
Building

WSP's Wild Sex Party triumphs at Battle of the Bands

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By **Katie Puckett**

Industry rock gods - and goddesses - go head-to-head to find construction's best band

Harvey Canary is in a frenzy. "CREDIT CRUUUUNNCH! "It's the CREEH - DIT - CRUNCH!" he screams, hurling carrots into the crowd and leaping up and down. He's got crazy hair, stars on his shirt and fluorescent orange braces – he's clearly a contractor on the edge.

Not since Elton John's Candle in the Wind has a song so captured the mood of the nation.



Welcome to construction's very own Battle of the Bands event, live from The Gymnasium opposite St Pancras station in central London.

As Bauhaus, Village People and Bob the Builder could attest, there is a well-trammelled path between construction and rock and roll. And even if few of the industry's bands make the big time, there are countless surveyors, construction managers and architects in garages across Britain come Sunday afternoon howling soft-rock covers as if their day jobs didn't exist.

Tonight, the event, a charity do, is so well subscribed that organiser WSP has had to "re-fire-engineer" the venue to extend the capacity to 350 people, each contributing a tenner to the Chinese Earthquake Appeal and a King's Cross youth charity, The Copenhagen Project.

The event has been masterminded by WSP director Bill Price and BAA's head of technology Nigel Fraser, but they've marshalled support and expertise from enthusiasts across the industry. Argent have donated the venue, and joint chief executive Roger Madelin is dryly compering proceedings. Paul Nicholson, head of architecture at Lend Lease, has not only arranged and paid for a mighty lighting rig above the stage, but is manning it on the night to great effect. And Peter Ball, Costain's technology manager, is running the stage and strictly enforcing each band's 12-minute timeslot. Punctuality is almost as important as a tight rhythm section this

evening, and the judges have been asked to award a prize for the not-very-rock-and-roll achievement of Most Organised Band.

Tonight's acts are drawn from companies across construction - some have been playing together for years, others have only a few hours rehearsal time under their belts. There is a lot of stone-washed denim, black T-shirts galore – comedy slogan optional – and many, many puns. WSP's own two in-house bands are called Public M&E and Wild Sex Party. Bickerdike Allen Partners have The BAP Band. Two firms went for an AC/DC pun, but Chapman Bathurst's AC/CB have clearly won the backstage tussle because MDA have renamed themselves "Another Brick".

Harvey Canary is the mysterious singer of Canary Wharf Contractors' Canary Wolf. The punk-loving Wolves are also the most desperate to impress our panel of music industry judges – they've already been on Chinese television, now they want a contract.

The judges themselves have an intimidating pedigree. Neil Pyzer is a veteran session musician who plays with Geno Washington's Ram Jam Band, Stuart Clarke is in charge of putting new acts in the pages of industry bible Music Week, and Pia Ashcroft and Lou Alchamaa are genuine A&R talent-spotters for record company Sony BMG. They veer between offering encouragement, slightly withering put-downs and genuine bemusement.

There's much to play for. Not only is there the glimmer of a chance of a brand new music industry career, there is also a very desirable sound system donated by Sound Technology.

But when the judges have watched all the bands and deliberated over their scoresheets, there's a rather embarrassing conclusion... Wild Sex Party, Price's own band, are declared the hands-down winner for their blistering covers of The Killers, The Strokes and Talking Heads.

A rather sheepish Price declares that the prize will be shared between all the bands – any of the evening's performers will be able to use the speakers for forthcoming gigs, they just have to collect them from WSP's London HQ.

The runners up are Bickerdike Allen's BAP Band in second place, Arup's OvaTones are delighted to win the best new band prize for groups formed especially for the event, and S' Argent from – you've guessed it – Argent are deemed "most organised" band for workman-like approach to punctuality and a swift and efficient exit from the stage.

But does fame beckon? Read on for biopics of the bands.

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