

Reggae legends UB40 launch 'Musical Routes' with West Midlands Railway

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Legendary reggae band UB40 were guests of honour as West Midlands Railway (WMR) unveiled its new 'Musical Routes' initiative to celebrate the region's musical heritage.

Founding members Jimmy Brown, Robin Campbell, Earl Falconer and Norman Hassan were joined by new vocalist Matt Doyle at Birmingham's Hall Green station this afternoon (Friday 26 November).

The 'Musical Routes' project is the brainchild of the Birmingham Music Archive and funded through WMR's "Your Community, Your Fund" scheme. It offers rail passengers a tour of the second city's world-class musical heritage, celebrating legendary Brummie artists like Ozzy Osbourne, Joan Armatrading and Jamelia.

The project will see music-themed information boards installed at dozens of railway stations across the city, with the first unveiled at Hall Green, close to where UB40, Ocean Colour Scene and Laura Mvula started out.

Adam Regan, from music venue the Hare & Hounds in Kings Heath, which hosted UB40's first gig in 1979,

was also at the launch event.

Fay Easton, WMR head of stakeholder and community, said:

“The ‘Your Community, Your Fund’ scheme was designed to bring life to community projects that would benefit our customers and we are so pleased to see this world-class concept delivered in Birmingham.

“Many local people and global visitors will be unaware of the musical talent that impacted world music from Birmingham and the Midlands. This talent should be celebrated, and we are proud to have been part of this project to bring Birmingham’s musical heritage to life at our stations.”

The “Your Community, Your Fund” scheme is funded by the Department for Transport and was previously known as the Customer & Communities Improvement Fund. Under the scheme, WMR and sister company London Northwestern Railway is investing a total of £1.7million in community projects across the network.

Jez Collins, founder of Birmingham Music Archive, said: “I’m passionate about Birmingham’s music history, heritage and culture and as a city we need to celebrate and publicise these stories of global interest.

“This project with the railways will allow us to reach hundreds of thousands of people each year, as they travel across the train network. It’s a fantastic opportunity to highlight, through truly beautiful locally-produced maps, some of Birmingham’s great musicians and venues.”

The intricate 3D wooden maps have been produced by designers from city-based studio Space Playand will feature Spotify codes that connect to a curated playlist for each area.

Maps will be installed at the following stations: Sutton Coldfield, Four Oaks, Wylde Green, Chester Road, Erdington, Gravelly Hill, Perry Barr, Hamstead, Jewellery Quarter, Duddeston, Aston, Witton, Bordesley, Small Heath, Adderley Park, Lea Hall, Five Ways; Spring Road; Hall Green; Yardley Wood; Acocks Green; Stechford; Tyseley; Selly Oak; Bournville; Kings Norton; Northfield and Longbridge. University station will get two maps. University and Perry Barr stations will get their maps when redevelopment work there is completed next year.

For more details about the project, visit www.birminghammusicarchive.com

Photo credit: Ian Davies