



Northern Nashville Country Music Club

February 2016 Newsletter

Returned two weeks ago from a lovely girlie holiday in Fuerteventura where we had a ball, the weather wasn't brilliant all the time had some cloudy spells and it was quite windy however our villa was sheltered and a right sun trap so we got the best of the weather with no wind. It was a fairly small resort but with nice plenty places to eat and drink and we found an Irish bar that still plays Irish music so we had a few good nights in it. It was fine to do as little or as much as we wanted - no men - no stress!

We came back on Thursday and had our club A.G.M. on the Saturday night which was pretty straightforward really when we studied our finances the situation wasn't quite as bad as we thought so we don't see the need to change things like the membership or prices of the shows, but we will be looking at the costs of acts and trying to keep within our budget. Studying the attendance figures and income for last year's shows we agreed that the more attendees we get on our cheaper shows then the more big shows we can afford. To try and encourage new members if a member brings a friend along they get in for half price as a one off introductory perk, hopefully some of the members who have drifted away will come back to join us also.

We had circulated questionnaires round our members to get some general feedback and clarification on what they would like for the club in the future we summarised them and again there were really no surprises in the answers. There was a question over whether or not we should do away with the cabaret; we thought that very few dance at the start on a night we have no cabaret, some of the bands like to have the opportunity to show what they can do so we decided to leave it optional and it's up to the bands. The biggest percentage of you enjoy the Irish bands so we will try and include as many as we can, we will use duos as we are doing and only use solo's to support the bigger bands enabling us to keep costs down.

Regarding the Legion and their financial crisis again I don't think we have anything imminent to worry about we do realise the price of both soft and alcoholic drinks are expensive and we will make them aware that people are staying away because of this. We did have a few suggestions regarding alternative venues but there's no doubt that the Legion is the best venue for the club so fingers crossed things improve for them and we don't have to move.

Following the meeting we went through to the lounge where Johnny Bremner was playing we all enjoyed the music Johnny sang some great old country numbers - bet the Legion wishes we had an A.G.M. more often it was great to see a good crowd in the place on a Saturday night.

The following Friday and our February club night music by George McIntosh and Justin McGurk & The Boogiemens, two great acts who have appeared in the club before.



George originally from South Shields now living in Glasgow played for us as part of Arizona Flame along with Steve James but he has been going out as a solo act for a while now and getting lots of work making a big impression wherever he plays in clubs across England and Scotland. It's a difficult job for an artist on their own to get things going and keep the crowd with them however George managed very well. He is a true country entertainer and played a great selection of songs delighted to hear lots of American country from artistes such as Travis Tritt, George Strait, Ricky Van Shelton, Don Williams not forgetting some Roy Orbison numbers all in all a very entertaining couple of spots with some Geordie humour thrown in.

Justin McGurk & The Boogie men were with us the same time last year everyone thoroughly enjoyed them then so we were delighted that their busy schedule allowed the band the time to come back and join us. Justin from Cookstown, Co. Tyrone has been playing for more than a decade and has been working very hard to get the recognition he deserves.

Justin is a very talented songwriter and has written hits for many top Irish acts including Nathan Carter, after performing as a solo act and duo he formed his very professional and versatile band the Boogiemens in 2008. Together they are a lively outfit playing lots of crowd pleasing and floor filling numbers making them a very sought after band in Ireland at festivals and major events they have also toured with American acts including Hal Ketchum, Martina McBride & Colin Raye. The boys who were very smartly turned out gave us a great selection of music: we heard numbers from their studio albums which included the title track from their latest release (their 10th to date) Pick A Winner and favourites like Get This Party Started, the Vince Gill classic Look At Us, Road Back and some songs with a Scottish flavour for the waltzers Caledonia & Go Lassie Go. To accompany the band on these numbers Justin brought young Steven Sinclair from Dunbeath on stage and he got the opportunity to play with them. Steven plays keyboards and accordion at local functions he also hosts a Scottish / Irish programme on North Highland Radio on Thursday nights at 10.00pm. Steven had interviewed Justin as part of his radio show and whilst they were talking Justin asked if he would like to come up and give a few tunes --a very nice gesture young Steven was delighted—

Again he pleased the crowd by singing his self-penned number If I Could Take Your Place written when his wife Roisin was being treated for breast cancer thankfully now things are good for Justin and his family and in the summer they had a baby sister for son Larry.



Aidy Quinn was covering for their regular drummer who couldn't travel naturally he treated us to a few numbers good to catch up with him again he told me he's busy doing promotional & management work at the moment when not on the road with his mum.

All in all a great show from both acts who were super to work with and looked like they were enjoying their night as much as we were and yes a better crowd which added to the atmosphere and put a smile on our treasurers face.

During the night there was certainly a first for NNCMC when James one of our visitors from Wick got down on one knee and proposed to his girlfriend Tracy and thankfully for him she said yes.

Our band secretary Johnny Dunnett recently turned the big 60 there was no chance of us forgetting or leaving him out he received the same treatment as everyone else the poem and funnies to go with it including toilet seat, skimpy panties and wires out of a bra!!! which all made perfect sense. However being the kind souls that we are we also gave him a framed picture which highlighted trivia and events from 1956: did you know that was the year Velcro was introduced, Elvis released his first hit Heartbreak Hotel, first Eurovision Song contest and a pint of beer cost 10p; oh how things have changed.



I have now seen more bits and pieces from the Phil Mack Keep it Country Music Channel they still seem to be showing lots of repeats but there are also some good shows and hopefully lots of new ones to come. I enjoyed Demand Country where people request the songs and videos they want to see so it covers good selection of American, Irish and British stuff a great variety.

What about Caithness Music Television which has just started on Wednesday at 5.00pm repeated again at the same time on Saturday the honours for this must go to Robert Cameron (Dynamos). At the moment we will see six programmes the first three will feature young Brandon McPhee who will give viewers an insight into how he achieved the accolade as one of the top accordion players in the U.K. and talk about his time on the road and in the studio. It will also showcase other Highland musicians including Geordie Jack, Alistair Macdonald, Manson Grant & Gordon Gunn great for Caithness and its very talented musicians. At the moment the Keep It Country T.V. is being shown on SKY 389 and Freesat 516 but I think that could change come April and it will also then become available on Freeview.

Read recently that Merle Haggard is still not doing very well and not out of the woods yet he has re-entered a Californian hospital where he continues his battle with double pneumonia which the 78-year old has been fighting for a few months now. His scheduled shows and appearances are all now cancelled until April fingers crossed that things will improve for Merle.

Another old timer who hasn't been well recently has decided to retire; Don Williams announces he will hang up his hat and is ready to take things easy and spend time at home. Don had his first hit in the 60's but was most popular in particular here in Britain during the 70's and early 80's, he had his final hit record in 1992. Don retired initially in 2006 but went back on the road in 2010 however last month he cancelled gigs due to having a hip replacement.

Willie Nelson also recently went through a period of ill health but he seems to have bounced back; he already has a statue in his honour in Austin, Texas where Willie lived for some time now on a wall they have painted a 60 x 20 feet mural of the man which will be the backdrop of the heart of Texas, Rockfest taking place on the 16th - 18th March at which Willie be appearing.

Looks like we're in luck the series Nashville is set to come back for season five, apart from telling a great story it takes place in top country venues such as the Opry and The Bluebird Café : on it we have seen stars including Luke Bryan Brad Paisley & Sara Evans as well as hearing some original music, can't wait. Speaking of Nashville Chris Carmack who plays gay artiste Will Lexington has just become engaged to Erin Slaver she also appears in the show as one of the backing singers to Juliette Barnes.

I noticed in the news somewhere that a 56-year old Scottish man from Peterhead has been jailed for four months after ignoring police warnings and complaints from neighbours to turn down his country music which he plays at top volume. His favourite artistes are Dolly Parton and Johnny Cash and to defend himself he says he has the volume loud as he is deaf but once he is released he is looking for somewhere more remote to stay so he can enjoy his music in peace.

One of my favourite artistes Vince Gill has released an album his first since 2011 entitled Down To My Last Bad Habit it's an excellent offering from one of country's superstars. For a while he went a bit blue grassy for me but on this album he's back writing & singing the type of music which best suits his voice those slow emotional ballads along with some good honky tonk and rocky no's with some great guitar playing thrown in. On the 12 track album he is accompanied on harmonies by his two daughters Jenny & Corrina and on the last track entitled Comin On, Vince pays tribute to George Jones who was clearly a big influence in his career.

Another country super star Loretta Lynn has this month released her first CD in over 10 years it's called Full Circle and is a bit of a musical journey through her life from the folk songs of the mountains, gospel numbers, and new versions of some of her biggest hits along with some new songs written especially for the album. She duets with Willie Nelson on the number Lay Me Down and Elvis Costello makes a guest appearance on Everything It Takes. Loretta is hardy for her 83 years she is still appearing on the Opry and says she has no intention of retiring.

Gene Watson has also just released his 33rd studio album entitled Real Country Music, I haven't heard it yet apart from some tracks which Stewart Fenwick played on his on line radio show on Celtic Music Radio on Sunday 28th Feb. but judging by Gene's past releases I am sure that's exactly what it is. He says it's a collection of songs he's loved for many years and it includes some older tracks such as Bitter They Are & When A Man Can't Get A Woman Off His Mind which are no longer available.

I was reading that the Johnny Cash Museum which opened in Down town Nashville in 2013 has now expanded and at the end of February they have opened further features some interactive also a section which includes the costumes from the Walk The Line film. Apparently they have discovered a species of a black tarantula spider living near Folsom Prison and appropriately they have named it after Johnny Cash.

I told you last month that the Joey & Rory song If I Needed You was had been nominated for an award at this year's country Grammy's in the Best Country Duo category held on the 16th February sadly the couple didn't win; Little Big Town came out on top in that category and were again winners for the best Country Song. Chris Stapleton walked away with Best Country Album and best Solo Performance, he just can't go wrong at the moment he came out of nowhere to win 3 awards at the Country Music Association night and no doubt he will do it again at the Academy Awards on April 3rd in Las Vegas where he is nominated in 7 different categories.

I suppose by now many of you have heard the sad news that Joey passed away on Friday 4th March she really was a beautiful person and they were so devoted to each other. However as Rory says she is now in heaven and a better place she struggled on for long enough and managed to see Christmas and Indy's 2nd Birthday. Indy will be keep Rory going and he has his faith which I am sure will be a great comfort to him – but it really is heart breaking - they had everything to live for –

Other awards which took place in February were the Ameripolitan's in Austin Texas these are for artistes whose work does not exactly conform to the taste of 'today's' country or falls into any other music genre such as Rockabilly or Bluegrass but perhaps more into true country style Texas swing etc. This year the Master Award went to Charley Pride, Jason Roberts walked with the western Swing Male Artiste and Jeff Woolsey who appeared at our festival last year along with his group the Dance Hall Kings earned himself the title of the Honky Tonk Group Award winner.

During the award show the remaining Eagles took the stage and sang Take It easy in honour of front man and band member who just recently passed away – not an easy thing for them to do I wouldn't imagine –

The very popular Irish entertainer Gene Stuart from Tyrone recently passed away after a long illness aged 73, he had a singing career which spanned five decades beginning in 1969 when he joined the Mighty Avon Showband after Larry Cunningham left to start his own band.

Gene was a legend on the Irish scene he performed many time on the Grand Ole Opry stage and was highly regarded by all Irelands top entertainers. His close friend Crawford Bell said of him "our lives were touched by his friendship he was straight talking down to earth and will be sorely missed" I do remember Gene playing in the club way back in the Viewfirth days probably round about 1989.

Another sad piece of news I heard after I returned from holiday was that the great fiddle player John Permenter lost his wife Sarah to cancer I knew she had been poorly for some time and that her illness was terminal. John originally from America has lived in the south of England for many years now and is always demand for his fiddling ability and asked to play as part of major events all over the country.

Of course the big news this month is the Country to Country festival being held mid-March; the first festival in 2013 was only held in the O2 London then the following year it was extended to Dublin with the artistes changing venues each day last year there were also stars from the event appearing in Glasgow.

This time again Dublin and Glasgow will be part of the weekend and it has now moved into Europe as well. I have never been as it was always too close to our weekend and a lot of the acts were too modern and rocky for my taste in country; this year however there are one or two I wouldn't have minded seeing, there certainly are some of the top country acts of the moment included in the line-up.

I notice that there quite a few country shows coming to Caithness over the coming months Nathan Carter has added a gig in the Assembly Rooms Wick on the 14th April prior to his two nights in Orkney, I know some folk from here had actually booked tickets for Orkney but bet the tickets have gone already they are on a first come first served basis no reserved seats. Then on the 6th May the Davitt Showband are in the Royal British Legion Thurso and again in the legion on June 11th Mary Duff is appearing along with Kathy Krinion & Jordan Mogey who is one of the newcomers on the Irish scene he is certainly much more country than Irish. Good to see some more country music coming to the area hopefully they won't affect the attendance at our nights and on the other hand night help the legion stay afloat putting more money over the bar.

Well I think that's about all the news this time round

Until next time

Keep it country

Christine