

Legend back on stage

After 40 years, band reunites for two gigs at old stomping ground, Riga

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A BAND named Legend risks failing to live up to its own hype. But in the case of Mickey Jupp's Sixties and Seventies sensations, the name is fully deserved, with the songwriter, frontman and band holding a seminal place in Southend's music history.

Listed as an influence by names including Wilko Johnson and Will Birch of the Kursaal Flyers, Jupp's songs have been covered by the likes of Elkie Brooks, the Searchers and Nick Lowe.

So when Legend reunite for two special gigs at their old stomping ground Riga this weekend, it's no surprise they've got fans flying in as well as a host of local music lovers, eager to hear their heroes back in action.

Bass player John Bobin was recruited along with guitarist Mo Witham and drummer Bill Fifiel to join Legend. Bill went on to join T. Rex and was replaced by Bob Clouter.

The band developed their signature electric sound on the classic self-titled second album, widely known as the Red Boot album.

John says: "It's going to be very good. A bit challenging because Mo lives in Burton-in-Kendal, in Lancashire, and Mickey's lived in Cumbria for about 30 years, so I think we can guarantee it will be pretty unrehearsed."

"We'll play things to have a run through on Friday afternoon then hit the stage running on Friday evening."

"Obviously music is about spontaneity and immediate response and we've had such a fantastic response from people all over the place."

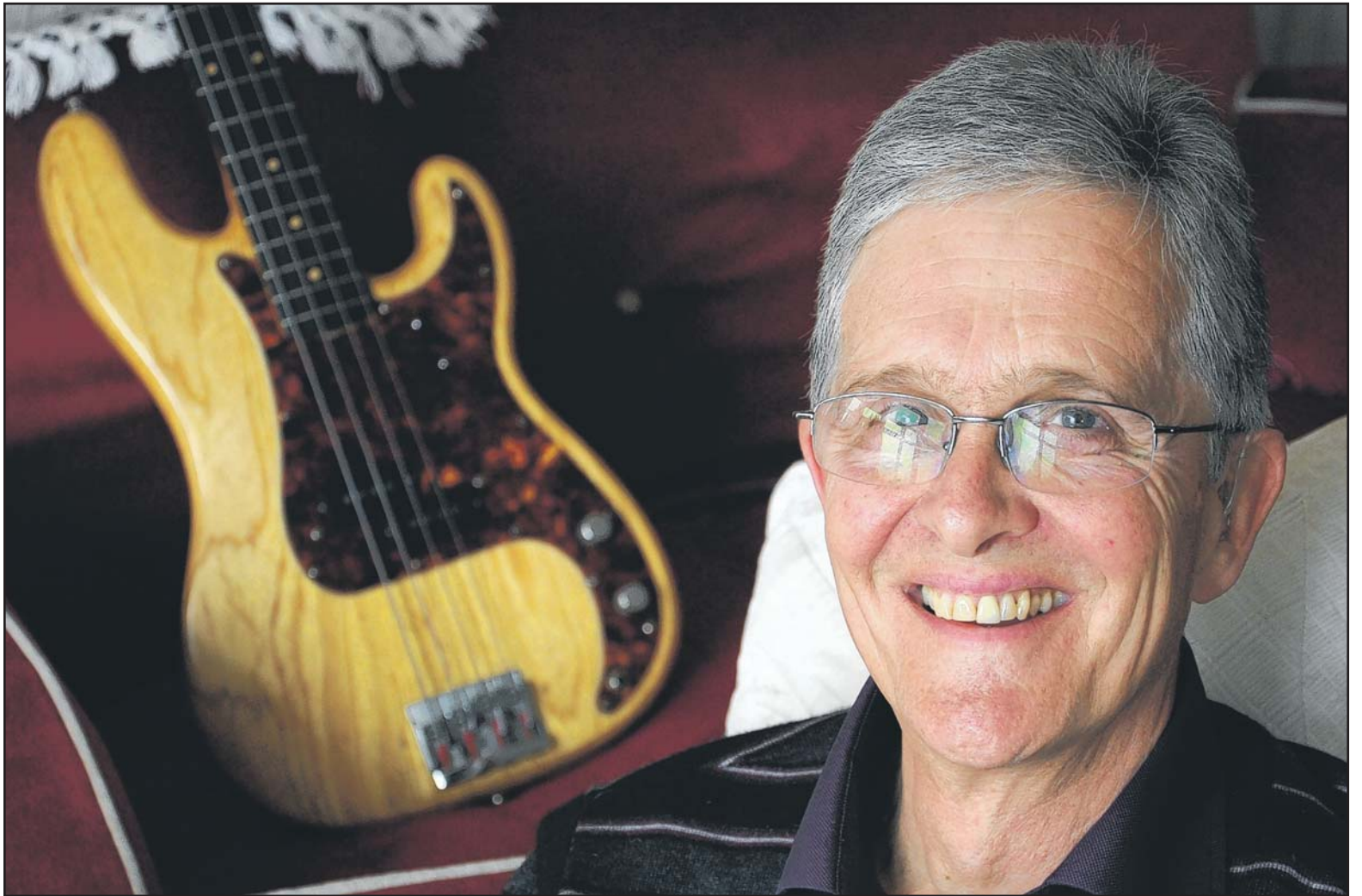
"We've got people coming from Sweden and Holland. Some are coming over for a few days and seeing both the gigs. They're glutons for punishment really."

"We are lucky that we go out there and we've got an audience that really, really wants to see Legend."

It's the first time the line-up of Mickey, Mo, John and Bob have been on stage together in around 40 years.

Playing at the Westcliff venue will bring back some memories, especially from the early days when the same line-up played in another Sixties incarnation, the Orioles.

John says: "Riga's a comfort-



■ **Favourite venue** – John Bobin, Legend's bass player, is looking forward to the Riga gigs

Picture: **PAUL WATSON** BA55976_03



■ **Legends in their heyday** – Mickey Jupp, John Bobin, Bob Clouter and Mo Witham were Sixties and Seventies sensations

able venue for us. When we were in the Orioles we used to play there four nights a week in about 1964. It was just a dance hall then for the Cricketers.

"Mickey used to play an old upright piano with an old concert mic stuck on the back with insulation tape, which of course always fell off."

"Life's a little bit easier now with a digital piano. We used to carry a piano around with us. It would always go out of tune. Mickey used to try and tune it up with pliers sometimes, but it wasn't always successful."

John says touring in the Sixties and Seventies was an amazing time to be in a band as they cut their teeth on the circuit. Eventually they played college

gigs alongside the like of acts including Monty Python's Flying Circus and Dudley Moore.

He says: "Mo sat next to Dudley Moore's wife Suzy Kendall and he said he wasn't going to wash for a while. As well as an actor, Dudley was also a fantastic jazz player."

"It was just a nice time playing in the Sixties and early Seventies. It was a time when everywhere we

went clubs, dance halls, restaurants and the like, they all had live music."

It's been said if there was any justice in the fickle music world, Mickey Jupp would be a lot more famous than he is.

But part of the reason is down to his own reticence. He's known to be a private person and doesn't often give interviews.

John says: "For someone so talented it's surprising he's a bit self-conscious sometimes. I think that's why he probably likes it up in Cumbria because it's wild and lonely and empty – he's written some great songs up there."

His fans will get to hear some of the songs as they'll be playing a whole range of tunes.

John says: "Mickey's written lots of really good songs over the years and we've persuaded him to do a lot more of his songs this time round. He's also very good at the old rock'n'roll and R&B, but we thought it'd be nice for people to hear his stuff."

"There'll be some old Legend songs from some old Legend albums and some he has done since then. Things people might not even have heard."

It's difficult for John to pick out a highlight, but he admits working on the two albums, the famous Red Boot one and its follow-up, Moonshine – which featured string arrangements by Procol Harum organist Matthew Fisher – were times he'll treasure.

He says: "The Red Boot album was produced by Tony Visconti who worked with David Bowie, Thin Lizzy and T. Rex and that was a great time."

"With our second album we wanted to do something completely different."

"We had 12 members of the London Symphony Orchestra come in. They played and it sounded beautiful. Then the engineer said, 'Would you mind doing that again?' I said, 'What was wrong with that?' He said, 'Nothing, but we don't want to pay them twice do we?'"

John can't wait to get back on stage on Friday, despite slight nerves after so long.

He says: "I'm very pleased. Everybody's very pleased. We're all really looking forward to it."

"Whenever we do something like this there's always a slight element of, 'I hope this is going to be all right'. But when we get on stage, look around, see our mates and play songs we really love, I'm sure it's going to be good fun."

"To be honest, it makes me feel a bit humble, I'm only a bass player after all."

“When we look around, see our mates and play songs we love, I'm sure it's going to be good fun

Legend
Riga,
Milton Road, Westcliff
Friday and Saturday
8pm.
£10 advance/£12 on the door
08444 771000