

For more than thirty years Liverpool has had one over-riding claim to fame. For lovers of British "pop" music world-wide it is the city that gave birth to a raucous, gritty rock sound that was, and still is "the Liverpool Sound"... in essence personified by John, Paul, George and Ringo, otherwise known as The Beatles.

Their music recognises no age gap. Today, younger generations "discover" it while older generations continue to covet it as their own. It has been arranged in a variety of ways to cater for every musical appetite from pure pop to absolutely classical. The explosive, unique style has never been equalled, anywhere. In this **LIGHTS!** special feature we show the happy results when a former pupil, and former Beatle, goes back to his roots and joins a group of dedicated people committed to a new generation of entertainers. The temptation to draw comparisons to "FAME!" can be understood but as our story explains this project is about far more than a group of people who want to dance.

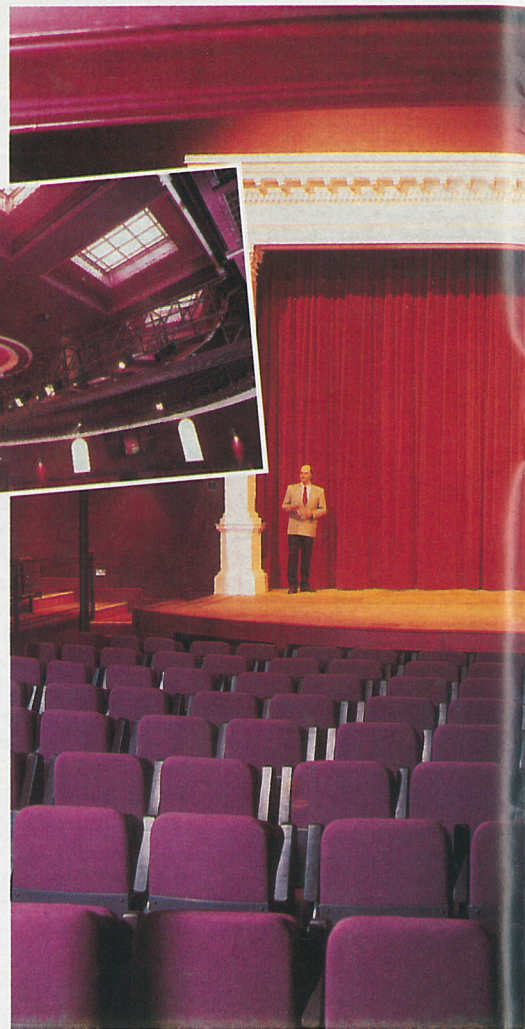
The Liverpool Institute and School of Art opened in 1825. It would finally close its doors in 1985 ending its days as a boy's school. However it was a school that could boast amongst its former students two members of the "Fab Four"...George Harrison and Paul McCartney.

Four years after the closure independent approaches were made to the Schools Performing Arts Trust by Paul and the Liverpool City Council. The intent was to create a performing arts centre that would be recognised as a seat of learning. It would teach the knowledge, understanding and skills entertainers, administrators, designers, technicians and managers would require, to pursue chosen careers in the world of entertainment. It would breed the competitive "edge" necessary for success at all levels.

yellow brick road would be success, achieved after a 15 year journey. As Mark would write in his inaugural notes in January of this year, to the projects many supporters, "You have donated to a dream, and, by making that donation, have made a dream come true."

With money from the Department of the Environment, the European Regional Development Trust, the National Lottery, the private sector and a generous amount donated by Paul himself, much of it from the "Let it be Liverpool" Concert in mid 1990, a start was made. By January this year all was ready. The Liverpool Institute for the Performing Arts was ready to receive students.

Liverpool, situated on the River Mersey in the north-west of England, has many claims to fame. For 19th century immigrants going to the New World Liverpool would be the last memory of "the old country". For others it is remembered as a great commercial port from the days of "Empire". Since 1892 it has been home to one of Europe's most successful soccer clubs. It is a proud city that is an integral part of the social and economic life of Great Britain.



Liverpool's sound investment in

The project required a dynamic partnership. Such a partnership was forged between Paul McCartney, who would become Lead Patron of a group that resembled a "Who's Who" of some of the greatest names in show business today, and Mark Featherstone-Witty (of the Trust) who would become Chief Executive. From the world of music Andre Previn, John Dankworth, Vangelis and Ronnie Scott joined film producer Sir David Puttnam together with actors Paul Schofield and Joan Plowright (Lady Olivier), entrepreneur Richard Branson, comedienne Victoria Wood, theatrical producer Sir Cameron Mackintosh and musical director George Martin. Just a few in very distinguished company.

The project would not be easy. It would have no ingredients of a "Hollywood Musical". For the Mickeys and Judys of Liverpool it would not come to pass overnight, there was a long way to go. But at the end of this particular

The school is centred on three principles. The first is a need to train versatile performers. Secondly to provide training in the popular music industry. Third is the need to provide the business skills that allow for survival and prosperity of entertainers and managers alike. Happily this knowledge is present in Liverpool under one roof.

By the end of last year almost 200 students were already in place. They came from eleven different countries representing seven performing or production crafts. They, and those students who follow will enjoy the most advanced and specialised environment in which to learn their craft.

The 550 seat Paul McCartney Auditorium, the 200 seat Studio Theatre, and two rehearsal studios provided an exciting challenge for David Collier of our Lancashire Main Distributor ASG Stage Products. The photographs on these pages show beyond

any doubt that this fine old building has come to life to serve a new generation. For Strand Lighting this was a prestigious project, supplying luminaires, dimmers and control consoles to ASG for the key production areas of the institute as well as architectural and house lighting throughout the building. ●

The following equipment was supplied to the Liverpool Institute for the Performing Arts by ASG Stage Products, Strand Lighting Ltd's Main Distributor, Ashton-in-Makersfield, Lancashire, England. Project Director David Collier.

Photographs courtesy of Lighting & Sound International.