

kevi

(King Edward VI) STEEL
- A band to look out for!

One of the oldest schools in the country, The King Edward VI School in Morpeth, Northumberland, (KEVI) (established 1552) has embraced one of the world's newest instruments, the steel pan!

Now into its third year of operation, **KEVI Steel, aka 'Jenny and the Sandwiches'**, has gone from strength to strength and is one of the North's newest steelbands. In 2006, KEVI purchased an 8-piece set of steel pans and, after a few taster sessions with Dave Edwards, decided to form a high school steel band. 'KEVI Steel' started in September 2007 under the musical direction and tuition of Jenny Gilberg.

The band spent its first year getting to grips with basic techniques, strumming and pan layout and also forming its own personal repertoire of music. 80% of the students in the band were already accomplished musicians playing a range of classical instruments. They took to the pan very quickly. As a result of their dedication and enthusiasm, they have made excellent progress. After the band's first year, it started to expand its repertoire, covering a range of traditional Caribbean and Soca classics such as 'Island in The Sun', Jazz numbers like Dave Brubeck's, 'Take 5' and Glenn Miller's, 'In The Mood', and a mixture of old and contemporary Pop ranging from The Stranglers to Mario.

As KEVI Steel is a school-based band, there are always opportunities to perform to an audience, but 2008 saw KEVI Steel's first independent gig when it performed at the Alive '08 Festival in Morpeth. Since then it has been steadily gaining a reputation as a gigging band and already has bookings for 2010.

Earlier in 2009, KEVI took part in the 3rd North Tyneside Festival of Steelbands event (part-sponsored by British Association of Steelbands). As newcomers to the event, KEVI players were excited to be performing amongst other local steel bands. The festival is a great event for both old and new bands to perform at. For KEVI, it was a chance for the players to showcase themselves with the other local bands. All the bands had two performance slots and participated in a final 90-strong mass play before band awards were awarded for 'Best

Band of the Day' and individual awards for 'Best Contribution of the Day'. KEVI Steel was delighted to be placed third and players are looking forward to entering next year.

With pans becoming very much a part of this dynamic school, which has a strong musical tradition, more and more students are keen to be involved. The school generously made a commitment to steel pan by allocating part of their music budget to expand the equipment. In addition, the band has raised money by gigging and busking. The school placed an order with Toussaint Clarke, its tuner, earlier in the year, and eagerly awaits the arrival of two sets of chromed seconds, a set of double guitars and new stands and cases for some of the original pans.

The arrival of new instruments will provide immediate relief, as demand for places in the band is high, but the school is still looking to increase the size of the band. KEVI Steel is actively seeking sponsorship and has plans for fundraising. Players in the band performed and busked in the run-up to Christmas 2009. You must have seen them on the streets of Morpeth and other towns.

Morpeth's First Adult Community Steel Band - Jenny and the Jalapeno Peppers'

After much deliberation, the idea to run an adult band finally got off the ground in October with two pilot sessions at the school. Participants had a crash course in playing the steel pan, learning about the different roles of each instrument within a band and also getting to grips with common rhythms used on steel pans, as well as learning some of the ABBA classic 'Mamma Mia'. The sessions proved to be extremely popular and classes are already fully subscribed. The band now goes under the name of 'Jenny and the Jalapeno Peppers'.

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