



BIG PLAYERS

in Milton Keynes: Sports, Arts & Media

The BBC at the OU, 1981-2002

In 1969, when the world's first distance-learning university opened in Milton Keynes, the BBC's Open University Production Centre was set up at Alexandra Palace. The whole department moved to the new city campus in 1981 bringing some 400 staff including producers, directors and assistants with all the necessary support to make the unit self-sufficient and independent from London.



The BBC Outside Broadcast van pictured at the OU, 1985

'In the early days, productivity was very high because a lot of programmes were needed very quickly and this led to a few corners being cut!'



One of a series of programmes in schools for Maths Teachers, recording a lesson c 1988

'We had full programme-making facilities - Radio and Television Studios, Outside Broadcast Unit, Film Editing, Studio Design, Graphics Design, Special Effects Design, Scenery Building, Props, Costume, Make-up - the whole works!'



The crew returned to Alexandra Palace in 1990 using the BBC's experimental High Definition Unit. Geoff Dawe is 1st right.

'We were all saddened by the demise of the Department, but the writing was on the wall from the moment we arrived here. OU techniques were changing, the internet happened and broadcast became less necessary for distance-learning... It would be good to know that we were not forgotten in the Milton Keynes story.'

(Geoff Dawe, BBC Locations Manager at the OU until 1992)

DISCOVER
MILTON KEYNES