

3/Nov/2004 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

A Musical World...

I'm writing this column on the way back from Essen in Germany where I've been a delegate at WOMEX 2004, probably the largest meeting of 'world' and related musics on the planet. The four day event combines music showcases, a trade fair, seminars and sessions on topics important to the promotion, production or performance of World Music throughout, well, the world actually. The whole thing took place this year in a gentrified coal mine on the outskirts of the town, which is in the middle of the Ruhr, the industrial heartland of Germany, so no one could accuse the delegates for coming for the view. The Being a maritime nation, Britain is no stranger to world music, being a cross-roads to the various cultures and a seething mixing pot busy producing new genres by combining elements of national styles and traditions - dub reggae and hip hop are just two examples of this process.

I saw some friendly faces over there with Mas-Y-Mas and Prego who have played at Dunstable Folk Festival as well as the iconic Eliza Carthy, The Bollywood Orchestra to mention a few. In fact Eliza led a session discussing why English folk music should be included in world music events. The showcases were pretty interesting on the whole with acts from all over the globe, ranging from a Polish experimental accordion trio to a full-on Latin ethno-rock outfit from Columbia. It was somewhat disappointing to see so little involvement from UK based bands and no celtic stuff at all, though Eliza did do a short performance as part of her seminar. However that should all change next year when WOMEX comes to the new Sage venue in Gateshead.

As far as I know the Eliza Carthy Band is not touring down this way till next year, but you can see her mum and dad when Martin Carthy and Norma Waterson play down at the Trestle Arts Base in St Albans on Sunday week (November 14). Martin also has early links with this area being born in Lemsford (near Hatfield). Starting out in skiffle in the 1960s London folk scene where he influenced performers such as Bob Dylan and Paul Simon - who had a hit based on Martin's arrangement of the English folk song 'Scarborough Fair'. Plank publishers might also be interested to note that Martin will be leading a guitar workshop in the afternoon (2.30pm) where you'll be able to get an insight into his ground breaking guitar techniques. Tickets for the concert cost £12 (concessions £9) and can be purchased in advance by sending a cheque payable to 'St Albans Folk Music' to 40 Warwick Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 4DL or you will also be able to get on the door, if there are any left! For further details see www.stalbansfolkmusic.org.uk or ring 01727-852111.

10/Nov/2004 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Roy Bailey going underground

Nigel Benson, who runs Benny's Folk Club in the basement of the Hat Factory Arts Centre in Bute St, seems to have a knack of persuading the great and the good of the acoustic blues and folk music world to play in Luton. After kicking off the series with blues greats such as **Derek Brimstone** and **Wizz Jones**, rising star **Emily Smith** and the grand old man of the folk scene **Martin Carthy**, he managed to sell out the venue when US guitarist **Bob Brozman** dropped into to show off his amazing guitar pyrotechnics and eclectic world music. Next Tuesday (Nov 16) you can hear **Roy Bailey** who has been described as "The possessor of one of the finest voices in the folk world ..." by the Guardian. And they're not the only ones as he received an MBE for services to folk music in 2000, which is quite an accolade for someone that Tony Benn described as "the greatest socialist folksinger of his generation" and Robb Johnson as "the champion of The People's Music...". Anyone who saw him at the Dunstable Folk & Dance Festival will attest to the power and underlying compassion of both his songs and his performance. The doors open at 7:30pm and entry costs £4 for members (£6 for non-members, £2 concessions). See www.bennys.org.uk, email BennysFolkClub@hotmail.com or call the box office on 01582-878100 for more information.

Hitchin based ceilidh band **Chalktown** are in the frame for this month's Tyre Kickers' Ceilidh at St Mary's Social Club in West Street Dunstable on Friday (Nov 12). The band is based around the melodeon of **Paul Scourfield** and the music combines various folk, rock and jazz influences to create a very danceable sound. The band has a wealth of dance music experience with ex-Gas Mk 5 members **Michael Davidson** and **Rob Gifford**, and Trevor Lines who brings influences ranging from ceilidh to Balkan music. Caller for the evening will be Sheena Masson who is no stranger to the area, having performed with Stomp at a previous Tyre Kickers' and at many local music sessions. Tickets cost tickets £6 (£3 conc) and under 12's get in free and are available on the door or from Octave Music in High Street South, Dunstable. Call 01462-458031 for more information or check out the website at www.roots66.net/tkc

Things are hotting up music-wise at the Cork & Bull in Cumberland St, Luton. As well as a revitalised music programme – **Over*Easy** are there on Saturday (Nov 13) and the Tempest on Sunday (Nov 14) – well known local bass player **Cliff Mulwiney** (3 Card Trick etc) is hosting a jam session there every Thursday. This is a great opportunity for young bands to 'test the water' and for musicians of all levels to meet socially and have a bit of a play. For more details about any of these gigs call the venue on 01582-729586.

17/Nov/2004 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

The First Step to an Indie in the air?

If you're an independent musician it's very easy to moan about the lack of access to the airwaves, unlike the PBS stations in places like Australia that give new or unsigned artists air-play. In fact, Dire Straights would have been consigned to the dustbin of history if the Sydney based radio station 2JJ hadn't picked up on the Sultans of Swing and given it the opportunity to become a massive hit. This lack of access in the UK has been brought harshly into light recently by the untimely death of John Peel, one of the only DJs on radio who would play new/unsigned music to a national audience. The tributes of some of the great bands that managed to break-in to the wider music scene (thanks to John) says volumes about the quality of the music out there. It's a real shame that the system is denying you – the audience – a chance to decide what you want to hear.

However moaning doesn't do much good and it takes someone to actually get off their backside and do something. Step forward Robb Eden, who amongst other things manages the local band **Surefire**. Robb has put together a CD project called 'The First Step' that brings together music from all over the world – including Australia, Russia, USA, Luton (enQ) and even Morton-in-Marsh to showcase the music to broadcasters in the UK. The tracks range from full-on rock through power pop, to a dance influenced acid jazz instrumental. It's been something of an up-hill struggle with his initial efforts being totally rebuffed by broadcasters he approached. However persistence has paid off and some big players in radio land are taking the issue seriously. Robb hopes to have some good news by Christmas, watch this space. To find out more about the organisation behind The First Step check out www.jacobsladder.org.uk

Well known local jazz trumpeter Ray Batson is running a "One Day Jazz Improvisation" at South Luton Community College on Saturday (Nov 20). The course will be useful to any musician who wants to learn more about improvisation. If you're interested then contact the college on 01582-480886 to get onto the course. The cost is only £16 for the day.

Tomorrow night (Thursday) I see that **Los Pacaminos** is playing down at the Horn in St Albans (Victoria St next to the BR mainline station). The line-up features local lad **Paul Young** who had massive hits with "Wherever I Lay My Hat" and "Every time You Go Away" who has moved on from playing for hordes of hysterical girls at Wembley to get down to some seriously spicy Tex-Mex music. Doors open at 8pm and it costs £10 to get in.

24/Nov/2004 The Scene (Luton News/Dunstable Gazette)

The Brian Heywood Column

Scottish Folk Invasion

The powerhouse of Scottish song - Dick Gaughan – is playing a gig over at The Place Arts Centre in Letchworth on Friday week (Dec 3). Dick is an original member of the ground breaking Scottish folk band ‘Boys of the Lough’ and a key member of the electric folk outfits ‘Five Hand Reel’ and ‘Clan Alba’. Apart from his ensemble work he is now know as a troubadour of the road, taking his songs and music around the world, from Catalonia to Canada as an internationally acclaimed singer guitarist and a dynamic solo performer. Known overseas as "one of Britain's most innovative and contemporary voices." (Boston Globe), The Guardian reckons that his songs show "how music from the gut really sounds." This gig is likely to be sold out so make sure you book early to ensure you get a decent seat. The concert starts at 8:30pm and tickets cost £12, £10 for concessions and £5 for children. You can get tickets by post from Mad Nanny Music (Royal Oak Cottage, 6 High Rd, Seddington, SG19 1NZ), call the Box Office on 0845-123-2656 or email alan@madnanny.co.uk

Tomorrow night (Thursday) the 2004/5 ‘Transit’ tour hits Luton at Charlie Brown's Nightclub (Midland Road, Luton) with live performances from local bands **Bowfinger** and **Reverie** playing Indie & guitar pop at its best. Also on the bill are **Overdrawn** from Welwyn Garden City and Brighton's **Turncoat**. Doors open 7.30pm until 1am, with the first band on at 8pm. Entry is £4.

On Saturday (Nov 27) **Dilate** and **Bilker** are playing down at The Wheatsheaf in High Street North Dunstable. Dilate are a Luton based metal band who's diverse metal sound is building them a strong following and have been compared with the Deftones, Incubus and Stained.

On Sunday night (Nov 28) **Tannahill Weavers** are appearing at the Hitchin Folk Club. The band is billed as one of Scotland's premier traditional bands, blending guitar, mandolin, bouzouki, fiddle, whistles, bodhran and pipes. The club takes place at The Sun Hotel, Sun Street, Hitchin and you can phone Maureen on 01462 812391 for more information or visit www.hitchinfofolkclub.idnet.net

Next Tuesday (Nov 30) Maggie Holland is appearing at Benny's Folk Club which takes place at The Hat Factory in Bute St, Luton. I remember seeing Maggie in “Hot Vultures” with Ian A Anderson in the early 1980's. Since then she has developed a successful solo career and in 1999 her song "A Place Called England" won the best new song award in the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards. Tickets cost £5 (non-members), £3 (members) and £2 (concessions) for more information call the Box Office 01582 878100 or check out www.bennys.org.uk

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>