



Northern Nashville Country Music Club

Christmas 2015 Newsletter



November saw my return to the club after missing three I was beginning to have withdrawal symptoms so it was good to be back and thankfully on the mend but it was Ally's turn to be absent. He had a bad dose of man flu and sorry for himself I think maybe it was revenge wanted me to run after him – well he should have known better – although I hate to, I have to admit he did have a bad chest and cough.

A good crowd turned out and what a difference it makes to the atmosphere of the night: the music provided by two very popular acts Shaun Loughrey & The Countrysiders & Robbie & the Brothers.

Robbie kicked off the night and was joined on stage by accomplished guitarist Rony and multitalented son Ryan who plays steel, keyboards, accordion and drums he is also a sound engineer and joins Broken Wing when they provide backing to some visiting Irish acts. Robbie and the guys always give us a great night's entertainment and this time was no different they went down a storm with the crowd.

Robbie has just released a new album entitled: Robbie What Have I Got Planned For You Tonight (Diana) which is literally just 'hot of the press' and they were selling like hot cakes. The album is a long awaited dream of Robbie's when he travelled to Donegal to record some of his favourite country songs. It is a very high quality well produced album by Ryan Turner and no surprises that there are four songs on it from his all-time hero Merle Haggard including the title track Diana I particularly enjoyed Were The Chains Of Love written by Rory Feek and Me Missing You by James House. In fact, there's not a bad track on it a very enjoyable album Well done Robbie.

During the course of the night Robbie and the boys treated us to numbers from the CD along with others from some of his favourites in country including Gene Watson, George Strait & Dwight Yoakam and some up tempo dance tunes ensuring the crowd stayed on the floor. The guys enjoyed their night both on and off the stage they are quite at home in the club have made lots of friends over the years so not short of company at the bar.

I was blethering to Robbie before the show started and he said apart from the release of his CD one of the highlights of his year was working with and spending time with Merle's son Marty Haggard when he played here in the summer. Over a few whiskies they spoke at length about Merle and put the current country music scene to rights. Robbie is visiting Nashville next June and intends catching up with Marty wouldn't it be great if he could arrange it for Robbie to meet Merle, you never know I'll keep my fingers crossed that would certainly be his highlight in 2016.



As expected Shaun who is becoming a very popular annual visitor to the club pulled a crowd, you all know by now that he is the son of the famous Irish singer Johnny Loughrey who sadly passed away in 2005. Shaun originally from Manchester now lives in Ireland with his wife Carrie (one half of the Benn sisters) and young son Liam.

Shaun ensured the floor remained busy by providing something for everyone and we noticed that a couple of the young band members certainly scored a hit with some of the young 'ladies' in the crowd. Shaun has released several CD's and DVD's during his fairly short career he naturally treated us to some of the songs from them including my favourite Vince Gill's Look At Us and Ally's favourite Garth Brook's The Dance but he also did a medley of Elvis songs and an Irish medley complete with dancing.

Aside from locals we had a few guests from far flung parts of the globe including a young lady from Greece hopefully they enjoyed their night and will come back and see us again.



That week saw us announce the sad news that we won't be holding our Festival next year. At a recent well attended AGM the current committee and members of our support team who " help make it happen" debated the facts and figures of the past festival and the downward trend in audience levels.

Despite a very successful weekend the dwindling attendance has had a detrimental effect on our finance level, this coupled with no guarantee of securing grants or allocating a major sponsor are worrying factors. We do recognise the continuing support of local businesses and firms both financially and in kind has always been good and greatly appreciated.

Indicators suggest that travelling audience levels have remained fairly consistent for the last three years. However, we agreed that we have to do some market research to establish what can be done to increase a wider local audience without making our event less unique thus risking the down turn in 'tourist' visitors.

Our decision will clearly affect the local economy as the travelling and visiting fans provide Caithness with income at a normally quiet time of year; however, many of the businesses who make money from the Festival are not supporters of the event.

The AGM unanimously agreed that time was not on our side to organise a 2016 Festival but the committee will remain in place to have time to actively source funding and assess a way forward for future events.

Sadly, this is not our desired outcome; but finally we would like to say a big thanks to everyone who has supported us in any way at all during past Festivals.

I received a phone call a few weeks back to tell me that Brian O'Reilly or Bronco as he's known had passed away, after fighting cancer for some time. Bronco was involved in the country music scene for many years and the guy who worked hard to establish the Kelso country music festival he was also a Fast Draw Champion several times over; another sad blow for the Scottish country music scene.

Geordie Jack the guy behind the fantastic Colorado and more recently The Jacks has been in retirement for a couple of years however he has recently released a new C/D called Choices and held a release night in Golspie. Unfortunately, I still wasn't fit enough at that time to attend but apparently they had a great night lots of music songs and crack. The album is well put together although it includes numbers such as Choices, Falling For You & Hello Darlin it's not a country album but contains some great songs on it. Geordie is joined by sons Kevin & Trevor, daughter Kimberly and on fiddle Gordie Gunn. On Tuesday the 12th December Geordie along with sons Kevin and Trevor appeared in the Pentland Hotel Thurso for a charity evening of laughter and song to celebrate the launch of Choices in aid of Marie Curie. Sadly, I was on a night out so couldn't make it again but as expected he had a good turn out and everyone who was there said it was a brilliant night. Geordie sang some tracks from his C/D along with some well-known and loved numbers from the days of Colorado and The Jacks. Naturally he told some great stories and yarns reflecting back over the Good Old Days all in a good cause. They were saying he looked really well and was in great form maybe he is set you come out of retirement and ready for a come back to the music scene-- fingers crossed.

We were getting all geared up for our Christmas show when I received the dreaded phone call --yet again -- band problems. Travelling up the country to entertain us was supposed to be Nicky James and the fabulous State of the Heart Band and making his debut young Jacob Carter the 17-year-old brother of the current No 1 Irish entertainer Nathan Carter. I'd hoped Nicky was phoning to tell me that everything was as planned but sadly he rang with the bad news that Derek Thurlby the bands very talented musical director and steel player lost his son under tragic circumstances.

Derek was bringing the drummer with him so he also felt unable to attend so two musicians down with two days to go clearly too late to recruit anyone and teach them their play list. Nicky was gutted they were looking forward to coming to the Club as a band and introduce young Jacob to do his thing. Those of you who were at the Festival two years ago know what a very professional group of musicians they are one of the best in the U.K. However, I also knew that Nicky was used to going out solo and would ensure he put on a great Christmas Show for us (maybe he wanted to use the backing singers he had when he played the club's anniversary show for us). Although disappointed we had to put things into perspective and think what Derek and his family must be going through.

Due to the bad weather and terrible road conditions the boys were late getting here so they more or less had to go straight on stage after a quick change without time for anything to eat. Anyway as I expected we had no need to worry the three treated us to two absolutely fantastic night's entertainment during which they covered a wide range of music.

Nicky kicked things off and in his own laid back style and easy listening voice he literally covered all styles of music some Irish numbers, country old and new middle of the road and some dance classics. For the second part of the show Jacob shared the stage with Stevie who plays as part of the duo Little Rock aside from accompanying Jacob on guitar he treated us to some numbers; what a voice he did a great job and boy could he do justice to Roy Orbison songs easy to see why he can do a tribute show to the man.



What can I say about Jacob apart from 'big brother watch out here I come' he's just a natural making his debut he looked very relaxed and confident on stage what an amazing voice and sound. As expected he went in for a more modern style of music singing covers such as George Ezra, Budapest, Steve Earl, Copperhead Road, Johnny Brady, Chicken Fried but when he sang the Christmas carol Silent Night no wonder everyone just stood and listened wow.

However, despite being asked repeatedly he wouldn't sing Wagon Wheel which of course is brother's Nathan's biggest hit the song that brought him to a new height on the music scene. Aside from being a great singer he was a nice guy spent time chatting to everyone on and off stage even doing a few turns around the dance floor not that he had a choice in that the females were dragging him up.

The guys all played together during the final part of the show and they looked as if they were enjoying themselves as much as we were joined in the fun even wore their Santa hats courtesy of Gina. For three guys who had to change their play list at the last minute they provided 100% entertainment value got the crowd on the floor from the start and there they stayed all joining hands in a big circle at the end of the night super to see everyone w in good spirits and out to enjoy themselves.

We had a good crowd both nights nice to see so many coming back for an action replay on the Saturday night it's all very well deciding on the Friday night yes we'll be back but it's a different story on Saturday so well done you ones who made it both nights. The band left to go back to Liverpool directly after the show I certainly didn't envy their trip bad enough at the best of times but the roads were very icy. Our drive was the same when I came out of the car to go in Ally was sliding all over the place (don't think it was the drink) so he took my hand to help me and what happened he fell and took me down with him so a bruised hip god knows what any of the neighbours would have thought seeing us both sprawled in the middle of the drive -- should have known I'd be better on my own.

Jessie our Festival secretary had been given a special bottle of whisky so as she doesn't drink she decided to donate it to the club to use to help with funds so we had roll the £1 coin at it to see who was nearest It was good fun you can see that some of the men are very competitive but it was won fair and square by Henry Ross. We also received the left over cash from the bus fares to the Anniversary Show in Wick that was a nice gesture we received £46 and almost a £100 from the bottle it all helps so thanks for those that participated.

These last few months has seen some of our country stars taken poorly it was reported that Dolly had been taken to hospital with stomach cancer however the star reports this was false she was in hospital but with kidney stones which she had removed. She says she has made a full recovery and is very busy, her Dollywood resort and theme park celebrates its 30th Anniversary and another exciting chapter for Dolly was the premiere for her movie The Coat of Many Colors on the 10th December the film tells the true story of her childhood and her growing up in the Smoky Mountains hopefully we'll not have to wait too long before it is screened over here.

Poor Merle Haggard has been struck down with pneumonia and had to cancel some dates he had an op to remove a lung tumour in 2008 so is now more prone to respiratory illnesses. He has been in trouble recently as you know most modern country singers state Merle as being one of their influences. However, he certainly doesn't return the compliment and certainly doesn't appear to be a fan of the latest acts saying 'they are a bunch of crap, I can't tell what they're doing nobody seems to attempt to write a melody nowadays' However there are always exceptions and singer songwriter Sturgill Simpson gets Merle's seal of approval; you can always count on Merle to tell it as it is.

His mate and fellow rebel Willie Nelson also had to postpone to some gigs he had been booked to do with Merle a couple of months ago on the back of their recent duet album Django & Jimmie a couple of months back as he was suffering from some mystery illness. Shania Twain and Johnny Rodriguez have both had to cancel gigs recently due to having chest problems however thankfully everyone seems to be on the mend.

Joey from Joey & Rory fame is still very poorly she is very tired however, last week she surprised them all by getting on her feet with her sisters help and coming into the family

room and getting down on the floor to play with young Indiana. In her pictures she looked noticeably thinner and very weak. Rory said it was a lovely moment she could be a mam again such courage strength and determination from a truly beautiful lady. Amidst all the sadness they heard that their song, If I Needed You was up for a Grammy award in the best duo category she said excitement amidst all the tears.

I haven't as yet had time to sit and watch the award show from Nashville but by all reports it was as rocky as ever lacking true country tunes but will make up my mind let you know once I've watched it.

I also haven't caught up on any of the country programmes being screened recently on Sky 191 and 261 and really vexed I missed Brendon Quinn on BBC Alba heard it was good he did some good country stuff as recently he has leaned more towards the folky or more traditional Irish music. Alba has been screening country programmes on a Tuesday night with them being repeated again on Sunday nights.

Good news that Phil mac has managed to receive funding and sponsorship to screen a 24-hour video channel on Sky not sure yet what channel it will be shown on think it starts on January 24th think it will be on 261.

We are hoping to go to the Wick Triple C's Christmas Show next weekend they have Manson Grant & the Dynamos playing so should be a good night haven't managed to get to Wick very often this year at all and haven't heard the Dynamos since the festival so looking forward to that.

Well I think that's about all the news for now I better stop rattling on and go and get something done still lots on my list to get through before the weekend.

Until next time hope you all have a great Christmas manage to enjoy some great country music nights and that 2016 will be a happy, healthy one for everyone.

Hope Santa is good to you all.

Christine

