



Harry Hammond

Halfway to Paradise

2 July – 5 September 2010



An exhibition of prints by the first great photographer of British Rock 'n' Roll, Harry Hammond (1920 – 2009), comes to Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum this summer.

Starting in the late 1940s, Hammond captured the definitive images of virtually every leading British musician from Cliff Richard and Shirley Bassey to the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, as well as many visiting American artists including Buddy Holly and Little Richard.

This exhibition of over 100 of Hammond's prints from the V&A collection captures the emergence of British Rock. It features many of his most famous images of leading artists performing on stage and provides an insight into the wider music industry. The photographs will be set against a soundtrack of Rock music from the 1950s and 60s and there will be an interactive quiz.

Born in the East End of London, Hammond began his career as a promising society portrait photographer. During the Second World War he served as a reconnaissance photographer with the RAF. On his return to London he found himself increasingly drawn to the music industry and using his talent and professionalism as a portrait photographer he began to photograph a new breed of celebrity – the Rock 'n' Roll generation.

Hammond captured the liberal, post-war public attitude that embraced the popular music culture and earned respect not only for the innovative way he shot their performances, but for his consideration of his sitters' private lives. In 1952 the New Musical Express (NME) magazine was relaunched and Hammond soon became its primary photographer, taking some of the most famous images of the era and setting the standard of pop photography for future generations.

His daughter Carole Hammond said: 'Having moved here from London, Leamington Spa was my father's home in the later years of his life – a town which he regarded with great affection. He was very pleased to learn of the planned touring exhibition throughout the UK with one of the venues being the stunning Art Gallery & Museum within the Royal Pump Rooms. We are deeply proud of my father's lifetime's work and the wonderful legacy that he has left to the world.'

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Further information and images – Emma Lewis, Publicity Officer, (emma.lewis@warwickdc.gov.uk) 01926 742709 or Vicki Slade, Curatorial Officer (victoria.slade@warwickdc.gov.uk) 01926 742701

LEAMINGTON SPA ART GALLERY & MUSEUM

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Open: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday 10.30am - 5pm, Thursday 1.30pm - 8pm, Sunday 11am - 4pm, Monday closed (except Bank Holidays) Admission Free.





Notes to editors:

Exhibition Tour Venues:

The exhibition will tour to: British Music Experience, O2 Centre, London (21 September – 27 November 2009); Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff (4 December 2009 – 22 January 2010); Portsmouth City Museum (Monday 1 February – Sunday 6 June 2010); Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum (Friday 2 July – Sunday 5 September 2010); Pocklington Arts Centre, York (11 October – 30 November 2010); The Lowry, Salford Quays, Greater Manchester (Jan – April 2011) before returning to the V&A for display in the Theatre and Performance Galleries in April 2011.

Accompanying Book:

Halfway to Paradise: The Birth of British Rock, Alwyn W Turner has been published by V&A Publishing £24.99. For more information about the book please contact Julie Chan in V&A Publishing on 0207 942 2701 or email j.chan@vam.ac.uk

V&A Theatre and Performance Collections:

The V&A holds the national collection of materials about live performance in the UK, which ranges across all performance types from opera, ballet and drama to puppetry, circus, rock and pop. New Theatre and Performance Galleries opened at the V&A in 2009. In the late 1980s the V&A acquired Harry Hammond's archive.

For PRESS information about the V&A's collections please contact the V&A press office on 020 7942 2502 / 00 or email press.office@vam.ac.uk