

# Audience

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**Audience** is a cult British art rock band which existed from 1969 until 1972 and then from 2004 until 2013.

The original band consisted of Howard Werth (born Howard Alexander Werth, 26 March 1947, The Mother's Hospital, Clapton, East London) on nylon-strung electric acoustic guitar and vocals; Keith Gemmell (born Keith William Gemmell, 15 February 1948, Hackney Hospital, Hackney, East London - died 24 July 2016, Beltinge, Kent) on soprano and tenor saxophone, flute and clarinet; Trevor Williams (born Trevor Leslie Williams, 19 January 1945, Hereford General Hospital, Hereford, Herefordshire) on bass guitar and vocals; and Tony Connor (born Anthony John Connor, 6 April 1947, Romford, Havering) on drums and vocals. Also did some of the soundtrack for a British mod film *Bronco Bullfrog* released in 1969. Needs clarification.

## Formation

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Audience rose from the ashes of a semi-professional soul band named 'Lloyd Alexander Real Estate', which had included all the Audience members except Connor, who had unsuccessfully auditioned for the earlier band when John Richardson left to form The Rubettes. However, when Werth, Williams, and Gemmell decided to form their new band, they thought of Connor. The 'Lloyd Alexander Real Estate' issued one 45rpm single on President PT157 in 1967 "Gonna Live Again"/"Watcha' Gonna Do (When Your Baby Leaves You)", a Mod R&B record.

Within weeks of starting rehearsals, Audience had acquired management, a publishing contract, a residency at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club, and a recording contract with Polydor, with whom they recorded their first album *Audience*, an acoustic guitar-driven album featuring Gemmell's saxophone often electrically altered to resemble an electric lead guitar and with string and horn arrangements by Andrew Pryce Jackman. But the band was dissatisfied with the record company's promotional approach (a single, "Too Late I'm Gone" from the album had been planned and was cancelled), and temporarily moved to Switzerland to avoid involvement in proposed publicity stunts.

By the end of the year, the band was drawing public and journalistic acclaim for their songs, arrangements, and stage act. They had also been commissioned to write the score for *Bronco Bullfrog*, an East End skinhead film directed by Barney Platts-Mills, which established a genre subsequently taken up by Mike Leigh.

## Recordings

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After the debut album issued on Polydor, Tony Stratton-Smith, Director of Charisma Records, spotted the band supporting Led Zeppelin and signed them up to his label immediately. Audience recorded three albums with Charisma. The first, *Friend's Friend's Friend*, was produced and designed by the band. Their subsequent releases *House on the Hill* and *Lunch* were produced by Gus Dudgeon, with arrangements by Robert Kirby and cover art by record sleeve designers Hipgnosis.

Their first two albums were not issued in the U.S. Elektra signed them up and their final two albums were issued in the U.S.

Dudgeon's first 45 rpm production for the band, "Indian Summer", took them into the lower reaches of the U.S. charts, but by this time they were exhausted and fractious, having worked virtually non-stop for three years. A U.S. tour with Rod Stewart and The Faces and Cactus, although successful, brought things to a head, resulting in Gemmell leaving the band in January 1972.

The unfinished *Lunch* album was completed with the help of The Rolling Stones and Mad Dogs and Englishmen brass section, Jim Price and Bobby Keys, following which they went straight back on the road with new members Nick Judd on keyboards and Pat Charles Neuberger on alto and soprano saxophone.

## Break-up

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The band never recovered from Gemmell's departure; and Williams, the band's main lyricist, resigned eight months later. When Judd received an offer to join Juicy Lucy shortly thereafter, the band folded. Judd later went on to join Alan Bown, The Andy Fraser Band, Brian Eno, Frankie Miller and Sharks, most recently emerging in a Madness spin-off band.

By this time, Keith Gemmell had joined Stackridge, later to form Sammy, whose sole album was produced by Ian Gillan of Deep Purple, then on to The Roy Young Band. During this time he was also doing session work and arranging, often together with film soundtrack writer John Altman, before joining the Pasadena Roof Orchestra for fourteen years.

Howard Werth was working on his first solo album at this time, still with Charisma and produced by Dudgeon. Called King Brilliant, his band, containing members of Hookfoot and with Mike Moran on keyboards, was dubbed Howard Werth and The Moonbeams, and came close to having a chart hit with *Lucinda*. However, it wasn't to be, and when he was headhunted by The Doors (Audience stable-mates on the U.S. Elektra record label) to replace Jim Morrison, Werth left for the USA. The Doors did not reform, and Werth found himself engaged in various short term projects with Doors' keyboard man Ray Manzarek and musicians from Captain Beefheart and The Magic Band before returning to the UK in the early 1980s. Although appearing live only occasionally, Werth later recorded two more solo albums, *6 of 1 and Half a Dozen of the Other* on Demon Records and *The Evolution Myth Explodes* for his own Luminous Music label.

Trevor Williams joined 1960s hitmakers The Nashville Teens, a version driven by Len Tuckey, who left shortly after to help his girlfriend Suzi Quatro launch a career with Mickie Most. Williams moved on to Jonathan Kelly's Outside, recording one single, *Outside*, and an album *Waiting On You* with a band fronted by the twin guitars of Snowy White and Chaz Jankel plus ex-Graham Bond drummer Dave Sheen and percussionist Jeff Whittaker, formerly with Peter Green and Crosby, Stills and Nash. After this, he drifted back to The Nashville Teens, this time with friend Rob Hendry – ex-Renaissance guitarist, and later with The Motors and Alan Price – in a misconceived project to revitalise the band's image and fortunes. When this foundered, Williams left the business entirely.

Tony Connor also ended up with Mickie Most. After a stint with Jackson Heights, a spin-off from The Nice, he joined one of Most's stable, Hot Chocolate, with whom he has remained.

## Reunions

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Despite a few minor projects together, the original Audience band members were not to re-emerge as a working entity until 32 years after their dissolution. In 2004, Howard Werth, Keith Gemmell and Trevor Williams performed in Germany, Italy, Canada and the UK, replacing Tony Connor (who remained committed to Hot Chocolate) with drummer/vocalist John Fisher (born 8 December 1960, Buxton, Derbyshire - died 27 September 2008) and recording a live album *alive&kickin'&screamin'&shoutin'* for Eclectic Records. During this period, Gemmell released two solo albums, *The Windhover*, inspired by a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins, and *Unsafe Sax*, a tribute to his early '60s soul roots.

Following the death of John Fisher from pancreatic cancer on 27 September 2008, Audience recruited drummer Simon Jeffrey, who also worked with Bernie Torme, Led Zeppelin tribute band Letz Zep and Blue Pulse, which Trevor Williams joined in 2009. Audience played its final gig at London's 100 Club in 2013 shortly after which Keith Gemmell, already fighting cancer, became too unwell to play. Williams subsequently announced he did not wish to continue without Gemmell but continues to work with Blue Pulse, with whom he released an album entitled *Trams* in 2012, with Howard Werth also performing on several tracks.

Keith Gemmell died from tongue cancer on 24 July 2016.

## Personnel

Howard Werth - guitars, vocals (1969-1972, 2004-2013)

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- Trevor Williams - bass guitar, vocals (1969-1972, 2004-2013)
- Tony Connor - drums, vocals (1969-1972)
- Keith Gemmell - saxophones, flute, clarinet (1969-1972, 2004-2013; died 2016)
- Nick Judd - keyboards (1972)
- Pat Charles Neuberg - saxophones (1972)
- John Fisher - drums, vocals (2004-2008; his death)
- Simon Jeffrey - drums, vocals (2008-2013)