



# Gary Holton

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**Gary Frederick Holton**<sup>[3]</sup> (22 September 1953 – 25 October 1985) was an English singer-songwriter, musician and actor from London. He was the frontman of the band *Heavy Metal Kids* (1972–77), he worked with Casino Steel (1981–84), and played the part of Wayne in the UK television comedy *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* (1983–85). Holton died from an overdose of morphine combined with alcohol in 1985.

## Early life

Gary Holton was born in *Clapham*, South London, the first child of Ernie and Joan Holton, and grew up in *Kennington*. Whilst musically talented, he was first in a rock band as a schoolboy at Beaufoy School, Lambeth,<sup>[4]</sup> his real ambition was to act.

Early on in his life, he began working in the theatre world with the *Sadler's Wells Opera Company*, debuting in opera appearances aged eleven, and was with them for three years. In 1966 he had a part in *Congreve's Love For Love* with *Laurence Olivier*, and at fourteen played the title role in *Menotti's Amahl and the Night Visitors*.<sup>[4]</sup> Soon after leaving education at *Westminster School*, he joined the *Old Vic Theatre Company*, and from there he went on to work with the *Royal Shakespeare Company* at *Stratford*.

Gary Holton



Performing in 1974.

### Background information

<b>Birth name</b>	Gary Frederick Holton
<b>Born</b>	22 September 1953 <sup>[1]</sup> <div>Clapham, London, England</div>
<b>Died</b>	25 October 1985 (aged 32) <div>Wembley, Greater London, England</div>
<b>Genres</b>	Glam rock, hard rock, folk rock
<b>Occupation(s)</b>	Singer-songwriter, actor, musician
<b>Instrument(s)</b>	Vocals, guitar, keyboards, harmonica
<b>Years active</b>	1971–1985
<b>Labels</b>	<i>Safari</i> , Receiver Records Limited, <i>Magnet</i>

At seventeen, he joined the touring company of *Hair*, and remained with them for two years. When he left the company, his musical talents led him to front the rock band *Heavy Metal Kids* as vocalist.

## Acting career

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### Early roles

Holton made his screen acting debut in 1979, when he played the character of Eddie Hairstyle in the television movie *The Knowledge* with *Michael Elphick* and *Kim Taylforth*. Holton did not receive much credit for this role, and neither did he get much credit for his role as an uncredited character in the film *Quadrophenia*, released the same year. However, Holton, after appearing in the television series *Shoestring*, played the lead part of Ken in the 1979 film *Bloody Kids*.

In 1980, Holton appeared playing the character of Keith in an episode of television series *Play for Today*, and as a minor character in the film *Breaking Glass*. He appeared in the 1981 television film *Tiny Revolutions*, where he played a minor character, and in the television series *The Gentle Touch*, where he guest-starred as Rick Sloan.

Holton also sang the theme tune to 1980s British children's drama, *Murphy's Mob*, which was produced by *Central Television*.<sup>[5]</sup>

### *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*

Playing the part of Wayne Winston Norris in the popular comedy drama *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*, Holton played a *Cockney carpenter* who liked his women, music and drink, which was similar to his off-screen personality.

He landed the part, the first of the seven main characters to be cast, after he was introduced to *Ian La Frenais* at a party. La Frenais and his writing partner *Dick Clement* had been drafting storylines and working on an idea given to them by *Franc Roddam*, who was the director of *Quadrophenia*.

The first series of *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* ran between 1983 and 1984. In February 1985, filming began on the second series. The final episode of the second series, broadcast after Holton's death, was dedicated to his memory.

The show was revived in 2002 with the original writers and all of the surviving cast members. The gap in the line-up left by Holton was filled by Wyman, Wayne's illegitimate son, played by *Noel Clarke*.

### Other roles

While acting on *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*, Holton had only two other roles. He appeared in the TV series *Minder*, in which he played villain Barry, in 1984. He also played an uncredited extra in the television series *Bulman*, in the following year of 1985. He also appeared in an episode of "*Shoestring*" filmed in Bristol.

Holton was offered the role of villain 'Nasty' Nick Cotton in the television soap opera EastEnders, but he turned down the role and it was instead given to Holton's friend John Altman, who bore a strong resemblance to him, and would go on to succeed him as the lead singer of the Heavy Metal Kids.

## Musical career

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### Solo

His musical endeavours were now confined to strict one-offs for a while: in December 1978, Holton stood in for The Damned vocalist Dave Vanian on a short Scottish tour; and he also recorded a solo single (which became a number one hit in Norway), a punk-country version of Kenny Rogers's "Ruby, Don't Take Your Love to Town" with the Boys' keyboardist Casino Steel, with whom he would later write a song simply titled "Auf Wiedersehen Pet" about his experiences in the show. Holton and Steel recorded three albums together, all of them doing well in Norway. But even the opportunity to replace the late Bon Scott in AC/DC could not lure him back to full-time rock & roll. He made an appearance on the TV programme The Tube in 1984 with a band named as The Actors, which included fellow Quadrophenia star Gary Shail on bass guitar, and they performed a song entitled "Long-Legged Blue-Eyed Blonde".

### The Heavy Metal Kids

Gary was the front-man for the band, which formed in 1972. With his cockney accent, he became a popular glam rock singer. The band were discovered by former Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick & Tich front-man Dave Dee, who signed them to Atlantic Records. Their eponymous debut album was well received by the press, but had achieved limited sales. They later played many gigs with punk rock band the Adverts. On their first American tour in 1975, they shortened their name to "The Kids".

In December 1975, the Kids signed with producer Mickie Most's RAK label, but before work could begin on their next album, Holton was sacked amid a storm of drink- and drug-related headlines. Plans for the remaining members to continue on without him came to naught. In late 1977, Holton rejoined the band for a handful of live shows and the long-delayed third album, *Kitsch*. But, by mid-1978, he had departed once again, and the band broke up.

Whilst the band was popular in Sweden, they had little commercial success in Britain although in 1976 their single "She's No Angel" was regularly played on BBC Radio 1, a favourite of DJ John Peel, and this led to an appearance on Top of the Pops. The lack of commercial success led to the breakup of the band, and Holton returned to acting.

### Holton/Steel

In 1980/81, Holton hooked up with Casino Steel, a musician from Norway and in the following years released a couple of (in Norway) bestselling albums. The duo's musical style was country rock with strong punk influences, their first hit being a cover of Kenny Rogers' "Ruby". Gary Holton's Norwegian musical career went largely unnoticed in his homeland.

## Personal life

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### Relationships

Holton had a string of relationships in the early to mid 1970s. In 1977, he dated singer Stella Palmer, with whom he performed his cover version of "Somethin' Stupid" in 1973. Holton and Palmer got engaged on 12 March 1977, but on 2 May the same year, Palmer called off the engagement, stating their relationship was not going quite as planned.

From 1979 he was married to model Donna Campbell. They were amicably separated from 1981 and remained friends, though they were still not divorced at the time of his death.

After Donna, Holton had a relationship with model Susan Harrison who gave birth to his son Red, in 1983.

At the time of his death, Holton had long separated from Harrison and was engaged to hairdresser Jahnet McLlewan.

### Death

Holton was found dead by his fiancée in his bed on 25 October 1985. He had died from an overdose of alcohol and morphine, with traces of diazepam and cannabis in his system. Pathologist Rufus Crompton said during his inquest at Hornsey, North London, that he would have been drinking less than half an hour before his death, and that the morphine would have made him unconscious within a matter of minutes.

Holton had a blood alcohol level of 199 mg and a morphine level of 0.8 mg per litre (0.5 mg per litre is considered invariably fatal).<sup>[6]</sup> He had been a drug user for several years after experiences through the music scene and was addicted to heroin, a habit he had quit some time after the first series of *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* had been broadcast. He was considering setting up a clinic to help others with their addictions.

Holton had considerable debts and had two bankruptcy orders totalling £61,000 over him. These debts were partly due to his not having paid tax since 1979, and also having a mortgage of £48,500 on his flat in Maida Vale, London.

He died midway through the second series of *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*, but the producers used body doubles and editing of dialogue already recorded to allow the series to be completed.<sup>[7]</sup> They eventually rescripted the series, such that in every indoor scene that originally included Holton, excuses were made for his absence.

Just before his death, he had released the single "Catch A Falling Star". He was survived by his son, Red, and his adopted son, Max, with model Susan Harrison.

## Funeral

Holton's funeral took place on 22 November 1985, with a 15-minute service at Golders Green Crematorium in London. His *Auf Wiedersehen*, *Pet* co-stars were all there to pay their respects. His ashes were later placed in his grandparents' grave in Maesgwastad Cemetery, Welshpool, Wales.

## Discography

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### Albums

#### With Heavy Metal Kids

- *Heavy Metal Kids* (1974) Atlantic Records
- *Anvil Chorus* (1975) Atlantic Records
- *Kitsch* (1977) Rak Records

#### With Casino Steel

- *Gary Holton & Casino Steel* (1981) Killroy Records
- *Part II* (1982) Polydor Records
- *III Edition* (1983) Polydor Records
- *No 4* (1984) Polydor Records

### Solo

- *Sing It To Me* (1989) Receiver Records Limited (Released Posthumously; Featuring Mick Rossi)

### Singles

#### With Heavy Metal Kids

- "It's The Same" (1974) Atlantic Records
- "Ain't Nothing But A House Party/You Got Me Rollin'" (1975) Atlantic Records
- "Ain't Nothing But A House Party/You Got Me Rollin' Re-Mix" (1975) Atlantic Records
- "She's No Angel" (1976) Rak Records
- "Delirious" (1977) Rak Records/EMI Electrola
- "Chelsea Kids" (1977) Rak Records/EMI Electrola

#### With Casino Steel

- "Ruby, Don't Take Your Love to Town" (1981) X Records
- "Blackberry Way"/"Candy" (1982) Polydor Records
- "No Reply" (1983) Polydor Records
- "Runaway" (1989) Amulet Records (Released Posthumously)

## Solo

- "Ruby, Don't Take Your Love to Town" (1980) Safari Records
- "Catch A Falling Star" (1984) Magnet Records
- "Holiday Romance" (1984) Magnet Records (Featuring Mick Rossi)
- "People in Love" (1986) Gaza Records (Released Posthumously; Featuring Mick Rossi)
- "Catch A Falling Star Re-Issue" (1989) Not on Label (Released Posthumously)

## Filmography

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Year	Title	Role	Notes
1979	<i><u>Quadrophenia</u></i>	Aggressive Rocker	Uncredited
1979	<i><u>Shoestring</u></i>	Gary Molecombe	1 episode
1979	<i><u>The Knowledge</u></i>	Eddie Hairstyle	
1980	<i><u>Play for Today</u></i>	Keith	1 episode
1980	<i><u>Bloody Kids</u></i>	Ken	1 episode
1980	<i><u>Breaking Glass</u></i>	Punk Guitarist	
1981	<i><u>Tiny Revolutions</u></i>	Neighbour	TV movie
1981	<i><u>The Gentle Touch</u></i>	Rick Sloan	1 episode
1983-1985	<i><u>Auf Wiedersehen, Pet</u></i>	Wayne Norris	26 episodes, (final appearance)
1984	<i><u>Minder</u></i>	Barry	1 episode
1985	<i><u>Bulman</u></i>	Bernie Scroop	1 episode

## References

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2. "Archived copy" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20160508013439/http://www.liverpoolbeat.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=14&t=312>). Archived from the original (<http://www.liverpoolbeat.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=14&t=312>) on 8 May 2016. Retrieved 24 April 2016. {{cite web}}: Unknown parameter |deadurl= ignored (|url-status= suggested) (help)
3. Births, Marriages and Deaths Index for England & Wales
4. "Father remembers multi-talented son, Auf Wiedersehen Pet star was also a rocker with county links". *Shropshire Star*. 21 March 2015. p. 10.Report by Toby Neal. Interview with Holton's father, who came to live in Shropshire in 1975.
5. "Away From The Numbers - Murphy's Mob" (<http://www.aftn.co.uk/murphysmob.html>). Retrieved 8 March 2017.
6. [1] (<http://pages.intnet.mu/cobain/lewis1.htm>) Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20091124184706/http://pages.intnet.mu/cobain/lewis1.htm>) 24 November 2009 at the Wayback Machine

7. "Auf Wiedersehen, Pet stars to reunite at convention" (<http://www.gigglebeats.co.uk/2013/07/auf-wiedersehen-pet-stars-to-reunite-at-convention/>). *Giggle Beats*. 19 July 2013. Retrieved 19 July 2013.

## External links

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- <http://www.garyholtontribute.co.uk/>
  - Gary Holton (<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0392619/>) at [IMDb](#)
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