brunell



Kevin Molyneux, a local musician, on-stage in the Uppercut, 1967.

The Stax Tour brought many American soul legends to the Uppercut Club, for a matinee and an evening performance. Alcohol was locked away during the afternoon.



Images courtesy of Newham Archives and the East London People's Archive

An Eastside Community Heritage Exhibition. Visit: www.hidden-histories.org.uk