



Northern Nashville Country Music Club

May 2016 Newsletter

The weather hasn't been seasonal during April unfortunately no spring showers it's been windy and freezing cold, however into May now and not sure how it came in -- a bit of everything -- however let's hope it goes out like a lamb.

Hopefully I'm going to get some warmth as I'm jetting away to the Cyprus sunshine next week so this may be short and sweet compared to normal, as I've still got loads to do. If you remember when we were there last year I was feeling ill couldn't eat or drink. Ally said he would take me back but I don't think that was the real reason behind it: more likely that I was away in February leaving him at home so he thought it was his turn to get away.

The Hot Country TV Awards were held on April 19th in the very impressive Balyconnel Hotel Co, Cavan. What a great night of music it looked - anyone who's anyone at all on the country scene was there including Big Tom, Nathan Carter, Declan, Mike Denver, Jimmy Buckley and the list goes on; great value for money admission to the star studded event was only 25 euros. Huge Congratulations must go to our own musical genius Brandon McPhee who took the Johnny Cash Inspirational Award back to Caithness also playing his own spot on the programme. Brandon said he didn't expect to win anything so was delighted and the fact that Johnny Cash is one of his favourite singers made the honour even more special as was meeting top Irish performers. Awards also went to Phil Mac for his contribution to country music, Best Visual Award went to Johnny Brady, Inspirational Music Award went to Justin McGurk.

Speaking about awards we had a great turn out for our Sandy Swanson Scottish Band of the Year Memorial Award show which went to Manson Grant & The Dynamos. It was good to see some of members bring along their friends and family to take advantage of the half price offer for their first time in the club -- hopefully they all enjoyed themselves and will come back and see us again -- We welcomed first time visitors Bill and Ena Baxter from the Tuscon Club in Edinburgh who braved the stormy A9 to come and see The Dynamos they had a blast thanked us for our hospitality and said they'd certainly make the trip again.

Barry Doyle or Farmer Dan opened our night and together Barry & Marty put on a great show just like the cracker they gave us last time they appeared for our Christmas Show 2014. Their show was mainly country with some top country songs from Barry's favourite acts such as Alan Jackson, George Jones & of course Merle Haggard, although they did treat us to the odd Irish numbers plus some Farmer Dan tunes. Buldoo didn't make it in to join Barry on stage this time round for their rendition of Pheasant Plucker although they did get together for a rendition at the end of the night. Barry welcomed his friend Cowboy Larry on stage to sing a few numbers with them, Larry has been performing in Ireland for more than 30 years and I thoroughly enjoyed his part of the programme he has a good voice. He really enjoyed his night, was very impressed with our club thought the Dynamos brilliant couldn't get over Brandon's accordion skills. If I remember correctly I think Larry used to write the Irish review in Brigitte's magazine at one point.



Normally for our Award show we try to get our two winners together on the same bill but it just wasn't possible this year; so following their cabaret spot we presented Manson Grant & The Dynamos with their award. I thought this time they had scored a hat trick but Brandon told me that this was their fourth time as winners I think it was the third consecutive year maybe that's the confusion or just my memory not what it used to be.

For a change we thought we'd dedicate one of Alan's (our poet Laureate) poems to the boys thankfully it went down well everyone enjoyed it especially the band they took it all in good spirits even poor Manson when we made fun of his little legs and big belly!!! They were well warned before not to take offence it was just a bit of crack. The band over the years have received many awards but I'm sure that this one was equally as special to them as all the others as it was the club members who voted for them. They are receiving very positive reviews regarding their Caithness Music TV programmes screened several time a week on Sky 389, created by Manson & Robert and introduced by Brandon. The programmes can only be good for Caithness tourism as it shows footage of local landmarks and showcases some of our very own home grown talent.



During the course of the night they entertained us in true Dynamos fashion as always putting on a fabulous show. I was delighted that Keith sang my one of my favourite of his numbers Dirty Ashtrays hadn't heard it for a while (it got Ally away from the bar for a dance) Manson treated us to several numbers from Buck Owens and that great Bakersfield Sound. Brandon took lead vocals on some of his favourite country songs from his heroes such as Billy Ray Cyrus then a few Cajun numbers and of course a selection some Scottish tunes showing his skills on the boxie much to the delight of the audience.

Manson, Robert and Brandon, along with George Dunnet Transport, have organised a trip to Bantry in Southern Ireland and they leave Caithness next Thursday with a full coach load of fans I'm sure they will all have a good time lots of acts on the bill including Declan & Anthony McBrien: I hope Margaret watches that Irish brandy!!!



Kay & Gordon two of our loyal club members and big country fans sneaked away recently and got married in Huntly with Gordon's family present. The pair met on one of The Dynamos Top Country holidays in Benidorm a few years ago; so it was appropriate the band were playing when we gave a gift to the new Mr & Mrs Campbell and wished them all the best for their future together.

During the course of the night I announced the Band of the Year results for 2015 as follows:

Sandy Swanson Scottish Band: 1st Manson Grant & the Dynamos

2nd Robbie & The Brothers

3rd Norman Borland Band

Main Band: 1st Shaun Loughrey

2nd Justin McGurk & the Boogiemens

3rd Sean Corrigan & Broken Note

I noticed that one of our previous band of the year winner Jason McGilligan got married on Saturday 30th April to fiancée Ruth. Jason was our 2013 winner and if you remember he was forced to come off the road due to vocal cord problems last time I spoke to him things hadn't been resolved with treatment so unfortunately he may still require surgery. Unfortunately, the trophy is still gathering dust in my spare room and as it's unlikely that he will be able to appear any time in the near future so I must make arrangements and get it back to him.

I noticed recently that 70-year-old Dolly Parton and 73-year-old husband Carl Dean celebrate their Golden Wedding Anniversary in May the couple plan to renew their wedding vows. They met in a laundrette when Dolly had just moved to Nashville and got married two years later.

Carl has chosen to stay in the background despite being supportive of her career. Dolly will shortly embark on her latest tour where she will play more than 60 venues, this will coincide with the release of her new CD Pure and Simple with Dolly's Biggest Hits. Willie Nelson also has cause to celebrate he turned 83 on the 29th of April hard to believe: he hasn't exactly been good to himself over the years but it seems to have done him no harm, he's one of the few remaining country music legends.

Whilst reading the latest Country Music People magazine on the David Allan page I noticed that following his notes on the C2C Festival he added "The C2C success was little consolation to the organisers of the small but popular NNCMC Festival held in Caithness since 2004. the weekend of strong solid country music --more Texas than Nashville-- has been cancelled. the organisers blame the failure to find a major sponsor and to secure grants. That coupled with virtually zero radio coverage and no backing from the likes of the CMA have proved to be insurmountable hurdles. Well said! I suspect our friend and supporter Tony Byworth had something to do with supplying the information.

A recent arrival was a baby boy Remington Alexander born to Kelly Clarkson on the eve of her 34th birthday on the 12th of April this is her second child she already has a little girl River Rose born in 2014.

Another couple awaiting the patter of tiny feet are Paul & Claire from Raintown who announced they are expecting their first baby in October lovely news delighted for the Glasgow couple. They are really busy on the road travelling up and down the country recently they were one night in London to headline the Rising Stars of U.K. Country show the next back up to play as part of the Country 2 Country weekend in Glasgow playing on the King Tuts stage. They received a great response and the couple remain the only act to have been involved in all the C2C weekends they are now waiting to release their new single Nineteen Again written by the very talented Brian Hughes.

Sad news this month of course was the death of Merle Haggard on his 79th birthday I knew he was poorly following a bout of double pneumonia so I can't say I was really surprised to hear the news he looked very poorly in the last pictures I saw of him.

His funeral service was as he wished; it was held at his Californian ranch his family, close friends, band members were in attendance Marty Stuart officiated. At Merle's request Connie Smith sang Precious Memories, her and husband Marty Stuart dueted on Silver Wings, Willie Nelson & Kris Kristofferson also sang and his children closed the service with Today I Started Loving You Again.

Merle made his last public appearance on the Grand Ole Opry on October 15th at their 90th birthday celebrations introduced by his good friend Connie Smith. Merle born in 1937 had a very troubled and rebellious early life he ran away to Texas aged 14 and landed in a juvenile detention centre for shop lifting this was his first of many spells in prison for more serious crimes including armed robbery. Five times married Merle was imprisoned in San Quentin in 1958 and whilst there he played as part of the prison band was entertained by Johnny Cash and before his release in 1960 he decided he wanted to turn his life around and become a musician. Thankfully this was a good decision for the country music world: Merle has influenced many of today's top acts he himself was influenced by Bob Wills, Lefty Frizzell & Hank Williams. During his career Merle was presented with many awards including a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award he was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1994 but was never a member of the Grand Ole Opry which I find very strange: but then people like Kenny Rogers, George Strait and Glen Campbell are not members either.

Merle's first top ten hit was My Friends Are Always Gonna Be Strangers taken from a poll the top three most popular of his songs are 1st, Mama Tried, a song inspired by his own life experiences as a wild law breaking teenager. 2nd, Okie from Muskogee one of his signature tunes written when one of his band members spotted a road sign for Muskogee and said they probably didn't smoke marijuana there. In 3rd place was Big City co-written by friend Dean Holloway when the two walked round California whilst making an album and they were disgusted by the dirty streets, his wife of that time Leonna Williams supplies background vocals on that number. One of my particular favourites Today I Started Loving You Again was placed at number 9.

Merle certainly put Muskogee on the map and they are to pay tribute to him by erecting a public memorial which will be a bronze sculpture of Merle sitting on a bench with his guitar case and cowboy hat.

I was looking through the list of Country's saddest songs of which there must be hundreds and have to admit the list was certainly not what mine would have been here are a few examples see what you think:

Number 38: George Jones Grand Tour

Number 27: Red Sovine Teddy Bear

Number 24: Ray Charles & Willie Nelson Seven Spanish Angels

Number 17: Vince Gill Go Rest High On That Mountain

Number 11: Alan Jackson Where Were You When The World Stopped Turning

Number 4: George Jones He Stopped Loving Her Today

Number 1: Martina Mc Bride Concrete Angel (song about a little girl abused by her mother)

Maybe it would be good if we compiled a top ten list of our own just for a bit of crack so let me know what your favourite sad country songs are.

Another sad piece of news nearer home was the sudden death of drummer John Bradley, you will probably say you don't know him but you will. He has played in the club many times most recently with Lorraine Macmillan (he was also her partner) but prior to that we have seen him with Shooter, Red Canyon & Steve James Band: very sad not exactly sure of his age but he certainly wasn't old.

Brooks and Dunn are to be honoured with the 2016 American Country Countdown Award in Los Angeles which is presented to an artist whose extraordinary talent has influenced generations of musicians. Reba the 2014 winner of the icon Award will present the guys with their award whose legacy is that they are the biggest selling duo in country music history a long list of acts will perform. Toby Keith will honour Merle Haggard with a special performance and Merle's wife and family will be present.

I mentioned last month that Blake Shelton was suing In Touch Weekly magazine for wrongly alleging that he had been in rehab and drinking heavily. Apparently the judge has ruled that he has indeed a case against them and should proceed with his two-million-dollar law suit. No wonder some of these stars get annoyed with the things you hear about them you're never quite sure what to believe.

One day we are told that Blake and Gwen Stefani are getting engaged – starting a family – the next their relationship is in trouble. Blake has a new album entitled If I'm Honest due out later in May, Gwen has said that she features on one of the tracks.

Blake's ex Miranda Lambert is now dating Anderson East a Nashville producer engineer and accomplished artist in his own right with a couple of albums under his belt. They were seen together at the Academy of Music Awards in Las Vegas recently the 27-year-old isn't much of a looker but she says he's kind and treats her well so that's all that matters.

Another thing I said in the last newsletter was that Kenny Rogers had postponed his Gamblers Last Deal Tour in November due to health concerns now it's that the tour is back on and he has in fact added more dates in this country. Since then I've seen that he does have an illness and been forced to cancel all tour dates so I'm still unclear at the moment what's going on but on his web site it says he's touring before he retires so guess that would be more accurate than Facebook.

Friday April 22nd saw another country super star George Strait play his opening night in Las Vegas the first of his Strait to Vegas run sold out to 19,222 fans at the new T-Mobile Arena. George performed for more than 2 hours singing his way through many of his no 1 hits. He played a medley of Merle's songs in his honour stating " we'll never get to hear Merle playing live again but his music will live on for ever" adding that Merle was a big influence on his career and whilst he was in the army Merle came along and entertained blowing him away and it was then that's who he decided he wanted to be like.

Kasey Musgrove opened for Strait: quite a show I would think I had seriously hoped to be able to get to Las Vegas to attend a show: along with Alan Jackson (who I did manage to see twice) George Strait is the other artist on my bucket list to see live. However, with a family wedding looming, we couldn't book anything until we knew the date now they are all sold out, however I'm keeping my fingers crossed they may add further dates.

Nathan Carter has just played his first sell out concert in the area I didn't go myself but heard it was excellent (although folks saying he's getting less country) I can imagine it would be he is a fabulous young entertainer and showman enjoyed by all ages. Nathan says he loves playing Scotland it's so like Ireland people love to enjoy themselves and it makes for a great atmosphere. For a while Nathan was not comfortable being called a teenage heart throb and who can blame him I know a lot of young ones attend his concerts but he is a very talented entertainer and co -songwriter. Nathan says his dream is to play to a full house in the Hydro in London well the way things are going for this young man who celebrates his 26th birthday on the 28th May I wouldn't dismiss it he plays the London Palladium his next trip. Nathan was awarded the Hottest Act in Country Music for the 4th year running at the Hot Country Awards and received a double platinum disk for his song Beautiful Life.

Another young Irish entertainer and songwriter Derek Ryan has just played to a sell-out crowd in Eden Court another very enjoyable night I notice that Lisa McHugh is booked to play there in September.

I was reading this month's Brigitte's mag CMDS and was amused when reading Ken Macleod's article - he said that Bob Harris (Radio 2) had said in a press release that 'he'd been doing the country show for 15 years and in all that time he's never known things to be as exciting as they are today -- country is now appealing to a completely new young generation'. Ken's reaction was that this is an insult to the great country acts who have been around much longer than that and what they are promoting now to a new generation has sod all to do with REAL country. Well said Ken!!! my definition of country has never been the same as Bob's either.

Brigitte also told us that the very popular entertainer Glenn Rogers has decided to stop touring he has been on the country scene for the last 26 years and feels it's now time to come off the road. He will continue to be part of the Keep it Country TV but sadly we won't hear that great country voice of Glenn in these parts again.

Well I think that's about it for now

Until next time

Keep it country

Christine