

Rock and Blues at the Halfway House

I always knew that Barnes liked to boogie. With a Bowling Club as renowned for its musical members as its bowling experts, and with audiences dancing in their seats at the Bull's Head most nights of the week, there are plenty of telltale signs.

But what I wanted to know is where do Barnes folk go when a vigorous foot tap is not enough?

One Saturday night I found out.

On Priests Bridge Road stands a homely looking pub called the Halfway House. Go there at 8 o'clock on a Saturday night and you might think 'ah, how cosy, what a lovely place to escape with a pint and the crossword – and it's only a short walk home.'

But then, ladies and gentlemen, things change. It happens slowly and imperceptibly so that you might not even notice it happening, until you find yourself dancing round the pub like a loon to some of the best live blues and rock in London.



The Rick Martin band playing at the Halfway House

Let me tell you how it happens.

Those in the know begin filtering in as the evening progresses, starting out with some pub grub, catching up with other regulars.

Then the band kicks off, prompting the odd clap, toe tap or politely reserved wiggle.

Then without fail, the music gets livelier, the first brave couple takes to the floor, and then the next, and then the next.

For twenty-five years, landlords Jill and Mike Thompson have been having free, local jazz and blues at the Halfway House. Mike says: "I'm a musician in every way except I don't play an instrument. I love jazz."

This passion has been growing over the years from an occasional event, to once a month, to a 'what the hell, let's do every Saturday night' affair. Mike has every Saturday booked up until August with first class local bands.

Did I tell you it's free? "How many places in London can you go

to hear free live music?" says Mike.

Rachel Rickard Straus

For more info see: www.halfwayhousebarnes.co.uk