The University of Manchester Freedom of Information Act appeals procedure

If you feel that The University of Manchester has refused access to information to which you are entitled, or has not dealt with your request appropriately under the Act, you have a right of appeal.

An appeal in the first instance should be directed to the Records Management Office, contact details below. You should include:

- a covering letter giving details of your complaint
- details of your initial request
- any other relevant information

Complaints relating to procedural matters will be dealt with by the Records Management Office, appeals against the withholding of specific information will be dealt with by the University's Registrar and Secretary.

The University will deal with your appeal within a reasonable time, and will inform you of the projected time scale on receipt of your complaint.

You are also welcome to contact the Records Management Office with informal questions about the handling of your request.

After The University's internal appeals procedure has been exhausted, you have a further right of appeal to the Information Commissioner's Office. Details of this procedure can be found at: http://www.info.commissioner.gov.uk/eventual.aspx?id=626

University of Manchester Records Management Programme
Room G.29
John Owens Building
Oxford Road
Manchester M13 9PL

Tel: 0161 275 8401
Email: foi@man.ac.uk
Chancellor, distinguished guests, colleagues:

On this, the final Founder’s Day, you are witnesses to a bit of history in the making. For the first and only time, The Victoria University of Manchester is honouring three individuals in a single citation. Over a period spanning, incredibly, five decades, their extensive and distinguished contributions to the world of music and popular culture have made them household names: collectively as The Bee Gees; individually as Barry, Maurice and Robin Gibb. And also very specially today - as you have said, Chancellor - we confer one of the three honorary degrees posthumously, following Maurice’s untimely death in January 2003.

The Gibb family can proudly boast of longstanding connections with Manchester. The boys’ mother, Barbara, and their father, Hugh, were both born here over eighty years ago, and first met each other in 1941 at a wartime dance hosted by the Stretford Trades and Labour Club. And although the brothers all share Douglas, on the Isle of Man, as a birthplace, the family relocated to Manchester when Barry was eight and twins Maurice and Robin just five.

In the years they lived there during the 1950s – and allowing for the fact that they were still young schoolboys – we are able to trace the beginnings of their musical careers. They began to sing harmony as a trio; Barry was writing songs and had his first guitar; and, together with two friends (Paul Frost and Kenny Horrocks), they performed as The Rattlesnakes at Manchester’s Gaumont Theatre during the intervals of matinees. Alas, The Rattlesnakes were a short-lived venture - as is the case with many ‘boy bands’ today.

After six months the Gibb brothers were reduced to a trio, and became Wee Johnny Hayes and The Blue Cats. In this incarnation they gave their first live evening performance, singing their three-part harmonies at the Russell Street Club in Manchester for the princely sum of two shillings and sixpence.

We have still only reached 1958, a year of great change for the family - they emigrated to Australia under the £10 per head Assisted Passage Scheme. And on that voyage, the boys reinvented themselves yet again, singing as Barry and The Twins. More serious musical opportunities were to be had once they settled in Queensland, and the eight years that followed saw the birth of The Bee Gees. Performing first at speedway meetings, then appearing on radio and television shows and becoming regulars on the club circuit Down Under, the group released their first single in 1963 and their first album two years later – by which time a host of other artists were already recording songs written by Barry Gibb. By the time they left Australia at the beginning of 1967, The Bee Gees were stars in the Antipodes – and by the end of that year they were releasing singles and albums across the globe.

The history made by The Bee Gees begs more than just a cursory glance if it is to do full justice to their impact on popular music and culture. Mere mention of the group’s name is likely to conjur in many of our memories thoughts of tight-fitting white suits, falsetto vocals, funky dance grooves and the golden age of mid-to-late 1970s disco. And with good reason: for it was in 1977 that the Bee Gees provided the songs for the film ‘Saturday Night Fever’, songs which the group wrote either for themselves or for others to perform, and which, taken together, created what is still the best-selling soundtrack album ever recorded. This achievement, significant though it is, however, represents just one chapter of The Bee Gees’ success story. What the full story shows above all is that their ability to change with the times is truly remarkable.

In Britain, their collection of number one singles covers a period of precisely twenty years: from October 1967 (when they first topped the charts with ‘Massachusetts’) to October 1987
(when they did so with ‘You Win Again’). So I think, Chancellor, that most of us here today will be able to recall from the heady days of our youth at least one Gibb brothers chart-topper – whether it be a classic pop ballad or a more up tempo dance track. In the United States, they chalked up a staggering six number one singles between 1977 and 1979, and for 1978 alone their songs topped the charts for precisely half the year. They feature among the top five most successful recording artists of all time, with record sales exceeding 110 million.

The Bee Gees have collected many prizes in recognition of their work: prestigious Billboard and Grammy Awards have been bestowed upon them aplenty and with great regularity, and, in more recent years, music industry organisations across the world have – quite rightly – been falling over themselves to recognise the group’s outstanding contribution with a plethora of ‘Lifetime Achievement’ awards. In this country, just over two years ago, the three brothers were honoured with CBEs. (The actual conferment of these will, incidentally, take place at The Palace on 27 May.) Across the Atlantic, meanwhile, they have, in recognition of their filmwork, a ‘Star’ on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Going further back in time – and this is truly one for pop trivia aficionados – the Best Dressed Pop Star Award in 1969 went to a certain Barry Gibb.

The Bee Gees have not confined their musical efforts to recording as a group. All three of the brothers, at various times, undertook solo projects as singers, songwriters or producers, and the many artists for whom they have written and produced are music legends in their own right – Diana Ross, Barbra Streisand, Celine Dion, Frankie Valli, Dionne Warwick, Kenny Rogers, Otis Reading, among others. Barry, Maurice and Robin Gibb have been hitmakers of the most productive kind. And their impact does not diminish with the passing years. Indeed, the way in which their songs have transcended generations is virtually unique. Take That, Steps and Boyzone, bands much loved by youngsters in more recent times, have enjoyed number one singles success with cover versions of Bee Gees hits. When I told my nine-year-old, very popwise daughter that I would be presenting them today, her reply was unhesitating, and without a hint of irony: “Dad, that’s just way cool”! But don’t just take her word for it (or mine – as a more ageing fan - for that matter) that the Gibb Brothers have successfully scaled the heights of musical fashion. Groups at the cutting edge of rock and pop over the years – bands as diverse as the Beach Boys, U2, and fellow Mancunians, Oasis – have made no secret of their admiration for The Bee Gees.

This influence is set to continue. Fans of the contemporary television programme, ‘Fame Academy’, for which Robin Gibb sits on the judging panel, will be aware of his commitment to encouraging young pop musicians who have got what it takes to succeed as part of the next musical generation of singer-songwriters. And, away from showbusiness, the Gibb brothers have all worked tirelessly and with great success for various charities.

The Bee Gees, as befits international pop stars, have lived all over the world, and often in the most exotic of locations. They have, however, never forgotten their roots; indeed, quite recently, Barry Gibb bought one of their childhood Manchester homes – in Chorlton, on Keppel Road - where the brothers created the earliest of their trademark harmonies. Not far away to the south of the city, at Oakwood High School, a new recording studio, named after Maurice, is to be opened later today as part of the School’s performing arts facilities.

We are all delighted that Barry and Robin have returned home again today with their families, so that the University can pay tribute to the achievements of The Bee Gees.

Chancellor, I am very pleased to present to you for the degree of Doctor of Music *honoris causa* Barry Alan Crompton Gibb, Robin Hugh Gibb and the late Maurice Ernest Gibb.
Confidential

Honorary Degree Nominations: Barry and Robin Gibb.

The nomination of Barry and Robin Gibb for Hon. Degrees is timely, and supported by the Director of Development.

Their early home was in Chorlton in Manchester. They started their early musical career in local cinemas and clubs, notably on Oxford Road in Manchester. The family relocated to Australia, when Barry was just 12 years old, and the brothers returned to England in their teens to develop their musical career.

The Development and Alumni Relations Office had already been discussing recently with the Head of the School of Music and Drama, Prof. John Casken, and his colleagues a way of celebrating their achievements in the fields of popular music, films and stage musicals. We have been seeking to associate them with the new School of Music and Drama. We are keen to acknowledge their achievements and success, before a less associated and relevant institution does so!

The death in January of Maurice Gibb (and previously of Andy Gibb) had prompted this discussion. (In terms of fundraising for the new School, we already have The John Thaw Studio Theatre, through discussion with John Thaw's family. John Thaw was also an Hon. Graduate.)

The Bee Gees have produced 28 albums, sold over 110 million copies, are the fifth biggest selling act of all time and have received Lifetime Achievement (American Music) Awards and Brit Awards. They have been the subject of a Broadway musical and, in February 2003, the surviving Gibb brothers were awarded a Grammy ‘Legend’ Award for their ongoing contribution to the field of popular music.

As the BBC states: “The Bee Gees: Three brothers whose impeccable harmonies and fine song writing made them one of the most successful pop bands of the late ’60s. After a few years in the wilderness they re-invented themselves in the disco era, helping launch the career of John Travolta along the way.”

Given the opening of the new School of Music and Drama in October 2003 (when Ben Elton will be receiving an Hon. Degree), a Gibb connection would be very welcome.
University of Manchester

Honorary Degrees

Honorary doctoral degrees are conferred by the University to persons who have made a substantial contribution, and who demonstrate international excellence, in their field. In making such awards, the University seeks a balance amongst a wide range of areas of achievement and endeavour which are in harmony with its values and purposes – including academia, the arts, commerce, industry, the professions and (in its wider sense) public service – and also pays due regard to representative issues such as gender and ethnicity. Additionally, some connection with the University, with the City of Manchester or with the North West is an important consideration.