



Northern Nashville Country Music Club

December 2013 Newsletter

I hope by now you are all organised for Christmas with all your shopping done, I was a bit disorganised this year for some reason or other but I am just about there now gets harder every year everyone just buys what they need.

Since you heard from me last time it's been very hectic and busy with some great nights out with the first of these being the Gerry Guthrie and Slange Ava show in Wick.

Thurso and the NNCCM were well represented with a bus load of us all travelling through together, it was great for us as a committee to sit back, relax enjoy ourselves and drink too much.

Gerry had a totally new band backing him since he was with us at our anniversary show, they might have been new to Gerry but there were certainly some familiar faces amongst them.

One of these being Marty who recently played in Jimmy Buckley's band but many moons ago was a regular visitor to the club and Viewfirth as a member of the very popular band Footloose. Great to have a blether and a catch up with him remembering the good times we had and then putting the current music scene to rights.

Gerry the young man from Co. Mayo who has only been on the road since 2009 put on a cracking show he sang a wide selection of numbers covering all styles of music. He included his first single *Shut Up Heart* the hit that introduced country music to Gerry's distinctive voice also his follow up the original *Lucky Horseshoe*. It's easy to see why Gerry was voted the Best New Band in 2010/2011 and the Best New Vocalist for 2013.

Slange Ava were a great support act they got everyone very quickly on the floor and that was it for the whole night, sadly this was the bands last appearance in Wick the crowd certainly enjoyed their sets. It was good to see both our clubs and members getting together socialising we should do it more often.

The following Thursday Ally and myself went to the Solid 60's 50th Anniversary show in Eden Court we thoroughly enjoyed it and certainly heard some blasts from the past including PJ Proby, Gerry and the Pacemakers, The Tremeloes & Searchers. You tend to forget how old some of these guys must be for example PJ is 74, so no wonder some of them struggled a bit. That aside they put on a super show had everyone on their feet dancing and singing along to these great hits of the 60's reliving our youths.



The next morning Ally and I met up with Alan, Evelyn, Johnny & Gina and we flew to London for the weekend.

The main purpose of the trip was to attend the British Country Music Award show being held on the Sunday night in Heathrow. As I have mentioned previously our festival had been nominated for Event of The Year so we thought it would be nice for some of us to be there.

Steve Cherelle along with Charlie Landsborough were the presenters for the evening I hadn't seen Charlie live couldn't get over how funny he was I thought he would be slow and steady like he sings but no an incredibly amusing man.

As expected we didn't win - we were under no illusion that we stood a chance up against the big O2 event which featured acts such as Leann Rimes, Vince Gill and Tim McGraw - stars we could only dream of having at our weekend. So it was obvious they were streets ahead of all others in our category, however the organisers spoke to us at the end and said he hoped we weren't too disappointed travelling the distance we had and added we had done very well. but as we said being nominated was an honour for us.

However I am delighted to say that Scotland didn't go without Paul and Claire or Raintown the only other nominations from Scotland kept our side up and won their category The Duo Of The Year. The couple was also on stage as part of the night's entertainment and proved what worthy winners they were they are certainly making waves on the country music circuit their stage presence and show is actually quite spell binding to watch.

So now we can say that the BCMA Duo of the year winners is appearing on our festival bill next year. Another of our festival acts Philomena Begley was given the privilege of being inducted into the Hall Of Fame and was she on form. She told some great stories, sang some great songs and received the only standing ovation of the night. Good for Philomena she deserves it still as popular as ever after 50 years on the road.

Other inductees were Johnny Larkin who, at 87 years young!, was the oldest inductee into the hall, Johnny started his musical career in 1948 and was a performer promoter and charity fund raiser. It's definitely a small world because when we spoke to him he asked if we knew Manson & Robert, so another half hour of chat and reminiscing.

The other inductee was none other than Frank Jennings. Now you old timers who went to the club way back in the beginning will remember Frank as front man of the Frank Jennings Syndicate he no longer has dark curly hair he is pure white I wouldn't have recognised him.

Some of the other winners were Entertainer of the Year Henry Smith & Country Dreams who also provided a brilliant entertainment spot no wonder he is so popular in England and is part of every festival and big event. The Irish Act of the year was Shunie Crampsey and International Act of the Year went to Vince Gill a great choice.

We also heard some great music during the course of the night in particular we liked Gary Quinn who won the Song of the Year title with his number He Don't Show Her Anymore. Gary who was born and raised in Ireland but now resides in England fell in love with country music after hearing Garth Brooks. Gary is a brilliant songwriter and his debut album entitled simply *Gary Quinn* contains 10 self-penned tracks all songs from the heart with a cool modern sound. We got a chance to talk to Gary who said he would be delighted to appear in Scotland and we told him not to forget us.

We were also very impressed with Pete Kennedy another Irish born singer he took pride of place in the U.K Album of the Year Category with his album Nashville Sessions volume 2. He sang two numbers from his album and they were brilliant and girls what a heart throb a name to look out for.

But the highlight and the finale of the night was when Billy Yates took to the stage along with C'est la Vie (who had got back together as the house band for the night) and wowed the crowd ending the night on a high only down side they closed the bar too early.

We got the opportunity to meet up and have a chat with lots of people we hadn't seen for a while like the country reporters Hannah and Tom who were at some of our early festivals. They asked us to send their regards to everyone Hannah has not been in the best of health hence the reason they haven't been travelling very far in recent years. Maybe some of you might remember the couple Jim and Debbie Duncan who were on their honeymoon when they came to the festival and we presented them with engraved glasses as a gift. Jim was working at the event but we didn't see Debbie as she was at work.

We also had a good yap to Duncan Warwick the editor of Country Music People who joined us at our last weekend and gave us a great write up so all in all it was a great night.



Aside from that we had a super weekend in London but talk about being busy it was just wall to wall people no way could I live like that.

We managed to take in most of the sights taking the open topped bus tour hopping on and off at the attractions to wander about or take photos, we went round Madame Tussauds did the London Eye even the ones scared of heights enjoyed it, what a view which brilliant. Had some lovely meals went to the theatre to see Dirty Dancing visited some great traditional pubs drank some very expensive drinks, didn't stop us although the men (especially Ally) moaned plenty about it.

On the Monday we walked the length of Regent and Oxford Streets went to Harrods just taking in the shop windows and the Christmas decorations which were amazing we were enthralled then spent a few hours in Hyde Park in the Winter Wonderland browsing round the Christmas Stalls warming ourselves with warm cider in Santa's Pub.



Of course we have also had two brilliant club nights recently our November show featured Shannon & The Brothers also Jason McGilligan then two weeks later our Christmas nights with The Davitts, Slange Ava & George Malcolm.

November was a sellout show with people still after tickets on the Friday; I guess that was because the young man Jason McGilligan made such an impression at the festival they wanted more.

Opening the show was Shannon along with some of the Brothers Robbie and Darren were still on the road due to work commitments but made it for the second spot.

A very nervous Shannon relaxed a bit once she got on stage and did very well providing a country spot with a modern twist to it she has come on in leaps and bounds since we first heard her and I am sure she will be as popular as her mum was before long.

Robbie however did most of the vocals on their next set and as per usual they couldn't go wrong with the crowd and did their utmost to ensure everyone enjoyed themselves. They had the dance floor full with their up tempo dance numbers mixed with country Robbie did call Shannon back and they sang some powerful ballads together.



Then it was Jason's turn to get things going and he did just that: himself and the band are all round entertainers they covered all types and styles of music. I doubt it would have mattered what they gave us the crowd loved them a brilliant atmosphere and the place bouncing. They had a ball the band and Jason clearly enjoyed themselves on stage.

No wonder Jason is making such a big impact on the scene in Ireland and Scotland he is versatile talented and an exceptionally nice guy no wonder he was awarded the title of The Outstanding Live Performer just before he came over... Definitely one of this year's highlights!

Our Christmas Show and we pulled a cracker another capacity crowd on the Friday night when the entertainment was provided by The Davitts very popular and dynamic show band from County Wexford and our own Slange Ava.

We knew we would have a blast and we certainly did Slange Ava were in fine form gave us their full repertoire of numbers everything the crowd wanted to hear.

I hadn't heard the Davitts live before but was told what to expect a show band extravaganza pure magic! Jo and the guys are all related there are sons, brothers, nephews cousins who make up a very versatile talented band.



They never stopped they belted out one song after another hardly taking time to draw breath neither did the dancers.

They gave us all types of music, country, Irish and one from the show band era taking us right back to the good old days as some folk said you couldn't call them country but boy were they entertainers.

Being Christmas we paid the usual thanks to people who had helped us out over the year and to the legion and their staff for their support what has become the norm a funny poem in honor of the occasion.

Joe and the boys had already played a couple of gigs in the area so knew how sociable and welcoming we were here in the north, they had initially been booked to play on Saturday night also but were unable to full fill that as they were booked to play at a function in Ireland However it is no longer going ahead so they decided to stay on the Saturday night and Peter Sutherland managed to get them a gig in Wick.

Saturday night and an all local line up some times the Saturday night can be quieter but certainly not this time it was an exceptionally busy night lots of groups on nights out and I was surprised how many members made it back again for round two.

George opened for us and very quickly got things going not always easy for a solo act but he manages he always covers a wide range of material taking us back in time with some standards we don't hear very often and then bang up to date with modern country.

Then it was a Santa, Snowman Reindeer and Elf who appeared on stage next and everyone continued to have a ball they were chilled out and having fun and went out of their way to give their fans something to remember and go out in a blaze of glory.

Of course all good things had to come to an end despite Sandy trying hard to make it last forever all too soon it was time for Slange Ava to say their goodbyes and thank their fans for their support over the years I can hardly believe it's been six years. It really was quite emotional and given the performances we had seen over the two nights what a shame to waste such talents and what a loss to country music. However I am sure Keith, James, Chris and Donnie will find alternative avenues to pursue we wish them well in whatever the future brings for them.

Before they came off stage Kelly James's daughter and Tracy Keith's sister auctioned off their Slange Ava T-shirts for charity and the club bought them splitting the money between Thurso Fire Brigade and Wilma Rosie local M.S Group.

Was reading up recently about the Annual Country Music Awards and noticed most of the winners were all the young high energy acts with top honors going to married couple Miranda Lambert and Blake Shelton : female and male vocalist. However I was delighted that the Entertainer of the Year award went to George Strait maybe this might fire him up again and he won't ride away just yet.

Sad news this week the passing of Country Music Hall Of Famer Ray Price at the age of 87 following a two year battle with cancer, Ray excelled in everything from Texas Swing to honky tonk and was credit with hits like *Crazy Arms and City Lights*. Ray was something of a giant in Texas I know that all the guys who come to our festival from the Heart of Texas label all say Ray is their hero.

Country Music loses another legend!!

Well I think that's about it for this year. I hope you all have a great Christmas and all the best for 2014.

Until next time.

Keep It Country

Christine

Christine Gray
Chairperson NNCMC

