



Northern Nashville Country Music Club

May 2011 Newsletter

Hi it's me again, just about recovered from last weekend! As I said to everyone who asked at the club on Friday night, we all survived but are not quite revived!

This is not going to be a newsletter, more just a quick update and feedback from the Festival. I am away on holiday next Sunday so have lots to do, including post Festival paperwork and the dining room is still full of boxes which I am in the process of sorting and tidying to put in the loft.

This time last week we were still in the throes of our Festival weekend which I am pleased to report was another outstanding success, for me there wasn't a bad act on the stage all weekend in fact the standard of entertainment was amazing.

Feedback for the main has been really positive and some 1000 true country fans left the riding centre on Sunday night saying we had managed to top last years event.

I have been asked what my favourite act of the weekend was, well I don't have any particular act to single out - obviously I enjoyed some more than others - but all the artistes put on brilliant spots.

I thought our local bands did us proud as ever and well deserved the praise they received from the audience - more than once we were told 'your own bands are as good as any' so you can't get any better comments than that.

They were certainly up there with the best of them; Caithness definitely has a wealth of musical talent, from the newly formed school and youth bands, to the well experienced Manson Grant & The Dynamos who were joined on stage this year by young Brandon Macphee - a musical genius.

The event was brought to a close by The Jacks who left the crowd wanting more, all of which endorses what I said about our own acts.

South Mountain from Canada and Highway 101 provided something a bit different, offering a modern approach to country music - perhaps not to everyone's taste but no one could dispute their musical talent and ability; very competent musicians.

Flying the flag for Ireland this time was Dominic Kirwan and Sharon Nixon. Dominic wowed the ladies on Friday night and Sharon did the same for the guys on Saturday night.

I hadn't seen Dominic for a while so was looking forward to his spot and I am delighted to say he didn't disappoint. He brought Friday night to a close by providing an excellent musical spot, concentrating mainly on the country side of his repertoire. For me he was as good as ever and getting better looking with age.

Sharon, bright and bubbly with a voice as big as her personality, gave an energetic performance fuelled with her passion for country music.

Our youngest artist on the programme received the biggest reception, 11 year old Simon Peters from Donegal is one of Ireland's newest singing sensations. Simon sold more CD's than any other act on the bill, charmed the audience from the young lassies down to the old wifie's. All you Hot Country viewers will have seen Simon perform; he wrote his first song when he was 8, and recorded it when he was only 9, he is in great demand in Ireland and recently went to Nashville and had the opportunity to appear on the Midnight Jamboree and record his new single.

Simon and his family had a ball over the weekend and he said he had never seen anything like it couldn't wait to tell his granny and everyone back home about it.

Nashville's Gail Davies paid her second visit to our Festival this time introducing her son, Chris Scruggs, on stage with her - Chris usually plays as part of Marty Stuart's band. Gail is a prolific record producer but also a talented songwriter and it was good to hear all her popular numbers sung by herself.

A highlight for me was hearing Ron Williams, I really enjoy all his CD's so was looking forward to the real deal and he was everything I expected and more. Ron proved himself to be a genuine country artist every song delivered in his unique style and I can see why he is in demand in the USA.

Our package from Texas was something else; these guys, along with manager Tracey Picox, were delighted to have been asked to appear in Halkirk and with the warm welcome and kindness shown to them

Tony Booth - a true gentleman - is the guy responsible for so many country hits including Cinderella and The Keys In The Mailbox (no it wasn't Manson Grant he just borrows it). In his own unassuming way he treated us to one great country song after another.

Landon Dodd, a relative newcomer and honky tonker, is certainly the full package - talented musician and singer with an award winning voice, a hard core country act.

The last of our Texas acts, Justin Trevino, had the audience spellbound; his voice is something else - powerful, high pitched and smooth but with a piercing edge just made for good old fashioned Texas country music wow!!! Certainly for many he was a highlight of the weekend.

A country music veteran was the 'main man' of the Festival for a large majority of country fans, on his first visit to mainland Scotland (he's previously visited Shetland). A few years ago if anyone had asked me did I think that Gene Watson would appear in Halkirk I would have replied don't be daft, so it really was a privilege to have him perform for us.

I knew what a treat we were in for and what to expect, and we got what we wanted, many just stood transfixed at the front of the stage listening to Gene delivering hits like Farewell Party & Fourteen Carat Mind with the emotion and powerful vocal performance that still captivates his audience - he makes it look easy and effortless.

George Malcolm had the unenviable task of being our compere also keeping the event running like clockwork and he did a great job for us. George kindly visited Pentland View and Bayview House care homes to entertain the residents on Friday, and during the course of the weekend he made a plea for Easter eggs which we donated to Thor House, Mount Pleasant and Thurso High School's special education units, where they were gratefully received.

This of course is only my view of the weekend's acts - we all have various tastes in music so clearly other people will have different opinions and likes and dislikes, which means we achieved what we set out to do provide something for everyone.

Of course we don't get it right all the time, we try our best and after all it's only a hobby. Constructive criticism we can cope with, take on board and try and resolve some of the issues.

Before I move on a few Thank You's.

Of course firstly I would like to thank everyone who came and supported us especially all the country fans who travelled from all parts of mainland Scotland and the Islands, England, Ireland and Europe.

The committee who work all year round aside from non stop over the weekend, our fantastic troop of helpers, club members, friends and family who turn up religiously the week before and the day after (some not in the best of health!!) to convert, then reinstate, the Riding Centre - I can't thank you enough.

All our sponsors who sponsored us financially and in kind - we just couldn't do without you.

Can I just say that all the artistes and visitors remarked on how well they were looked after in their hotels and accommodation, in town when shopping etc, I told them you can't beat Caithness hospitality.

We had our club night on Friday. It wasn't as busy as usual maybe to be expected the week after the Festival, holiday weekend and weddings on, however we the committee decided it was our night to chill and have a few drinks.

Nashville Union should have been making their debut appearance in the club however as Alasdair is still recuperating after his heart attack we decided to postpone that until later in the year. Luckily Drew and Terry, AKA Double Trouble, had a free night and agreed to play for us again. Since their last visit Terry has learned to play mandolin so treated us to a few tunes on that and did his usual Shadow's numbers on the guitar.

Father and son have just released their new CD and kindly gave me a copy when they were at the Festival. It covers their range of music, which we had the pleasure of hearing on Friday night.

Thanks boys for doing the date for us, and for letting Rosie use your equipment. They were driving down to Brechin after the gig which I am sure they weren't looking forward to.

The next young lady was paying her first visit to the club. Rosie Flanagan, originally from Co Westmeath now living in Co Offally, has quite recently embarked on her singing career, which I am sure will go from strength to strength.

I had seen Rosie a few times on Hot Country but hadn't heard her live; she is a lovely girl with a great singing voice. Rosie and her band flew from Ireland which meant they couldn't take all their own equipment with them. This created some technical problem at times which meant Rosie didn't come across as well as she could have which was a real shame.

She covered all styles of music I particularly liked her country numbers which I felt suited her voice better, as opposed to her Irish ones.

She has a CD out called *A Country Rose* which covers mainly country numbers including *Crazy* and *Half Enough*, and her 8-year-old daughter, Sophie, sings *Fields Of Gold* on it.

It was a good night overall but a shame that it lacked a bit of atmosphere, however we had a good time as did everyone that was there.

Next month sees us with a new one on me; Three Card Trick, and also Barry Doyle.

Anyway I better go loads to do as I said next Sunday we are going to Majorca to chill out, drink and eat - hopefully we might find some country music!

I hope those of you who are off to Dublin for the Manson Grant holiday have a good week - no doubt I will get a full report on return.

Until next time, keep it Country.

Christine

Christine Gray
Chairperson NNCCMC