

I SWEAR I HEARD THIS... *THE ANNUAL REUNION*

Juliane Deil

I swear I heard this favourite band of mine perform in a tiny music venue in Brooklyn, New York, while the event that was actually going on was the annual reunion of all Welsh New Yorkers! The previous time I had seen Stereophonics perform was on their UK tour in November 2013 at the O2 Arena in London with seats right at the back, opposite of the stage, feeling lucky I had managed to find tickets for under £50. These are arguably the least desirable seats. At least to the far left or right of the stage you see the side-view of the musicians on stage, whereas on the opposite end to the stage, the figures become action figure size at best, with your eyes peeled to the screens.

Fast forward 4 years, I stood in the queue at The Irving Plaza in Brooklyn, with a much smaller capacity of around 1000 people, signing up to an evening with the same band. Holding my 25\$ ticket, I eagerly awaited my favourite band, wearing my beloved white shorts with light-blue flowers stitched on them. It was a humid evening, as early September nights often are in New York, the date being 05/09/2017, or rather 09/05/2017. Once inside, it soon became clear that the community I was joining was not just the peak Stereophonics fandom in New York but rather a close-knit clique of Welsh people. Never had I seen so many Welsh flags in a concert venue before, let alone this many Welsh conversations in New York. Even the band leaned into this community-feel and soon began to respond to the Welsh phrases that the audience shouted.



Undoubtedly, the community-feel in diasporas is created partly with the help of music. In this rare event, the energy that was expected from the music was combined with the nostalgia in the room and multiplied again thanks to the particular magic that can be created especially in a smaller venue. The semi-permeable fourth wall had the artists reacting directly to audience members' requests and questions. On this night, Stereophonics were not a brand or even a band but rather a group of four very tired Welshmen, having just arrived from overseas, just in time to attend the annual reunion of all Welsh residents of New York.

Juliane Deil is a PhD student at Birmingham City University, researching music improvisation and music education. With a strong background in music performance, she completed a Master's in jazz piano at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire in 2024, and a Bachelor's degree in music at Durham University. Both confirmed her career interest in combining jazz and pedagogy research with music performance.

