

3/Sept/2003 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Dunstable Folk & Dance Festival 2003

Friday sees the start of the 4th Annual Dunstable Folk and Dance Festival with loads of great music from both national and local artists during the three day celebration of folk, roots and fusion music and traditional dance. One of the great things about our festival is that it combines both performance and participation; so as well as the Saturday night concert there are music sessions in various pubs around the town Saturday lunch-time. Other events around the town include dance spots from local Morris sides - Bedfordshire Lace, Caddington Blues, St Albans Morris as well a surprise guest side - and a farmers' market on the Saturday. The Morris dancing will kick off at the Square from 10:30am and The Quadrant Shopping Centre from 12:30 while the Farmers' Market will be open from 9am in Ashton Square.

The festival opens on Friday night with a public ceilidh at St Mary's Social Club in West Street, just up from the main cross-roads at the centre of and features local band **MoonDance**, which is a five piece 'electric' line-up featuring Vicky Brown on fiddle, Alison Heywood on accordion, keys and saxophone, myself on guitar, Dave Good on bass, Donna Whitlock on drums and top local caller **Martin Hallet**. The word ceilidh is from celtic and means 'party' and the whole idea is to have fun, the music is upbeat and the caller will guide you through the simple moves in time to some great music. Tickets cost £6 (£3 conc.) on the door or will be available in advance from Octave Music in High Street North. Call 01582-475655 for more details.

On Saturday there will be hosted music sessions from 11:30am at The Norman King (Alison MacFarlane), Froth and Elbow (MoonDance), the White Swan (Penders Fen) and Bar Chameleon (Sons of the Soil) followed by the evening free concert in Grove House Gardens (High Street North) . The evening concert kicks off at 6pm with the **Bram Taylor Band** whose repertoire is a convivial gathering of songs and music interspersed with a liberal smattering of good humour followed by **Mas Y Mas** who are an acoustic band playing a mix of Latino Flamenco, Afro-Cuban and Celtic dance rhythms. Next act will be local celtic rockers **enQ** whose original sound has been described as 'The Corrs meet the Doors'.

Top of the bill are **Prego**, whose fiery mix of warm sounds from the heart of Western Europe imbued with the sun kissed rhythms and tastes of Galicia of the north western Celtic roots tradition of Spain plus the sounds, flavours and colours of France, Italy and of course the UK. If last year is anything to go by they are bound to get everyone dancing again. The concert will be hosted by **Rick Christian** who will also perform from his repertoire of original material and songs by other writers during the band changeovers.

Last year there was a Sunday lunch-time music session at the Norman King that featured some well known players in both the local and national scene followed at 3pm by another free concert in Grove House Gardens featuring local talent and hosted by one of Bedfordshire's strongest all round folk performers - **Barry Goodman**. The concert line-up includes Life and Times, Michele Welborn, Anahata and Mary Humphries plus more.

10/Sep/2003 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

A Festive End to the Summer in Dunstable

Last weekend saw the fourth successful Folk and Dance Festival in Dunstable with three days packed with music, dance and song. Friday's opening ceilidh saw an enthusiastic crowd bopping along to the music of MoonDance under the expert control of local caller Martin Hallet. This year's event was held at St Mary's Church social club which is an ideal venue, being close to the centre of town just off West Street and having a friendly atmosphere. On Saturday I was at the music session in the Froth and Elbow in High Street South which went down treat with songs and tunes led by the various participants who included Kelly's Eye from Bedford, Luton poet William Grieg, Gill Cliff and Rick Payman from St Albans. I'd like to thank the management at the Froth and Elbow for the warm welcome they gave to the musicians and the fantastic spread they put out for the musicians. I heard that the other sessions at the other pubs - the Norman King, The White Swan and Bar Chameleon - went down well.

The evening concert on Saturday shows the wide range of music that makes up the current folk music scene. The gig kicked off with a three piece ensemble led by the fine voice and guitar of **Bram Talyor** ably supported by **Hutch** (David Hutchinson) and **Roly** (Roland Hindmarch). Bram played a cracking set of covers which ranged from Sting (Fields of Gold) to modern contemporary writers like Huw Williams. Following on was Nottingham based **Mas Y Mas** who played a hot Celtic/Spanish Latino mix of original and traditional songs. The band is led by **Rikki Thomas-Martinez** whose Spanish and Welsh ancestry makes him an ideal interpreter of this cross-cultural musical fusion. The **Mas Y Mas** rhythm section consisted of **Wayne Evans** on double bass and the massive percussion sound of **Richard Kensington**.

As the sun went down and the lights came up **enQ** hit the stage with a wall of sound as they launched into The Reverend Sharpton, a passionate number based on the life story of New York's most active civil rights campaigner. Lead singer Sean Devlin's distinctive vocals and Vicky Brown's aggressive fiddle soon shook the audience out of their languid Latino mood and had them on their feet right up to the final manic tune set - The Devil Among the Tailors. This warmed up the audience nicely for the headline act **Prego** who stormed through a set of Euro-roots dance music driven by the bagpipes and melodeon on **Ian Smith** and the fiddle of Nigel along with a punchy sax section and a rhythm section to die for. Basic the recipe of a good time had by all. A big for Dunstable Town Council for putting on such a great event and **Rick Christian** for keeping the show to schedule and entertaining the crowd during the band change-overs.

17/Sept/2003 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Waltzing Matilda man hits Hitchin

Singer/Songwriter **Eric Bogle**, who was born a Scot but is now an honorary Aussie, will be playing at the Sun Hotel in Hitchin on Sunday (Sept 21) with guitarist **John Munro**. Although he emigrated to Australia in 1969 he still has strong connections here and tours on a regular basis either with his band or with a abbreviated line-up. Eric is perhaps best known for his song "And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda" which has been cover by over 100 different artists including Joan Baez, The Pogues and the Bush Wackers. Another of his songs - "The Green Fields of France" (aka "No Man's Land") - was recorded by The Furey Brothers and spend an incredible 26 weeks in the Irish charts - ten weeks as number one. This is bound to be sold out so get there early or call Maureen Jones on 01462-812391 (email hitchinfofolkclub@onetel.net.uk).

There wasn't enough space in last week's column to mention the Sunday afternoon concert at the Dunstable Folk Festival. The music kicked off at 2pm with a performance from promising youngsters **Bizarity** and went on to feature **The Acoustic Dudes** who did a really cutting number about the new public entertainment laws. Other acts were the duos **Mary Humphies and Anahata** and **Live and Times** who treated us to some more traditional music and folk rockers **Penders Fen**. The high point for me though was the performance by the **Michele Welborn Band** who did a varied set of electric roots numbers with a wide range of dynamics, varied influences along with a lot of musical verve and virtuosity. Keep an eye out for this band.

It seems that Dunstable duo **Erica Harwood** and **Gemma Howarth** - who perform as **The Secretaries** - are having a bit of a problem in the publicity department. It seems that last week they were playing at Luton at the Cork and Bull (on Friday) and The Boater (on Saturday) and their advertising posters proved so popular with the clientele of one of the pubs that they kept disappearing. Their agent had to make several emergency trips to the venue (no names, no pack drill) to replenish the evaporating publicity material. A bit of a problem for the two divas whose live performance has been described as spectacular, as they belt out a selection of hits ranging from Aretha Franklin right up to the modern sounds of Christina Aguilera. Contact their agent on 01582-507779 for more information.

At a recent MoonDance gig someone gave me a note to say that there is a new Irish show-band forming in the area. The are looking for a Banjo player, fiddle player, lead guitarist and lead vocalist to join a drummer, bass guitarist and accordion player to play traditional Irish music, both modern and traditional. If you want more information contact Kevin on 01525-714696.

24/Sept/2003 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Finding Common Ground in Luton

Danny from the Milton Keynes based band - **Common Ground** - tells me that they playing down at Eddies Bar (Church St, Luton) on Friday (Sept 26) to promote the release of their new CD EP. He tells me that their sound is a smooth, funky, rhythmic, melodic mix - and that they are "very good at it" (Danny adds modestly). The band formed in 1997 and have recently increased their line-up to an eight piece. The band's self penned songs have strong funky melodies and soulful chorus harmonies punched out from the three vocal talents help along by a very tight rhythm section. The band can back up their claim since they have recently supported major acts such as The James Taylor Quartet (JTQ), The Average White Band (AWB) as well as headlining gigs in London. It sounds like a band not to miss, and it's free.

I also had an email from Spindles, who has just taken over as manager for the Winston Churchill pub in Dunstable. He tells me that there will soon be a lot of exciting things happening at this popular town centre pub. There will be a full programme of events running from Thursday through Sunday every week; including live bands, DJ nights, comedy nights and more. They already have a load of gigs booked with more in the pipeline. One innovative idea will address the problem that young adults who are over 16 have in seeing bands, when the only available venues are public houses. Some of the gigs will be classed as 16+ which will allow these younger members of the live music crowd to attend these gigs.

The way it will work is that everyone entering a 16+ gig who is over 18 will have their hand stamped and will be able to purchase alcohol at the bar. Those who are under 18 - or appear to be under 18 and cannot provide ID - will not get stamped and will not be allowed to purchase alcohol, just soft drinks. Anyone seen purchasing alcohol for under 18's will be removed from the venue, persistent offenders will be barred from future entry. Since the demise of the Queensway Hall venue, there is nowhere in Dunstable, and few places in Luton, that young music fans can see live bands without getting onto dodgy ground. The organisers tell me that they are going to be very strict with enforcing these rules, so anyone reading this who looks young for your age make sure you take the appropriate ID to these gigs. The new programme of events is going to kick off on Friday week (Oct 3) and they tell me that there will be a big surprise for all, so be sure to attend.

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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 searchable archive of the column is available on the web at <http://www.lutonscene.com>