

6/Mar/2002 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Opportunity for new performers . . .

The deadline for entries to New Roots competition for young folk and acoustic based singers and instrumentalists has been extended to encourage more applications. The competition gives an opportunity for young performers to strut their stuff for a sympathetic audience in a professional environment. While the gig is billed as a 'competition', the ideal is to help and encourage younger performers by putting them in touch with a panel who are vastly experienced in the acoustic music scene. To be eligible you need to be under 25, sing or play in a traditional or contemporary acoustic style and live in the Anglia TV area. The actual music can be traditional or self penned. There are two categories; under 18 and 18-24 and prizes include performance opportunities at festivals and music clubs. To enter you need to send a cassette or CD with 15 minutes of your music to; Alison Macfarlane, 40 Warwick Road, St Albans, AL1 4DL. The finals will be held at the Abbey Theatre in St Albans on Sunday April 14.

If you want to start warming up for St. Patrick's night on Sunday week you can catch some Irish traditional music with a youthful twist from **Lammas** tomorrow night (Thursday) at the Mad Nanny! Club, Goldcrest Inn, High Street Baldock. The band consists of **Matthew Griffin** (guitar, banjo, mandolin and whistles), **Nora Mulready** (fiddle), **Tim Dowd Jnr** (Uilleann pipes, flute and whistles), **Liam O' Sullivan** (button accordion) and **Daniel Griffin** on bodhrán. Matt is an All Ireland Champion on the bandolin and writes many of the tunes played by the band. Nora has a lively and melodic fiddle style and has gained impressive experience playing at venues such as The Globe Theatre and the Festival Hall as well as appearing on national radio and television programmes. She brings to the band an ability to take any tune and transform it into a wonderful array of life and variation. Tim has twice been All Ireland Champion on the Uilleann pipes and has supported such names as Michael McGoldrick, Andy Irvine, Dervish, Flook and Ronnie Drew. Liam took up the button accordion at an early age and has played with such accordion players as Joe Burke, Ned Kelly, and with the legendary John Whealan and Daniel is yet another All Ireland Champion. With all this young talent this should be a great gig, the music starts just after 8pm. For more information contact Alan or Sue at Mad Nanny! Music & Folk on 01462-438373, alan@madnanny.co.uk or check out the web at www.madnanny.co.uk

13/Mar/2002 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Get out and about on St Pat's night

This weekend is St Patrick's night - Sunday actually - so there should be loads of good music and dance happening around the town. It might be a good idea to book Monday off work to recover though!



Some of the area's best 'originals' bands are playing down at Brooklyn's in Dunstable on Sunday evenings. Last Sunday saw **Grief Society** and **Toy Drum** strutting their stuff in a very friendly - and comfortable! - setting. This is the first time I've seen either of these bands live though I've heard both of Grief Society's previous album releases. Grief Society played a very tight set of chunky funk influenced rock, with material off their last CD as well as some new songs. Angus the lead singer and bass guitarist tells me that they're just about to release a promotional CD of three new tracks that will be available at gigs as well as from their web site - www.griefsociety.com. Stay tuned to this column for news of their up-and-coming gigs in the area.

I'd not heard any stuff from the second band before - a five piece outfit called **Toy Drum** - but their raw sound complemented the slick professionalism of Grief Society. The lead singer had a very individual vocal style and the two guitarists provided a variety of sonic textures to keep the audience interested, worth keeping an eye on. And as if the Sunday evening gigs weren't enough, Brooklyn's is now also hosting a local Battle of the Bands which features a first prize of £300 and kicks off next Monday (Mar 18) - any local bands who are interested in getting involved should call Sean on 01582-671832.



Get down to the Dunstable Library if you want to get a preview of the plans of the replacement for the Queensway Hall. I understand that one of the schemes proposes that around a hundred new houses are to be shoe-horned into the space behind the current Leisure Centre. It makes you wonder what planet the planners live on when you consider that one of the stated reasons for knocking down the original Queensway Hall venue was due to the complaints about the noise from local residents.

Local Gigs . . .

- Tomorrow night (Thursday) local musician, radio announcer, composer and all round mad person **Big George Webley** will be looking at the greatest archaeological find in the history of Great Britain - the Sutton Hoo treasure - on BBC 2 at 7:30pm.
 - Friday (March 15) **TooFarGone** are playing at Roman Way, Tomlinson Avenue, Lewsey Farm.
 - Saturday (March 16) The **Bon Temps Playboys** at The Goat (High Street, Berkhamsted) with their foot-stomping Cajun Zydeco Swamp Pop and mayhem. Admission free and the music starts at about 9.00pm. Info from the Goat 01442-866-936.
 - Sunday (March 17) Celtic roots/rock from **enQ** to celebrate St Patrick's night at the Cork and Bull in Luton - ring 01582-729586 for more information.
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20/Mar/2002 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column



Chalktown are playing the next Unicorn Ceilidh at Hitchin Town Hall on Friday (Mar 22) with top local caller **Mick Brooks**. The band is gaining a reputation for being one of the best dance bands in the South of England and are a leading exponent of the E-Ceilidh movement. The line-up features two former Gas Mark 5 members - **Michael Davidson** (on guitars) and **Rob Gifford** (on percussion) with the addition of **Paul Scourfield** on melodeon and Trevor Lines on bass. I saw them at various festivals around the country now and vouch for their infectiously danceable music and high standard of playing. The music is mostly penned by Michael, who also wrote most of the tunes on the much acclaimed Gas Mk 5 album 'Guizers'. In addition to a strong folk music background, the band members have broad musical experiences including Jazz, Indian, Balkan and Rock music with Congas and double bass providing an unusual backing to the melody. **Chalktown** have a unique and very danceable sound, due in no small part to one of the best rhythm sections in the business powered by the 'wild man' of the E-Ceilidh movement - **Rob Gifford**. Tickets are a bargain at £6 (or £4 for under 14's) and are available on the door or in advance from 01582-733113 (day), 01582-724261 (evening). Doors open at 7:30 and the music kicks off at 8.

Top local acoustic rockers **Tempest** are playing over at the Well in High Town, Luton on Sunday (Mar 24). The band which is made up of **Pat McAnaney** (lead vocals/rhythm guitar), **James Ingram** (lead guitar/backing vocals), **Chris McCole** (bass guitar/backing vocals) and **Anthony Sowden** (drums) has been working on a couple of new songs for a two track CD-EP which should be ready for release soon. The Luton based foursome have been moving on up the music business food change are a doing a showcase for a record label in June - so hopefully there'll be a commercial release out on the streets before too long. You can see latest **Tempest** news and get an up-to-date gig list from their web site at www.the-tempest.com.

Another band to add to your 'must see' list is **Too Far Gone** who are playing at the Heights (George St, Luton) on Sunday (Mar 24). I've not seen the full line up yet but there is a real buzz going around about this band. They have been playing down on the London scene quite a bit and recently won a heat in the Battle of the Bands at the Horn in St Albans. For more information about the band check out their web site at www.toofargone.co.uk

27/Mar/2002 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Bringing it back to . . . Luton

Bob, who manages the up-and-coming Luton band **Tempest**, made a good point to me the other day - why go down to London when you can get loads of good music right here in Luton? The answer most bands will give you is that London is where all the record companies live so you if you want to get a record deal then you have to play down in the 'big smoke'. This is spurious of course, since all the other bands in the UK who live outside London have the same idea and will make a bee line to the metropolis with their long suffering fans in tow. This demand for London based stage space also means that the venue owners can play the bands off against each other, demanding that they bring a crowd along with them of 30 or 40 bodies along.



So what's the solution? Well maybe if bands and venues in Luton get together we could raise the profile of Luton music in both London and the UK national music press by pooling our PR resources. If we could get enough interest then we could even ship the appropriate record company personnel up to Luton to see showcases of Luton musical talent. We have the venues, we have the bands, and it's only 50 minutes up the motorway from central London. If you are interested in getting involved in this project then contact Bob on 07956-812831 or email live@lutonscene.com

Five piece local band **Surefire** are currently on the warpath with a raft of gigs in the Luton area. The band kicked off in 1997 and have been playing all round the country but recently decided to concentrate on their home patch. The line up is Steve Dunn (drums & backing vocals), Chris Merrick (bass), James 'Blackie' Black (lead vocals & rhythm guitar), Paul 'Meady' Mead (lead & rhythm guitar) and newest addition Matt (rhythm guitar & keyboards). The music has been likened it to a modern version of **U2** and the Rolling Stones by Ian Brown's guitarist (Aziz). To see the band you should get down to Mary Kates in Wellington Street, Luton on Sunday (March 30). For other dates check out their web site at www.surefiregroup.uksingers.com

On Sunday (March 31) **Backstreet** are playing down at the Cork & Bull in Cumberland St, Luton. I've seen this band a couple of times and they are great musicians and play a wide range of material. It should be a good night. For more details call 01582-729586.

Send gig information to "The Brian Heywood Column", PO Box 649, Dunstable, Beds, LU5 4XD and you can also email details of gigs, gossip, web sites or anything else to info@lutonscene.com. A search-able archive of the column is available on the web at <http://www.lutonscene.com>
