



Gretchen Peters hopes to explore the Shetland landscape during her visit next month.

Photo courtesy of Gina R Binkley

Peters promises to deliver a stirring *Independence Day*

■ Nashville star hears of isles' reputation from popular singer Isbell

■ She will explore the isles but is disappointed to miss Mirrie Dancers

Revered Nashville singer-songwriter Gretchen Peters will play her first Shetland gig next month – with Grammy Award winning artist Jason Isbell already giving his seal of approval on Twitter.

Peters will be performing songs from a sparkling career that began in the 1990s, in a stripped-down duo arrangement with husband Barry Walsh.

Born in New York the American songstress moved to Nashville in the late 80s and in 2014 was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters' Hall of Fame.

Having gigged throughout the UK and having "always felt at home" in Scotland, Peters is excited to head north for the gig at Mareel on 26th July.

"They [the Scottish audiences] are just so demonstrative," she said.

"They're very forward with their feelings and it makes the energy of the show all that much better."

Songwriter Isbell visited the isles with his wife Amanda Shires in 2014, with his power and beguiling lyricism lapped up by music lovers.

"[With] Jason when I tweeted about this gig in Shetland he responded to me so he obviously loved it," said Peters.

"I'm a seaside kind of a girl," she added.

"I grew up next to the Atlantic in New York so I love being by the sea."

On her bucket list is the chance to see the Northern Lights, though Peters acknowledges her timing might be off for Shetland at this time of year.

Nevertheless, she hopes to get out and explore as much as she can of the scenery during her stay.

Shetland folk will be no doubt familiar with the song *Independence Day* – popularised by Martina McBride and penned by Peters.

And having been told of its popularity in Shetland and the love of country/roots music, she says it will definitely have a place on the setlist.

"I'm playing in Nova Scotia next week and Nova Scotia is kind of a similar looking place [to Shetland]," she said.

"There are ties definitely and it seems like in these places roots music really resonates with people."

"I think it just goes back so far in the DNA of people in far flung places; it's like a common language almost."

Having stacked up an impressive back catalogue of songs, Peters continues to be on top of her game.

Her 2015 album *Blackbirds* debuted at number one in the UK country chart and reached the top 40 UK pop chart, winning international album of the year and song of the year at the UK Americana Awards in February this.

Writing she explains is like an "ah hah" moment and at its core it can be revelatory.

"My theory about writing things is that everybody sees it as self-expression, but to me it's self-discovery."

"I find more often I'm not sitting down and saying 'I want to say this' and I want to find a way of saying it."

"I find things come out that I didn't know were true ... or were on my mind."

The "curiosity" involved in the creative process keeps it interesting, she said.

"I've had this experience so many times writing so many albums where I thought 'I've got nothing to say' ... and I'm amazed what comes out of me it's almost like exorcism I guess."



Soloist Stewart Grains takes the lead at last weekend's recording in Mareel.

Fifty-strong group records its debut album in Mareel

After performances in Edinburgh, Shetland and the other side of the world burgeoning isles fiddle group Hjaltibonhoga hit the recording studio for their debut album.

Fifteen sets were recorded by the group last weekend, with more than 50 fiddlers taking to the Mareel stage to cut the record.

Margaret Robertson helped form the group in 2014 and said it felt like the right time to put the music onto CD.

Junior and senior members feature on the collection of tunes as well as slow airs and American reels.

For Robertson the most poignant is a slow air written in memory of the late Ian McAlpine, who played with the band at its first Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo in 2014.

It is an album which varies in tempo and feel, showing both more traditional Shetland influences and the influences from the band's travels.

"We're hoping to be able to put across the vibrancy

and energy that's within the group on this CD," she said.

One of the biggest joys for Robertson was seeing the younger members of the training band experience the recording process for the first time.

Rattling off 15 sets in a day is no mean feat and she praised the fiddlers for all their hard work.

"The band have worked really, really hard. They have endured me working them quite hard and they have really pulled it together," she said.

A range of harmonies feature on the album, and for Robertson it left room for orchestration, particularly in the slower numbers.

A concert was held on Sunday night to promote the CD and the band has already got about 70 pre-orders.

Robertson agrees the variety of sets reflects the vibrancy and colour of the Shetland fiddle scene.

"What I really like with Shetland is it's almost a stop off in the middle of the North Sea where you have influences being drawn in from different directions," she said.

Holmes returns

Two of Scotland's leading young singer-songwriters are returning to the isles in September.

Adam Holmes and Rachel Sermanni will once again be heading to Shetland shores, with Holmes and his band The Embers touring their second album *Brighter Still* released this month.

Sermanni will be joined by Orcadian pianist Jen Austin to perform material from her second album offering *Tied to the Moon*, nominated for a Scottish Album of the Year Award.

Holmes' gravelly vocals and sincere delivery have been a hit with Shetland audiences, both with folk festival appearances with the band, and performing with trad group Rura.

Carrbridge songbird Sermanni has performed in Shetland three times previously, first taking to a Shetland stage in 2011 supporting folk/pop giants Mumford and Sons.

Starting out on fiddle, Holmes switched to guitar at 14 and began writing songs about a year later.

A finalist in the 2009 Celtic Connections Young Traditional Musician of the Year competition, he was also nominated as Best Newcomer at the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards in 2011 and nominated for Best Up and Coming Artist at the 2013 Scots Trad Music Awards.

In 2013 he recorded his debut album *Heirs and Graces* with producer John Wood (responsible for seminal albums by John Martyn, Nick Drake, Richard Thompson and Sandy Denny).

The record was mastered by Simon Heyworth, co-producer with Mike Oldfield of *Tubular Bells*, and was launched to great acclaim in January 2014.

In April 2014 the album was nominated for Scottish Album of the Year and in December was also nominated for Best Album at the Scottish Traditional Music Awards. It reached a high of number five in the iTunes singer/songwriter chart and received national and international airplay from stations throughout the UK, mainland Europe, the US and Canada.

The gigs will be held at Sandwick's Carnegie Hall on 9th September with support from Sheila and Freda, followed by a concert at Mareel on 10th September at Mareel.

More midsummer magic, please

Midsummer in the isles was celebrated at Mareel on Tuesday with laid back jazz, rousing traditional tunes and sparkling songwriting.

The free event in the cafe bar had three local acts on the bill.

It pulled in plenty of punters, with young trio Mirka – Danny Garrick, Loris MacDonald and Karis Garrick opening the evening.

With Danny on fiddle, Karis on piano and MacDonald on accordion it made for a lively – toe-tapping start.

Individually all three are well known on

the Shetland music scene and collectively the band made for an impressive, slick and melodic outfit.

The second trio of the evening of Norman Goudie, Helen Tait and Alan Nicolson served up a soothing spoonful of jazz nostalgia to do go with the americanos, cake and cappuccinos.

Jazz standards from Duke Ellington's *Don't Get Around Much Anymore* to Louis Armstrong's *When You're Smiling* fluttered up to the cafe rafters – with Tait's soulful sax solos interspersed between the verses. Isles singer-songwriter

Arthur Nicholson rounded off the evening with self-penned tunes, including the catchy and wonderfully crafted *Voice of Reason* – highlighting his talent for memorable melodies and rich guitar playing.

Two covers featured in the setlist included a stellar rendition of John Martyn's *May You Never* complete with percussive guitar slaps, pull-offs and soaring vocals.


More of the same please Mareel.

Adam Guest



The jazzy trio of Norman Goudie, Helen Tait and Alan Nicolson.

Photo: Adam Guest



Galen F
Louise I

Orcadian Louis
joined by friends
lively mix of trad
Scotland, Ameri

Mon 11th E
Sandwick
Tues 12th
8pm, 7.30p
book online

Dynamic country

Shetland Country Music Club is welcoming country quartet Manson Grant and the Dynamos to the Garrison Theatre tomorrow.

The band recently celebrated over 50 years in music and have more than 100 trophies to their name

The group has also worked with the likes of Philomena Begley, George Hamilton IV, Brendan Shine and Big Tom and the Mainliners.

Manson Grant and the Dynamos will also be performing at Lerwick Legion on Sunday.

Classic gig at airport

BY KEEGAN MURRAY

Tourists and local travellers got a surprise on Wednesday morning when members of the Scottish Ensemble gave a short pop-up performance at Sumburgh Airport.

Six musicians from the group arrived in Shetland shortly after 11am and immediately got their four-day residency under way with a taster concert for the assembled punters.

Around half of the members of the all-string orchestra were present for the performance, with the remainder of the band arriving later that day on a flight from Glasgow.

Playing a short stripped back set the band blended classical music with pop songs and also managed to squeeze a few quirky renditions of Scottish staples *Auld Lang Syne* and *Scotland the Brave* into the set.

The intimate performance allowed spectators to enjoy the sensation of being present for a private classical performance – even if that illusion was intermittently broken by tannoy announcements asking for “passengers to proceed to the departure lounge”.

Once the remainder of the band arrived later that day the group were able to kick off their residency proper, with a “Musical Feast” at Sandwick’s Carnegie Hall. This concert saw the musicians providing the paying spectators with music and food, cooked under the tutelage of award-winning writer Marian Armitage.

The group plan to spend a great deal of their time in Shetland working alongside local musicians, such as the Shetland Community Orchestra. They will take time to tutor students at the Anderson High School and also to learn about traditional Shetland music from local fiddle players.

Residents of care homes around the isles will be treated to quartet performances today, before the group reassembles in the evening to perform a second pop-up concert at a secret location.

The musicians will conclude their residency tomorrow by performing two concerts at Mareel. The first of these is geared towards children and will take a narrative format as the youngsters are introduced to classical music via the medium of storytelling.

Finally the band will play a set entitled “En Rêve” which will be heavily inspired by the music of French composers such as Maurice Ravel, Claude Debussy and Gabriel Fauré.

Speaking after the performance at Sumburgh Airport Elaine Craig, project manager for the ensemble said: “We’re very much looking forward to our time in Shetland.

“We always enjoy our residencies as they give us a chance to get out and about and to take our music out of the concert hall setting.”

The group were also keen to thank Inksters Solicitors for sponsoring the residency, with Miss Craig adding “we couldn’t have done any of this without them.”

● More next week.

Musical feast shows ultimate levels of technical and dynamic brilliance

Last week JEFF MERRIFIELD went to two musical soirées offered by the Scottish Ensemble, on Wednesday at Carnegie Hall in Sandwick and on Saturday at Mareel.

Between the two events, he writes, we seemed to have lost Europe and split apart the nations. Praise be, therefore, for the excellent visiting musicians to remind us of the splendid traditions and superb perfections of European music.

Wednesday was billed as a “musical feast” and it certainly was that. The event embraced the making of some fabulously delicious food, with the musicians working with Shetland ace cook Marian Armitage in the new Carnegie Hall kitchens, which was then slotted into an evening of fascinating music.

The Carnegie Hall never looked nicer and the local volunteers who have so fastidiously upgraded this venue are to be wholeheartedly congratulated.

The first part of the evening was a series of pieces that ensemble members had collaborated on with members of Shetland Community Orchestra. With just one afternoon of rehearsal, the concert they put on was nothing short of remarkable.

The ensemble is noted for playing challenging music and no quarter was given. The opening item was the *Clarinet Concerto* by

Gerard Finzi, a 20th-century English composer.

It's in two parts, the first languid, full of huge spacial melodies, the second more sprightly and sweeping. The clarinet part is integrated into the strings in a quite complex way. Sioban Tekcan took on this difficult task and, despite some interference from a leaky reed, she played with brilliant clarity. There were some really inspired moments.

The Autumn and Summer sections were played from Antonio Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, among some of the most familiar Italian music. Written in the 18th century, it has become a popular piece with concert audiences all over Europe.

The Scottish and Shetland players took up the challenge with vim and gusto. Some of the pieces fairly zinged along.

I was particularly struck with the flamboyant bowing style of Jonathan Morton. He is a musi-



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cian of exceptional talent and the way he plays the violin radiates his enjoyment and love of the music. Here he transferred this vibrancy to the whole ensemble and the playing of the Shetland musicians was definitely raised a few notches.

The food part of this feast was provided by the joint efforts of the ensemble players and Shetland's own cookbook star. There was Whalsay clatch, a sort of supe-

rior hake bake, and a vegetarian dish with goat's cheese and walnuts. I had the veggie and delicious it was too.

The feast continued with a short programme of music from Germany, England, and France played by the members of the Scottish Ensemble. What a thrill to hear them play Mozart, a superb rendition one of his *Divertimenti*. What a joy to hear them wrap their fin-

gers and bows around this intricate and delicate music, with its complex contrapuntal meanderings. Beautiful.

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Maurice Ravel and a truly inspiring piece called *After a Dream* by Gabriel Fauré, of which more later.

Back to Germany for a rousing romp by Mozart that was simply stunning. The strapline of the Scottish Ensemble is “redefining the string orchestra”. Well, the nine players here certainly did that and provided us with a superb evening, a truly wonderful musical feast.

Most stupendous climax imaginable at Mareel

The Saturday concert at Mareel was called *En Rêve*, which roughly translates as “dreaming”.

We were presented with a delicious menu of European music that proved every bit as succulent as the Wednesday feast.

I should mention here how fantastic it is for Inksters and Shetland Arts to have worked with the superb Scottish Ensemble to create a truly exciting series of concerts over the last year. You have brought much joy and bliss to Shetland folk.

At the core of this evening was a beautiful piece which had also been played at the Wednesday event, *Après un Rêve* (after a dream), a gorgeous piece of music that raises hairs on the back of your neck, mine anyway.

Originally written as a duet for piano and cello by French composer Gabriel Fauré, this arrangement, by Jamie Manson, for six violins, two violas, two cellos and a double-bass, is a thing of absolute exquisiteness, and was played with scintillating precision by these talented musicians.

It was a privilege to hear this piece twice a few days apart. It is a flowing, yet powerful piece, with a passion and a soul that swallows you up in its voluptuousness. Rather than after a dream, the experience of this music takes you into a dream and you do not want for it to be over.

Other highlights were two splendid pieces by Maurice Ravel. The *Pièce en Forme de Habanera* was also arranged by Manson and was also dreamy. It featured a graceful violin solo from leader Morton, often playing with his eyes firmly shut in reverie, and played by the whole ensemble with a tender syncopation and succulent sliding chords, which truly captured the Spanish-tinged undercurrents of the piece.

The evening opened with Ravel's *Petite symphonie à cordes* (a small string symphony) arranged by Rudolph Barshai. This four-part work starts with a pastoral of sweeping melodies and threatening ponderous interludes.

I loved the flowing bowing as if the music were being passed around the places. I adored the gorgeous violin section.

The second part had a dramatic pizzicato opening, then strings that were melodramatic in places and lyrical in places by equal measure, as well as another excellently played pizzicato section.

A searching piece that seems to transport you to another place makes up the mysterious third section.

And the final part is very dramatic and up tempo, with hectic, scintillating playing from all 12 players. I couldn't help thinking, dreaming maybe, of how dear old Ken Russell, bless him, would have visualised this music had he made a biopic of Ravel's life. The whole small symphony end with a tremendous flourish.

Another Faure piece, a lullaby, the *Berceuse* for violin and piano, once again arranged for strings by Manson, is a familiar melody with elegant, flowing playing, sweeps you along and takes you for a gentle ride.

The first part was brought to a joyful climax with Claude Debussy's *La Marche De La Poupée De Chiffon* (from *Children's Corner*). You will know this piece, as it has proved incredibly popular over time.

Back in the period when things weren't quite so PC, it was known as the “Golliwog's Cakewalk” and is indeed inspired by the cakewalk dance, whereby slaves imitated the antics of their master and tried humiliation as revenge. It is an ebullient, stomping piece, full of irreverent rumbustiousness, where Debussy seems to

be sharing the mocking of those slave-owners of yore.

The final part of the evening was given over to the great Russian composer Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. In the autumn of 1880 the composer was working simultaneously on two pieces of music, one for money, the other for pleasure.

The first he disparaged as “loud and noisy”, a commissioned work he was doing just for the money. That was the *1812 Overture* and would become one of his most famous works.

The other came from the depths of his heart and this is the work that the Scottish Ensemble engaged us with. Tchaikovsky described it as him being “violently in love with this work”, which he called his *Serenade for Strings* (Op. 48), and which was a homage to his great idol, Mozart.

Filled with familiar melodies, this is a grand composition. Not taking directly and literally from Mozart, but finding a means of expressing his love for that great composer.

The opening C major descending scale is also reprieved in the closing section. It creates a powerful emotional base on which to build the rest of the work, a device which permeates the other sections throughout and links the work into a whole.

This opening is the playful Tchaikovsky, a huge concoction of music, big of sound and powerful of feeling.

The second section is akin to a Viennese waltz, another familiar tune that you will have heard many times in many guises.

Ascending scales take over the third section, building from the sweetly serenading and lyrical to the great block of sound, with a long section filled with love and passion.

A slow lowly start changes to driving rhythmical melodies for the final section. It was the most “Mozartian” section and was played to absolute perfection by the members of the ensemble.

It propels us towards the most stupendous climax imaginable. We were the lucky Shetland folk to be on the receiving end of such fantastic music so well served up.

An encore was, perhaps, inevitable and the piece played was written by violin player Donald Grant, and had been composed for the Highland wedding of a close friend.

And what an inspired piece it was, interwoven Highland tunes over a gentle undercurrent of strings. It was a piece written from the heart and played from the heart, perfectly fitting to end this superb musical occasion.



Soloist Sioban Teckan performs with the Scottish Ensemble at Sandwick's Carnegie Hall on Wednesday evening.
Photo: Chris Brown

Musical feast shows ultimate levels of technical and dynamic brilliance

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Moving street art project brings



From front: Adam Doughton, Greg McCarron and Alex Garrick-Wright during the visit to Shetland Museum.
Photo: Ben Mullay

BY ADAM GUEST
& KEEGAN MURRAY

A National Theatre of Scotland event saw participants dressed in First World War uniforms appear unexpectedly in locations around Shetland.

The street art performance was organised to mark the centenary of the start of the Battle of the Somme and to remember the 19,240 men who died on the first day of the battle.

Around 1,500 volunteers participated in the event on Friday which saw the soldiers popping up unannounced in locations from Shetland to Penzance.

Participants could be seen in areas including the NorthLink ferry terminal, Anderson High School,

Clickimin Broch, St Ninian's Isle and Mareel.

The work, titled *We're Here Because We're Here* was conceived and created by Turner Prize-winning artist Jeremy Deller in collaboration with Rufus Norris, director of the National Theatre.

Each participant represented an individual soldier who was killed on 1st July 1916. The work is partly inspired by tales of sightings during and after the First World War by people who believed they had seen a dead loved one.

The participants wore historically accurate uniforms, representing 15 of the regiments that suffered losses in the first day of the battle.

The soldiers did not speak, but at points throughout the day would

sing the song *We're Here Because We're Here*, which was sung in the trenches during the war.

If approached they handed out cards with the name and regiment of the soldier they represented, and, where known, the age of the soldier when he died on that bloody day.

Mr Deller said: "I wanted to make a contemporary memorial to mark the centenary of the Battle of the Somme, one that moved around the UK with an unpredictability in which the participants took the work directly to the public."

Mr Norris, director of the National Theatre, said: "This work by Jeremy Deller is a truly national piece of theatre and is a powerful way to remember the men who went off to fight 100 years ago."

Meanwhile, Shetland Islands

Council also marked the centenary by flying the Union Flag at half-mast over the Town Hall.

SIC convener Malcolm Bell said: "Shetland, like communities across Britain, the Commonwealth and Europe, paid a high price in lives in the 'war to end all wars'."

"We may never know how many Shetland families were affected by the traumatic events which played out in those months in 1916, but today we mark the sacrifice of the dozens of local men who died during the battle."

Willem John Clunness, 24, was among those who donned a uniform, with a family connection to the harrowing tales of the trenches.

His great granddad and great grand uncles – the three Smith brothers from Uyeasound – all



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Tenth Screenplay is 'set to be a corker'

The Screenplay film festival celebrates its 10th birthday next month with an impressive lineup of guests, screenings and special events, with organisers saying it's "shaping up to be a corker".

Guest appearances will include a one-off show by Sheffield-based singer-songwriter Richard Hawley, who was invited because of his involvement in writing the soundtrack for the 2014 film *Love is All*, the film's director Kim Longinotto will also be taking part in a Q&A session.

The festival runs between 27th August and 4th September, curated by film critic and festival perennial Mark Kermode, academic Linda Ruth Williams and Kathy Hubbard of Shetland Arts. The full programme will be announced early in August.

At a launch on Tuesday night, Mrs Hubbard said that she could hardly believe the festival had been around for 10 years, but "what fun we have had."

As well as important funders like Screen Scotland and the charitable trust, Mrs Hubbard said the community groups and organisations like Amnesty International, Alzheimer Scotland, Unison and J&G Rays which had been a constant support and were very close to her heart.

"For us that's about the community buying into the festival and feeling that the festival is about their concerns, as well as my concerns, which is seeing loads of films."

Guests were shown an excellent short film of highlights from past festivals pro-

duced by local filmmaker JJ Jamieson, which can be seen at shetlandtimes.co.uk/category/news/arts-entertainment.

For its 10th year, Screenplay will be celebrating the work of the people behind the camera. Confirmed guests include directors Longinotto (*Dreamcatcher*, *Love Is All*), Iain Softley (*K-PAX*), Amma Asante (*Belle*), and producer Sarah Curtis (*Hysteria*). Director of Amnesty International UK Kate Allen will also be present, taking part in a Q&A with Longinotto following a screening of her *Dreamcatcher*.

There is also an extensive education programme for children of all ages which aims to introduce them to the wonders of world cinema.

Shetland Arts creative project manager

Cara McDiarmid has been co-ordinating an education programme for the last three years. She said: "I think that we are trying to bring young people films that they would not generally get to see and show them that it is not just in Hollywood that great films are made."

This year the Home Made section will include some spectacular examples, including *Hirda: A New Opera for Shetland* and *Havera: The Story of an Island*, both by Jamieson. It will also feature the first film by the newly formed Shetland Film Collective, *Ragnar*, some "stunning" work by local film-poet Roseanne Watt and the annual screening of short films by makers of all ages for the Home Made sessions (the deadline for submission of home

made films is 1st August and there will be a Shetland ForWirds award for the most effective use of dialect).

Hawley, once of Pulp and The Longpigs, will be performing a one-off gig. Having recently produced the soundtrack to Longinotto's 2014 film *Love is All* he will take part in a Q&A session with the director before going on to play in the auditorium on 30th August.

Mrs Hubbard said "There is so much happening at Screenplay this year that we have had a real challenge fitting it all in. However, we know our audience to be a determined and dedicated lot, and they will find a way of seeing plenty. And as it's our birthday, there may also be occasional cake."

Accordions and fiddles tune up for 29th festival

The Shetland Accordion and Fiddle Club is now in the advanced stages of planning its 29th festival and the programme and advance booking form will be available from early next month.

The festival will run from Thursday 6th October to Monday 10th October. As usual Islesburgh Community Centre will be the central hub with the festival cub based there. Additionally, concert/dances will be held in Bigton, Bixter, Muckle Roe, Hamnavoe, South Nesting, Aith, Gulberwick, Ollaberry, Tingwall and Uyeasound. The Grand Dance at Clickimin Centre will take place on Saturday 8th when 12 bands will entertain.

Visiting bands include the Neil Hardie Scottish Dance Band, The Full Scottish Dance Band, The Alasdair Macleod Ceilidh Band, The Michael Garvin Scottish Dance Band, The Wullie Scott Scottish Dance Band and the Ian Thomson Scottish Dance Band. Also visiting will be groups from Norway, Ireland and England as well as many from Scotland.

As part of its fundraising the accordion and fiddle club is running a traditional variety concert in the Garrison Theatre on Wednesday 20th July.



By

Orcadian fiddlers head north this autumn

Orkney fiddle group Fara will be returning to Shetland this September to launch their debut album.

The quartet – featuring three fiddles, piano and vocals – will be celebrating the release of their debut album *Cross the Line*.

Fara perform an eclectic mix of songs and tunes – both traditional and self-penned.

The group, which features Jennifer Austin, Kristan Harvey, Jeana Leslie and Catriona Price, were a hit locally when they performed at the 2015 Shetland Folk Festival as a five piece.

Although they will be returning to the isles a member light this is unlikely to dampen the lively musicianship of the up-and-coming Orcadians.

Also on the bill at Mareel will be Danish five-piece

Himmerland, who previously appeared at the Lerwick venue shortly after it opened in 2012.

The band features Eskil Romme on saxophone, Andrzej Krejniuk on bass and Ayi Solomon on percussion.

On vocals and violin the band boasts Danish “Musician/Singer of the Year” Ditte Fromseier, who played at this year’s Shetland Folk Festival as part of the double act Fromseier Hockings.

Fromseier Hockings guitarist Sigurd Hockings will also be performing with Himmerland having recently joined the band.

Local traditional outfit Haltadans will also be in support, fresh off the back of appearances at the Halkær Festival in Denmark.

American songstress cuts right to the heartstrings during fine gig at Mareel

Grammy-nominated songstress Gretchen Peters delivered a tear-jerking, spine-shivering setlist at Mareel on Tuesday evening.

Accompanied by partner and polished pianist Barry Walsh the pair interwove tales of love, last-gasp cigarettes and heartbreak in a profound and moving collection of songs.

At times Peters left her soul bare under the cosy stage lights, with such searing honesty it left a lump in the throat.

Quipping about her most recent LP *Blackbirds*, she said the secret to chart success was being in your 50s and writing about death.

Admittedly the cheery numbers were few and far between, but Peters was all the while engaging – switching from heartfelt accounts of her own experiences to a downtrodden waitress and a brave Matador.

The latter with its accordion interjections and flowing lead lines showed the real strength of Peters' songwriting.

Hanging on every word her thoughtful and clever turn of phrase overlaid simple guitar picking: "His rage is made of many things, faithless women, wedding rings."

Thumping guitar and menacing melodies unfolded in the title track of the album, co-written with Irish songwriter Ben Glover.

Peters had joked that the near-capacity crowd may get a bit of

Willie Nelson thrown into the bargain as she was nursing a throat infection.

A re-jig of the song list was the outcome, keeping Walsh on his toes, although her vocals were still packing warmth and beauty in equal measure.

Five Minutes and *If Heaven* were luscious ballads delivered in a comforting American burr.

Walsh chipped in with his own musical brilliance too, including a stellar self-penned piano instrumental called *Belgian Afternoon*.

Local singer/songwriter Sheila Duncan opened up the night, joined by friends Jenny Keldie, Freda Leask and Ivor "Fred" Polson.

The trio of female vocalists belted out mighty three-part harmonies, anchored by the Duncan's guitar chords and Polson's sturdy acoustic bass.

Duncan's *Don't Forget About Me* saw Keldie take to the fiddle to adding fine flourishes to the memorable melody.

It was a delight to hear such strong singers in their own right join together on stage.

And their final number of Tom Waits' *Come On up To the House* saw them swap verses and bring their talents to the fore.

It was a superb night of no-nonsense music; intimate and entertaining and hitting the heartstrings.



Adam Guest

Gretchen Peters delivered a fine performance at Mareel on Tuesday.

Photo: Chris Brown

Innovative art on show with triple Bonhoga offering

Three new exhibitions at Bonhoga by Shetland-based artists, starting tomorrow, explore borders, hori-

zons and techniques in new and innovative ways. *Elemental* by Peter Davis in the

main gallery is a response to Iceland through the development of new techniques of watercolour.



Rocks on Ice – a watercolour and bodycolour on paper by Peter Davis.

It is described as a stunning new body of work from the popular artist – large and expressive works with a crisp clarity of tone and icy transparency that evokes the landscape which has inspired it.

Using ice, frozen paint, salt, air-brush, scrubbing brushes and other experimental techniques, Davis has stripped back his work to create pure and exquisitely beautiful paintings.

He said: “I am fascinated by the tension between representation and abstraction, and the ambiguity of scale and image within this subject matter.

“The effects of watercolour can mirror the effects found in the environment. Angle of paper, quality and quantity of water and pigment, size of brush, drying time and temperature are all variables that affect the final outcome.”

In stark contrast is a work by Paul Bloomer in the Lower Gallery.

Today is a collage of about 90 small ink drawings, just a proportion of the hundreds Bloomer has been creating as part of an ongoing personal project to produce

two drawings a day. One is based on his immediate surroundings in Shetland and the other sourced from world events via the internet. Much of the work reflects the crisis in Syria.

Meanwhile in the Craft Cabinet, *Borderlines* by textile artist Niela Nell Kalra explores the meaning and use of line.

The ideas for her latest knit-wear collection work come both the Shetland landscape that is her adopted home and her heritage – notably the Partition of India in

1947 resulting in the separation of her Indian father’s family from their own homeland.

Shetland Arts exhibitions manager Jane Matthews said: “All three exhibitions are imbued with a sense of place and time and reflect the rich and diverse energy within Shetland’s contemporary art scene at the moment. We are delighted to be showcasing such local talent.”

Davis will give an informal talk about his work at the gallery on Sunday at 2pm. It is free, open to all and no booking is required.

OUT NEXT WEEK
August Issue includes...
BOGTASTIC

Lucky 13th year of burgeoning fiddle festival which pulls in global audience

White and Henderson take the helm as the latest curators

Workshops, sessions and tours are planned for this year

Fiddle Frenzy gets under way on Sunday – with more than a week-long celebration of isles fiddle music as well as tours, sessions, mandolin and guitar workshops.

Claire White and Eunice Henderson take to the helm this year as curators of the popular festival, now in its 13th year.

Since its inception the event has grown to pull 100 students a year, both in the isles and across the globe.

Renowned fiddle player and teacher Henderson is a pupil of the late Tom Anderson and has been teaching traditional fiddle in schools since the 1990s.

Meanwhile top Shetland fiddler White is an award-winning songwriter and development officer for the BBC.

She has tutored, compered and performed at the festival previously and is excited to pick up the baton this year.

Looking ahead to a bursting programme of events, White said: "It's kind of similar to the work I do professionally at the BBC; it's really about planning and thinking ahead and trying to programme events to maximise visitors' experience and audience experience."

Fiddle tuition of "improver", "intermediate" and "advanced" levels are being held throughout the week, with tutors including Debbie Scott who played with famous guitarist "Peerie" Willie Johnson, teaching at the festival for the first time.

White said there were several new ele-



Fiddle Frenzy curators Claire White (left) and Eunice Henderson.

ments on the programme this year, including a Fiddle Frenzy "physio session" where players can get tips about how they can look after themselves when playing music and "be mindful of the toll music can have on a musician's body".

There will also be mandolin tutoring from Jenny Henry, accordion tips from Ian Lowthian and guitar classes from Brian Nicholson and revered folk guitarist and singer-songwriter Kris Drever.

An "ice-breaker" dance will be held on Sunday and there will also be concerts from a variety of top musicians including Aly Bain and Phil Cunningham, Kevin Henderson and Haltadans.

Local crafts are being celebrated through the Creative Fringe and a tune tour of Lunnasting is taking place on Wednesday where folk can explore the places that have inspired Shetland fiddle tunes.

Fiddle Frenzy, White said, was an opportunity to pull together all the different strands of Shetland culture, with music "a little capsule of culture that is informed by the place and the people that make the music".

She added: "People can learn Shetland tunes via the web and via YouTube ... from classes all over the world. But to actually see the place and the people that inspired the tradition I think it's really special."

Sun shines on fundraising buffet with raffle prizes galore for lucky winners

Heavy rock and Ray-Bans were the order of the day at the Heavy Metal Buffet raffle night.

The fundraiser for The Buffet 2016 pulled in music lovers of all ages, with a speaker outside the Mareel cafe bar for those who made the most of the early evening sunshine.

Lisa Ward & the XXY, The Kev T Experi-

ence and Big Time Quell were among a host of local acts who plugged in and cranked up the amps.

Customised jackets, vintage metal mags and guitars made for a burgeoning table of raffle prizes.

The Buffet is a great celebration of local

music and exciting, upcoming acts on the mainland. Next month's festival on 26th and 27th August promises to be a belter.

I'll be looking to find "my inner shred" as I was lucky enough to win one of the guitars on offer (though some restringing might be involved as a lefty).

