

COCK-NEY KNEES-UP! - Regulars hold naked singalong to save famous The Coach and Horses pub

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AS the pianist bashed out Cockney classic 'I've Got A Lovely Bunch Of Coconuts, I stifled a giggle "and not just because someone was singing off-key.

Naked Cockney Sing Along at Soho's The Coach & Horses pub on June 10, 2019 - Sun's Nilufer, front row second from left, joins in. Credit: Oliver Dixon - The Sun

Everyone gathered for Monday night's singalong in a traditional London boozer was starkers, including yours truly.

The ticket-only nude event at Soho's The Coach & Horses was part of a protest against owners Fuller's Brewery, which plans to take over and modernise the famous spit-and-sawdust pub.

Pianist Luke Meredith has been playing here for more than a decade, ever since The Coach's Cockney singalong nights started.

But this was the first time he had tinkled the ivories in the buff. Well, apart from his brown shoes and stripy socks.

He said: "Ah yes, I should have brought some flip-flops. It looks a bit silly wearing these when you're naked. Shoes were the least of my worries. Unlike me, people seemed to have no qualms about stripping off.

A bra whizzed past my head and I bent down to pick it up, coming face to face "actually, almost nose to todger" with a man's crotch.

By 8pm the pub was packed and everyone, apart from me and the bar staff, was starkers.

I felt a bit silly in my clothes, so bolstered by a couple of glasses of wine, off went my shoes, then my socks, then my T-shirt and jeans.

I had a little walk around in my undies to ease myself in. Then, as Luke played Maybe It's Because I'm A Londoner, the atmosphere got to me. What the hell, I thought, whipping off my bra and knickers. 'SINGING AND NUDITY'

"Waaaay! You go, girl!" cheered the starkers lady beside me with the long, flaming red hair.

Luke was taking requests, so I asked for Rabbit by Chas & Dave. Someone handed me a beer, but I spilled most of it down the buttocks of the hairy man in front of me.

Nilufer finally got her kit off as pianist Luke Meredith played Maybe It's Because I'm A Londoner. Credit: Oliver Dixon - The Sun

Well, it's not easy singing and dancing while cradling a beer and trying to hold your tummy in.

Not that anybody seemed to care much about their beer bellies and wrinkly bottoms being on show.

Maria Beadell, 37, from South London, told me. "I wanted to support the pub and I thought it'd be a laugh. I'm really enjoying it."

Singer Toni Ash, 40, from Kent agreed: "I love singing and nudity, so I came down."

As I joined in with Great Balls Of Fire "no tittering at the back, please" I chuckled watching an older man with one foot on a chair, tapping away in time to the music, his family jewels jiggling around.

FIRST PUB FOR NUDISTS

So how on earth did this bizarre night of baring all come about?

Fuller's brewery decided not to renew the lease, despite a campaign by current licensee Alastair Choat to keep control and backed by a petition with 15,000 signatures.

Pub landlord Alastair Choat, 56, and daughter Hollie, 32, have been fighting a battle with Fuller's. Credit: Oliver Dixon - The Sun

Alastair, 56, has run The Coach with daughter Hollie, 32, since 2006.

He said: "This is such a unique place, like any of the other few remaining proper boozers left in the country. It has a tremendous history and an amazing community feel.

"We have regulars that have been coming here every week for over ten years and people who worked here in the Sixties. They all say the same thing "it hasn't changed.

"Now Fuller's want to turn it into a posh pub and ruin all that. So we set up the naked singalong night as a "F*** you" to Fuller's, and a way of celebrating all that's great about The Coach & Horses."

Established in 1847, The Coach is a seminal part of old Soho. It once boasted London's rudest landlord Norman Balon and columnist Jeffrey Bernard could often be found propping up the bar in the Eighties.

Faced with their beloved boozers' extinction, locals had agreed to strip for a naked charity calendar to raise awareness of the campaign.

And last month The Coach became the first pub in London to be granted a nudist licence. Landlord Alastair decided to use it one last time, before the pub changes hands on June 23, for the nude singalong. Although he joked that for the sake of daughter Hollie, he would be keeping his boxers on.

The naked night was great fun. Taking a break from the singing I perched on a bar stool and ordered another glass of wine. Getting up, I noticed a bum-shaped sweat patch on the seat. My cue to leave.

The late Jeffrey Bernard must have seen some things in The Coach but nothing quite like this.

Actor Peter Oâ€™Toole played the boozy journalist on stage in the play Jeffrey Bernard Is Unwell.

Now thereâ€™s a surname that would fit right in with a nudist singalong night.

The Coach & Horses has been on Soho's Greek Street, London, since the 18th century. Credit: Alamy

Punter Toni Ash, Luke and Nilufer, who asked for Rabbit by Chas & Dave. Credit: Oliver Dixon - The Sun

Luke has been playing at the pub ever since The Coachâ€™s Cockney singalong nights started, more than a decade ago. Credit: Oliver Dixon - The Sun

Maria Beadell, 37, from South London, 'wanted to support the pub and thought itâ€™d be a laugh'. Credit: Oliver Dixon - The Sun

Regulars want to save the famous spit-and-sawdust pub from gentrification. Credit: Oliver Dixon - The Sun

Singer Toni Ash, 40, from Kent, said: 'I love singing and nudity, so I came down'. Credit: Oliver Dixon - The Sun

The Coach & Horses once boasted 'Londonâ€™s rudest landlord' Norman Balon. Credit: Oliver Dixon - The Sun

Locals previously stripped for a naked charity calendar to raise awareness of the campaign to save the pub from gentrification. Credit: Oliver Dixon - The Sun

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