

Soulful cameo by Hawley wins film festival plaudits



Richard Hawley's sold-out concert as part of ScreenPlay on Tuesday night has been hailed a great success. Review and comprehensive coverage of the film festival, see pages 34-35.

Photo: Dave Donaldson

Procession starts festival

The sun shone brightly on Saturday and Lerwick Brass Band played during a procession from the Market Cross in Lerwick to Mareel as the 10th Screenplay Film Festival was officially launched.

Supporters, staff and volunteers were also accompanied by the Lerwick Junior Jarl's Squad and on arrival at Mareel they enjoyed some birthday cake before the first film began.

Murray Shearer, who was born during the first festival, and his family were taking part in the walk and he was presented with a present on behalf of the festival.

Above: Leading the way festival director Kathy Hubbard leads the march on the launch of Screenplay.

Photo: Dave Donaldson

Right: Godzilla made an appearance at the launch of Screenplay.

Photo: Dave Donaldson



Screenplay co-curators Mark Kermode and Linda Williams.

Photo: Dave Donaldson

Kermode celebrates community's support

Screenplay perennials Mark Kermode and Linda Ruth Williams have heralded this year's roster of films and guests as the "best yet".

Film critic Kermode and academic Williams have once again returned to the isles to take on curator duties alongside Kathy Hubbard of Shetland Arts.

For Kermode the continued appeal of Screenplay is that it differs from other big name film festivals "in every possible way".

He said: "The beauty of Screenplay is that it stands or falls based on if the community comes to see films.

"There are people who travel up just for the festival, and every year I think we're surprised by the amount who do, but really it relies on us screening films that the community wants to see."

Co-curator Williams feels that Screenplay is bolstered by its informal approach, which she said raised it above the level of a number of more famous events.

She said: "At Screenplay the films are not in competition, we're not clamouring for new films. Here are films which we want to see, we have a couple of previews, we have Shetland made films and we've also programmed films that we like."

Williams added: "We try to think about what will appeal. There's the 'look north' strand to the festival, which is mindful of Shetland's history and we also have films about other islands such as the film about music in Madagascar."

Picking up on this theme Kermode said that "music always plays a big part. This year we have Richard [Hawley] and Jason [Singh] the beatboxer."

The couple explained that their year round efforts to attract guests to the festival have become increasingly easy as word of the festival spreads through the cinema community.

According to Kermode "Guests are always a big thing, and now, when you look at it, all we need to do is send a letter listing previous guests and people jump at the opportunity.

"And everyone who comes up says without exception 'It's brilliant.'"

And it seems that word about the film festival is spreading – a page lead in *The Sunday Times* focused on the fact that Kermode had "canned Cannes" in favour of Screenplay.

Viking tale tackles difficult topic brilliantly with just a £10 budget

There's not much you can get for £10 these days – but you can make an impressive short film.

It's difficult to believe but that is exactly what the Shetland Film Collective did with its debut movie *Ragnar*.

On the face of it, it is a film about Shetland Vikings and an excuse to bring out a few old Jarl's Squad suits and enjoy a good fight. Admittedly, there is some of that but *Ragnar* has a much deeper message about loss and grief, isolation and depression and above all friendship. And a familiar obsession with Vikings.

At the heart of the tale is "Ragnar", also known as Richard, a Viking-obsessed man struggling to cope with the loss of his father, a former Guizer Jarl. It's a theme that is handled with sensitivity and in the space of 20 minutes we follow Richard's slide from would-be berserker to isolated grieving son and, with the help of his friends, his journey out of the darkness.

Not only that, it's handled with humour and there are plenty of laughs.

A brutal battle with North Roe providing a stunning backdrop is the first scene and you start to think *Ragnar* is going to be a full-on Viking movie – *Braveheart* with Vikings, as one person described it to me. But that idea is soon interrupted by the trill of a mobile



Richard 'Ragnar' Hughson and director Stephen Mercer.

Photo: Dave Donaldson

phone – on the other end is "Ragnar's" mum who insists on calling him Richard.

From there, we're introduced to the various characters and the watch the story develop. Director Stephen Mercer cleverly uses several fight scenes to depict Richard's own battle with mental ill health.

It's one battle that he needs the loyal support of those nearest and dearest to him to survive and the viewer is taken on a journey through his desperation and on the path to recovery.

Mercer and all involved with the film collective deserve great credit for tackling such a tough subject in their debut. With no budget (save

that £10) they have achieved something quite spectacular and well-produced. Let's hope there is more where this came from.

Actress Maelyn Marriner, from Lerwick, and Mercer were interviewed after Saturday's debut screening by Screenplay curator Kathy Hubbard who was thrilled that the collective had established itself.

Marriner is more used to acting on stage and said there was a difference in approach to performing in front of the camera. "There's not so much of that instant gratification," she said, explaining that Saturday was the first time she'd seen the movie.

"I didn't realise it had so much humour in it. I thought it would be darker."

Mercer insists new technology makes the filmmaker's task much more straightforward but praised the support of fellow collective members.

"Filmmaking has got easier and easier with new technology but you still need the help of friends and people to come and help you do it all." That happened thanks to the miracle of social media and the film was shot, in total, over about seven days.

And he said *Ragnar* had shown that anybody could do it. "We [the collective] don't have huge expensive equipment... My camera was bought for about £300 in Cash Converters about three years ago. It's just a normal camera, it's not expensive equipment, it's not fancy equipment. The only trouble with that is audio but we were helped out by Dave Hammond with a fluffy mic."

When it came to the script, there was only one option, he said. "I quite liked the idea of the first scene where the Vikings would fight then actually it would be modern day. [When choosing a theme] I thought what do I have available to me, and everybody in Shetland has Viking costumes so it had to be Vikings!"

Adam Civico

Steel city singer Hawley takes a starring role in festival concert

■ He leaves packed Mareel audience clamouring for more ■ Northern Isles duo Drever and Nicholson start the show



Richard Hawley playing at Mareel on Tuesday night.

Photo: Dave Donaldson

Heartfelt lullabies and a sparkling steel city baritone rose to the rafters when Richard Hawley came to town.

The South Yorkshire songsmith performed a stripped down set with musical compadre Shez Sheridan, complete glorious Gretsch-driven guitar swells and acoustic accompaniments.

For Hawley it was his first time in the isles, though he professed he'd heard a lot about the place from fellow Pulp member and Shetlander Candida Doyle.

Shetland, he said had its own music scene, and heading up north to play was like "trying to sell fridges to eskimos".

Hawley, however received anything but a frosty reception, with whoops and cheers from the crowd and the audience hammering at the seating for an encore.

Kris Drever opened the night with a stellar single mic set-up, mixing driving guitar rhythms and emotive melodies with impressive aplomb.

Freshly returning home from tour Drever performed several tunes from his new album *If Wishes Were Horses*, inviting isles singer-songwriter Arthur Nicholson to join him onstage.

Curry and garlic had been banned, he smiled as the pair gathered round the retro-looking microphone for *If Wishes Were Horses* and *When The Shouting Is Over*.

As a Yorkshire lad, Hawley's turn of phrase and his observations have always pulled me into his music. There's no pretence.

Much like his turned up jeans and well-worn leather jackets, Hawley's voice is rich and comforting and there's a timeless quality to it.

Understated opener *As The Dawn Breaks* saw Hawley deliver the lines: "As the dawn breaks, over roof slates, hope hung on every washing line".

Guitar whizz Sheridan swapped between six and 12 string guitars, with chiming guitar picking and flourishes in *The Sea Calls* and *Tonight the Streets are Ours* - dedicated "to the fuckwits who voted for Brexit".

Hawley then strapped on a rather swanky looking electric, borrowed from Brian Nicholson, before delving into older tunes such *The Nights Are Cold* and *For Your Lover Give Some Time*.

The latter saw Hawley grab the mic with a subtle accompaniment from Sheridan as he crooned "I'll give up this cigarette. Stay at home and watch you mend the tears in your dress. Have your name in a rose tattooed across my chest. And be your lover for all time."

To say there were only two men on stage, the delays and echoes of the strings made for a glorious soundscape, with Hawley cutting loose in *Remorse Code* and really making the guitar sing as he danced up the neck.

Modern technology was thrown into the mix with a mobile phone acting as a drum machine. "Massive" quipped Hawley at the recorded beats.

While a drummer would have been better it didn't detract from the quality of the guitar playing and vocals on show and Hawley's patter, peppered with expletives, from tales of Banksy to his daughter leaving home, was top drawer.

Heart of Oak and *What Love Means* made for a strikingly beautiful encore, written for two important women in his life, folk singer Norma Waterson and his daughter.

Hawley said he hoped to return soon.

I'm sure there will be many queuing up for a new freezer.

Adam Guest

Collaboration is a stress-free experience

BY KEEGAN MURRAY

The collaboration between twice Mercury prize-nominated musician Richard Hawley and BBC Grierson Trustees' Award-winning director Kim Longinotto was celebrated on Tuesday night.

Both were in the isles as standout guests of the 10th Screenplay film festival. Their collaborative work on the film *Love Is All* was celebrated with a screening of the film, a Q&A session and a live performance from Hawley, who produced the film's soundtrack.

The film explores the portrayal of love on screen and is composed of archive footage from the British Film Institute and Yorkshire Film Archive.

Tracing the history of courtship on the silver screen Longinotto's film touches on a number of key moments from prudish beginnings to gay liberation and interracial love.

The soundtrack to the film is provided by Hawley, formerly of Britpop icons Pulp, and features both existing and original tracks.

In Longinotto's eyes Hawley's music provides the perfect complement to a film centred around love.

She describes his croon as "very honest in a way that you makes you feel as if somebody is singing just to you."

For Hawley this honesty is a central part of his art, and he has little time for music that places financial returns over emotional impact.



"With some music you can close your eyes and visualise the notes, other songs I hear and all I can see is pound signs," he said.

He added: "You can't pretend that recording music is natural but there has to be a part of the human being there. It's the transference of person into song."

When composing original tracks for the film Hawley felt that the music and emotion flowed naturally.

"The images that Kim sent to me, it was so obvious what would fit. I could say, 'that's going to work there and that will fit there'. It was Kim who had the nightmare task."

Longinotto humbly denies this, saying that *Love Is All* was a refreshing break from her standard approach to film-making.

The documentary maker, famed for filming in an unobtrusive cinema vérité style while immersing herself in the world of her sub-

jects, found composing a film from archive footage to be a "fluent" and "genuinely pleasurable" experience.

She said: "Usually I come home from after filming and it's been so stressful. This wasn't like that."

Longinotto's most recent effort *Dreamcatcher* also screened at this year's festival, is a film which placed far more strain on the director.

In many of her films, including the acclaimed *Divorce Iranian Style*, Longinotto concentrates on inspirational women pushing against oppression and discrimination.

Dreamcatcher explores these themes, concentrating on Brenda Myers-Powell, a former prostitute and addict who founded The Dreamcatcher Foundation to help prostitutes and at risk women in Chicago.

To make the film Longinotto spent weeks on the streets of Chicago, an experience she described as "very raw and quite freaky."

The director and crew were based in an area of Chicago not far from Barack Obama's home, but spent most of their shooting time in the more destitute areas of the city.

Longinotto describes the obvious divide between rich and poor in the city as distressing and heartbreaking.

She said: "You feel angry because you realise just how segregated it is. Between rich and poor and between black and white. At times it was quite terrifying."

Sunday's screening of *Dreamcatcher* was followed by a Q&A session with Longinotto and Amnesty International's Kate Allen.

Love is All embraces magic of romance

Laddered tights and all-enduring love played out in the mesmerising documentary film *Love Is All* at Mareel on Tuesday night.

Kim Longinotto's masterful composition of archive clips was paired neatly with the rich, cinematic arrangements of revered Sheffield crooner Richard Hawley.

Speedily pulled together in only six weeks for the Sheffield Film Festival, *Love Is All* proved a journey, not simply through time, but the different kinds of love so many of us encounter.

The love of a mother, a passionate embrace, dancing toe to toe on a ballroom floor, or an inexplicable, magical glance, like the world momentarily stopped turning – all rolled out in black and white and momentary bursts of colour.

Love is a constant and it runs through the heart of the footage. Both in different contexts and guises, shining through the grime and dirt of industrial Britain and soaring way beyond racial prejudice and homophobia.

The playful, grainy Victorian footage was brought to life with Hawley's swooning baritone, with the darker themes of abortion, lust and betrayal bringing menacing, distorted guitar tones and Hawley growling the lead lines.

"There's a storm coming," sang Hawley, as it echoed over the death of an enchanting and glamorous dancer, shot by her lover's jealous partner in her dressing room.

Longinotto said Hawley's music brought new meaning to the archive footage, having met in The Greystones pub in Sheffield the pair hit it off from there.

As a fan of Hawley's music, I found the pairing brought a new poignancy to his records.

Lyrical Hawley pulls no emotional punches, there's an ability to see the romance in the every day, a gift to pluck out magic from the seemingly mundane – "On a vandalised bus seat, oh I'd sit with you anywhere" had me smiling at the familiarity of late nights in Barnsley.

Rarely were there words spoken between characters on the screen, though the brief interjections were considered and cutting, like the mum refusing to let her daughter bring her boyfriend into the house because of the colour of his skin, or a young woman being called "a slut" and her hopes crushed by a mysterious mother on the end of a phone line who warned her son was soon to be married to another.

Longinotto said making the film was "like a little voyage of discovery".

So was having the privilege to watch it too.

Adam Guest

Mimicry flatters as Singh goes drifting

Beatboxing, the vocal art form that mimics percussion, and silent cinema might seem like a strange combination but according to beatboxer Jason Singh the two are natural bedfellows.

Singh is in Shetland this week as part of Screenplay and will be performing a live beatboxing score to screenings of John Grierson's 1929 documentary *Drifters*, about North Sea herring trawlermen.

Accompanying him on the *Following the Fleet: Drifters* tour – which will visit a number of historic herring ports after Shetland – is tour producer Shona Thomson, formerly the producer of Scotland's only silent film festival.

For Singh, the idea of having a voice artist bring sound to a silent film is one which allows "a whole

back catalogue to be explored".

"And it hopefully brings in a younger audience who might not watch a silent film and might only be familiar with Charlie Chaplin and Laurel and Hardy."

He said: "From a beatboxing perspective I think it feels fresh. A lot of what I'm trying to do is mimic the sounds and the spaces on screen."

"So I'm trying to mimic the thunder and the engine room. It's a very physical experience as a performer."

For Thomson the tour allows the collaborators "to get different non-mainstream films out there."

And she notes that there is a growing market for film screenings accompanied by a live music performance.

She said: "You can see that there

has been a shift change in programming. That live experience, it's going back to the way it used to be."

Singh's live performances will incorporate ambient sounds, electronic looping and vocal manipulation to enhance the film's atmosphere.

Although some of Singh's performance is planned there will also be a large degree of improvisation at every show.

Speaking about this element of the show Singh said: "To be honest it's shit scary, man. Every venue is different, the acoustics are different and the vibe of the audience is different and that changes the score. It's never the same performance twice."

The collaborators hope to incorporate audience interaction into the

show, with each performance being followed by a Q&A session and an opportunity for the film-goers to discuss old stories and issues around fishing. Both Singh and Thomson hope that this will lead to fruitful and thought-provoking discussions.

Singh said: "For me, the themes and topics of the film are very contemporary. Climate change, technology, depletion of the seas, mass fishing. It never felt like a film from back in the day."

Thomson added: "The film documents this very hard and dramatic life so it's special for us to take it to places where people have connections to the story and to have a blether afterwards with folk who know about the jobs on screen."



Following the Fleet: Drifters tour director Shona Thomson and beatboxer Jason Singh.

Photo: Dave Donaldson

Keegan Murray

ARTS&ENTERTAINMENT



Neil Georgeson

Exile provides inspiration for pianist Neil ahead of homecoming concert

Shetland born pianist and composer Neil Georgeson will return to the isles to launch Shetland Arts' classical season next month.

It will be his first concert locally in over four years and Neil has chosen pieces exploring ideas of home and islands. The music includes Beethoven's *Tempest Sonata*, inspired by the Shakespeare play set on a remote island, and Debussy's *L'isle Joyeuse*, inspired by the Greek island of Cythera.

Other works by Bach, Schubert, Ablinger, Grieg and Peter Maxwell Davies are concerned with homeland, exile and homesickness.

The concert on Thursday 15th September will be the first of three by Neil over the autumn and winter.

In December he will return with soprano Anna Dennis to perform a programme of French, Russian, German and English song, including Strauss's audacious *Ophelialieder*, settings of Ophelia's "mad speeches" from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Sorabji's decadent setting of Verlaine's *Fetes Galantes*, Thomas Adès' jazz-influenced *Life Story* and Mussorgsky's hilarious and charming *Nursery Songs*, as well as works by Stravinsky and Wolf.

This will be followed up by a final performance of *Pictures at an Exhibition* in February. These concerts will be followed by a series of ensemble performances by Hebrides Ensemble, Mr McFall's Chamber and Dunedin Consort.

Since leaving Shetland Neil is based in London where he regularly performs as a solo pianist and chamber musician.

He has performed as a soloist all over the world at concerts and festivals, including the Johnsmas Foy in Shetland, for which he was commissioned as a composer.

Top dancer Webb looks for 10 local performers

Ten enthusiastic performers are needed to take part in a project with leading Scottish choreographer Jack Webb.

He will be returning to the isles to bring his dance show *The End to Mareel* in October and there is an opportunity for local dancers to take part.

The show, which has a thumping soundtrack and a “dead-of-night set”, explores the notion of end points including mortality, excess, connection, disconnection and endurance. Three professional dancers lead the performance – “with mob interjections from a team of local participants”.

Webb is seeking 10 performers, aged 16 and over, who will take part in two evening workshops in the week before the show and then perform alongside the professional cast on Saturday 8th October. Jack is keen to include a wide range of participants, who should have some experience of dance and physical performance

Cleeves coming to launch latest novel

Author Ann Cleeves will visit the isles next month to celebrate the launch of her latest novel *Cold Earth*.

Cleeves, who put the isles on an international stage with her “enigmatic” fictional detective Jimmy Perez, is celebrating after penning her 30th novel.

Accompanying her at Marcell on 1st October will be professor of forensic pathology at Aberdeen University, Dr James Grieve.

Together with industry “fixer” Davie Gardner they will oversee the screening of clips from the *Shetland* series, which uses the Cleeves novels as its inspiration.

Beatboxing at Baltasound

As part of the Screenplay film festival there was something really different to experience at the Baltasound Hall.

It's not every day that a Beatboxer comes to Unst, not only that but to perform a unique live vocal score. This was to accompany the well-known 1929 silent film by Scottish documentary film maker John Grierson called *Drifters*.

Beatboxing is the art of creating music with voice and mouth and a musical style usually associated with hip-hop.

It was pleasing to see the sizeable crowd of all ages that came along not only from Unst but from other North Isles to see and listen to London's Jason Singh, composer and Beatboxer.

He said this was the very first night of their Scottish tour *Following the Fleet* supported by National Lottery through Creative Scotland and also by Film Hub Scotland.

Jason said he had spent four years developing the score for the film and was asked to do so

by the British Film Institute. It was interesting to find out that prior to that he had had very little knowledge about the fishing industry. He said he felt it was fitting with the important historical role that Unst played in the herring fishing industry in that the tour was beginning in the isle.

On to the performance, it really was incredible to think that every single sound that we heard was made with Jason's voice.

The film itself told the story of the North Sea herring fishing. What really struck me was the film depicted how incredibly hard fishermen's lives were and the dangers faced every day. In one scene it showed how they hauled the nets on board over a period of eight hours with their bare hands.

Jason's score really helped bring this to life; it was dramatic, intense and moving. Also mesmerising was the way in which he was constantly on the go the whole performance and moved in time to the score.

After the show there was a short question-and-answer session with Jason. We discovered that as part of the tour he will be delivering workshops to teach Beatboxing skills and techniques to secondary school pupils at each venue.

The next day Jason was heading to Baltasound Junior High School

school pupils at each venue.

The next day Jason was heading to Baltasound Junior High School where I heard later he had gone down an absolute storm with the young folk there; pardon the pun.

Following Jason's performance there was a showing of the local film *Havera* [sic]: *The Story of an Island* by JJ Jamieson. The story, based on a book by Laughton Johnson, included poetry by Christine de Luca and music by Pauline Wiseman.

It combined memories and stories of people who have family connections to the isle. An interesting film, it was also sad and poignant as it told the story of how Havra had become depopulated.

With the time and expense of travelling to Lerwick for gigs and performances it is always really appreciated in the North Isles when events come to us.

It is especially enjoyable when you have the opportunity to experience something different

The Baltasound school pupils with their wat

together with your island community.

Thanks to Screenplay for organising this special performance and for making the long trip up north. It's a night that I won't forget for all the right reasons.

W E F I L M H U

Organisers 'chuffed' with diverse ScreenPlay crowds

With wall to wall screenings and a plethora of special guests this year's Screenplay is sure to go down as a success.

Celebrating its tenth year, the local film festival showcased films, both local and international, as well as hosting a concert, a number of talks and some screenings in local halls away from the festival's Mareel base.

The festival kicked off last Saturday with a procession from the Market Cross to Mareel accompanied by music from the Lerwick Brass Band, the first of Screenplay's 102 events.

Over 4000 people attended the festival during the next eight days with Mareel,

and community halls including Baltasound, playing host to over 85 screenings.

Local films screened at this year's event included Roseanne Watt's *Death and his Mistress*, Stephen Mercer's *Ragnar* and two efforts by JJ Jamieson – *Hirda: A New Opera for Shetland* and *Havera: The Story of an Island*. The latter was the eventual winner of the inaugural dialect film award (see story, below).

A number of Scandinavian films, including *Pathfinder*, *Rams* and *The Last King*, were shown as part of the 'Look North' section of the event, and all proved to be very successful.

Specials guests who traveled to the isles

included the directors Kim Longinotto (*Love Is All, Dreamcatcher*), Iain Softley (*K-PAX*) and Amma Asante (*Belle*).

Music was another important aspect of the festival, with former Pulp guitarist Richard Hawley performing a concert featuring music from his soundtrack to Longinotto's stock footage documentary *Love Is All*.

Beatboxer Jason Singh was another musician on the lineup, and was also one of the more unusual curiosities on the bill. Singh was in the isles as part of a tour performing vocal accompaniments to John Grierson's *Drifters*, a 1929 silent documentary about herring trawlers.

Festival stalwarts film critic Mark Ker-mode and film academic Linda Ruth Williams were again the co-curators of the festival, while Kathy Hubbard of Shetland Arts continued as director.

Speaking after the event Mrs Hubbard said that she was "really chuffed with the way it went."

She said that Shetland Arts had received "terrific feedback" with a particular highlight for Mrs Hubbard coming from a young girl who had watched a subtitled film and left the response: "I loved this film so much that I forgot I was reading."

Mrs Hubbard was also pleased with attendance figures at the 'Look

North' screenings of subtitled Scandinavian films.

She said: "I've been trying to push that idea for a while. It was really about saying you may not have heard of it but give it a go because you might like it."

But the biggest success of Screenplay for Mrs Hubbard was the diverse audience drawn to the festival by a varied bill.

She said: "Obviously I'm happy with the attendance numbers, but I was also very happy with the diversity of the audience."

She added: "It was a real privilege to see people coming through that cinema door who I knew had never been there before."

full of praise for historic look at Havra

Film wins award for best use of dialect

Director Jamieson says it was magical

A film chronicling the history of the uninhabited island of South Havra was the winner of the inaugural dialect film award at this year's Screenplay.

Havera: The Story of an Island, directed by JJ Jamieson and based on Laughton Johnston's book of the same name, received the award for making the most effective use of dialect on screen.

South Havra, located south of Burra Isle, was inhabited from around 1770 until 1923. Though the island is now uninhabited signs of previous life are still, as seen in the film, very much evident.

The film's director Mr Jamieson said that he was "delighted" to pick up the award.

He added that he was pleased with the amount of entries into the dialect competition, which would hopefully help to preserve a tongue which he feels "should be promoted at every opportunity".

Mr Jamieson described himself as a "huge fan of Shetland dialect" ever since he first heard it 35 years ago during a music session in Edinburgh.

He said: "People in Shetland who hear it every day maybe don't realise, but I heard it fresh as an adult and I knew straight away that it was

beautiful. I was immediately taken with it."

Speaking about the process of shooting footage for the film alone, on an uninhabited island, Mr Jamieson described the experience as "one of the most magical days of my life".

He added: "It was sunny, clear and calm and I spent the whole day wandering the island. It was absolutely stunning. All I could think to myself was 'How much would an office worker in London pay for this opportunity?'"

At the premiere of the film a number of the descendants of South Havra's inhabitants came along to see the story of their ancestors on the big screen.

Mr Jamieson speculated that the screening got more South Havra descendants under one roof than ever before, and perhaps ever again.

He added that the response from the descendants had been overwhelmingly positive, with quite a few leaving the film "emotionally affected".

Joann Balfour was one of the descendants who attended the screening. Her mother Jessie is quoted extensively in the book and also features in Mr Jamieson's film.

Though Mrs Balfour's family



Filmmaker JJ Jamieson speaks to the crowd, including a big group of Havra descendants, before Saturday's screening.

Photo: Dale Smith

left South Havra in 1921 she made regular trips to the island as a child and heard many stories about South Havra from her family.

She fondly remembers that her mother remained proud of Havra her whole life, claiming that it was "next ta heaven."

She said: "Schoolbairns used ta come and ask her questions and she would just love to tell dem aa about it."

Mrs Balfour thinks that her last trip to the island was probably around 40 years ago meaning that the film brought back "lovely memories" for her.

She said: "It was a lovely night, it was just perfect. It was so good I felt like going back on Sunday."

Brenda Isbister was another descendant who attended the screening. Though she has never visited herself she had heard many stories about the place from her father, who left South Havra at 19 and was a member of the last family to depart from the island.

She complimented the film for showing how "beautiful" the island was, adding that the film was "very well done".

Mrs Isbister added: "When the

film finished you realised what it must have felt like for them to leave their home."

Mr Johnston, who authored the book which inspired Mr Jamieson said that he was "very pleased" with how the film turned out.

In particular Mr Johnston was impressed with the way in which Mr Jamieson "took the story of Havra and applied it to the whole of Shetland".

Hearing the stories of South Havra spoken on screen in dialect was another highlight for Mr Johnston, who said this gave the film a "very personalised" touch.

In fact he was so full of praise that he remarked to Mr Jamieson on the evening that "the film may one day stand alongside [John Grierson's] *Drifters*" as the definitive work about a time and place now lost.

There were also two runners up for the cash prize, which was sponsored by dialect promotion group Shetland ForWirds.

They were Amy and Alex Garrick-Wright's short silent film *Magnie's Fine Day* and Roseanne Watt's *Alfie*.

Keegan Murray

Local involvement helps make Shannon's latest visit even better than the last one

Looking back at what I wrote the last time that Sharon Shannon was here I see that I was fulsome in my praise (*The Shetland Times* 3rd October 2014).

Forget that, this time was far better.

This was wall to wall music, with a few songs thrown in, of the highest quality. Music from Ireland, of course, also from Scotland and Canada.

There were also tunes with a continental flavour and one classical piece. Nonetheless, a very strong traditional thread ran throughout the entire show.

The auditorium of Mareel was full, any Shannon concert is almost certain to be a sell-out. This audience was buzzing with delight and excitement.

To sit still through the music was all but impossible. As always Shannon's main instrument of choice is the two row press and draw accordion. There might be many ways to describe her mastery but it is enough to say that very few can play it better.

She plays the tin whistle with equal verve and we know from the past that she is also a great fiddler. It is astonishing to see and hear so much ability and talent from one so small and dainty. Add in her natural charm and charisma and you have a mighty star.

It is no uncommon thing to see

known Scottish tune, *The Dark Island*.

Fiddle player Sean Regan, like the others, had more hair in his bow, so to speak, than simply fiddling. He had amazing mouth music.

Standing close to the mike he made sounds that defy description but it added colour and variety that the audience loved. He also provided backing vocals.

But take nothing away from his fiddle playing. He played, on his own, two reels from the west of Ireland, one from the pen of that great Leitrim musician Charlie Lennon. For me this was one of a fair few highlights.

How does anyone describe Alan Conner? Shannon herself described him as the best musician she had ever played with.

Talk about multitasking, he is the only person I have seen playing the piano, guitar and percussion with his foot all at the same time. He is also acclaimed as a singer/songwriter. His rendition of *The Galway Girl* was memorable.

To say that his style is energetic is very much an understatement, he takes a heavy toll on any keyboard that he encounters. At times it seemed that it would get a life of its own and walk away from this brilliant tormentor.

Some Olympic medals are won with lesser effort. Looking around I could see people staring and

mighty star.

It is no uncommon thing to see a performer bringing on stage some refreshment – but this is the first time that I have seen anyone with pint glasses of tea, it's her tippie.

Each member of the band was highlighted when they played solo with backing from the others.

For any musician it has to be a great honour to be a member of the Shannon band. With her on stage were three men of exceptional quality.

Jim Murray was the guitar player and he, in his solo spot, played a slow air that he learned on Cape Clear and the well

with lesser effort. Looking around I could see people staring and gasping.

Typically Shannon would lead her band and start a set of reels at an easy pace before cranking up the tempo and volume and it all seemed so effortless. It was a very different programme from last time she performed in Shetland but she did include all the signature tunes that her audiences love and want to hear again and again.

She is a Phil Cunningham fan and some of his tunes were well to the fore. Those are recent tunes but there was also a tune that I know from an old recording of native Canadian

Anderson, Ewen Thomson and Shannon and keyboard player Alan Connor.

Photo: Dale Smith

Right: Sharon Shannon in typically charismatic form in Mareel.

Photo: Dale Smith

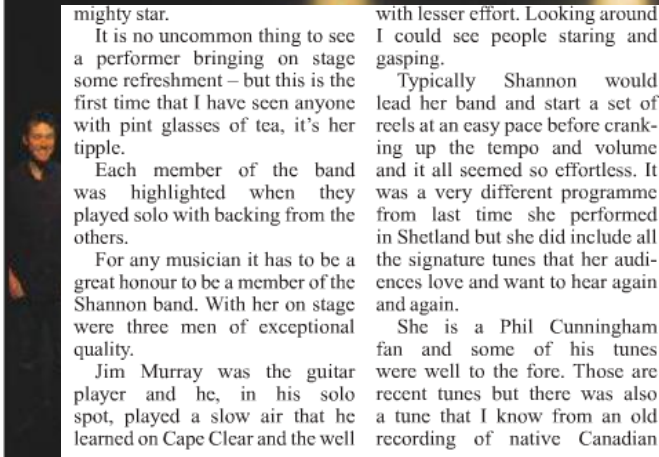
fiddler Lee Cremo. Wherever it comes from and whenever it was composed this music is timeless and precious.

During her two day visit Shannon and her band have been recording in Mareel. Some Shetland fiddler players have been part of this and they joined the band on stage at the end of each half. The locals were Maurice Henderson, Lois Nicol, Lyn Anderson Stewart Grains, Lynda Anderson and Ewen Thomson.

Needless to say they were well able to slot into the pace and rhythm of the show and the audience would have liked to hear more of this big overall sound.

We will all look forward to the CD whenever it is launched. This was a wonderful show and Shannon will be welcome whenever she returns to delight Shetland audiences.

Lawrence Tulloch



Above: Taking a bow are Sharon Shannon and her band and the Shetland fiddlers who joined her on stage. From left: Guitarist Jim Murray, local fiddlers Maurice Henderson, Lois Nicol, Lyn Anderson Stewart Grains, band member Sean Reagan, fiddlers Lynda Anderson, Ewen Thomson and Shannon and keyboard player Alan Connor.

Photo: Dale Smith



Georgeson's homecoming takes crowd on a mesmerising musical exploration

Pianist Neil Georgeson was back in town last week after four years away and brought us an eclectic mix of piano works. His programming is imaginative and wide-ranging peppered with classics and contemporary music.

Island/Home was his theme and he explained, both in the informative programme and on stage, how this had directed his choices. He talked about the composers who wrote best about their home when being far away from it and about the 19th century idea of the wanderer, so popular in Romantic art and poetry.

Georgeson began his journey with Beethoven's *Sonata in D minor* Op.31 No.2 often referred to as *The Tempest*, though not by the composer. It seems that an association with Shakespeare's play of the same name was attached to the work later perhaps for its tempestuous and dramatic mood but much of Beethoven's music from this time was similarly highly charged as he was coming to terms with his increasing deafness.

Georgeson handled perfectly the sudden changes in mood from slow introverted recitative-like passages to episodes of tumult. He emphasised all the uncertainty that the music abounds in, particularly harmonically, and in the unpredictable tempos.

He balanced well the polar opposites of stillness and action and demonstrated how this composer kept pushing the boundaries, struggling to contain the piano compass from high to labyrinthine depths. And the music just petered out at the end with no flamboyant coda for the pianist.

Not specifically African apart from the bluesy relaxed mood but it reminded me of the static quality found in the music of Satie. A great find.

Five of Grieg's *Lyric Pieces* took us to Norway and the simple folk-like melodies mixed with that composer's Romantic idiom. These miniatures demonstrated how a mood could be conjured up in just a few bars and without over-peddalling or over-egging the music. *Butterfly* was perhaps the most pictorial with its keyboard fluttering and subtle harmonic aura.

Listening to Georgeson play these short pieces made me perhaps understand why Bartok had such an admiration for Grieg. While not as uncompromising as Bartok they do present strident harmonies and rhythmic imagination.

J S Bach isn't necessarily the first composer you'd associate with narrative "programme" music, presenting a story, but in his *Capriccio BWV 992* that's what we are given in the form of a musical goodbye to his brother going off to war.

Each of the short sections gave us a different characterisation of the narrative using harmony ... minor key equals sadness etc.

It is a totally engrossing piece of music to which Neil brought plenty

Both challenging for performer and audience alike *Voices and Piano* uses actual recordings of iconic voices and overlays these with complex piano music based upon the same vocal recording. In the sections that Georgeson played we had voice recordings of Orson Welles, Bertolt Brecht and 1960's political activist Angela Davis. The piano smudges the voices making it difficult for the ear to choose what to listen to, but that's intentional and its role is to analyse the voice, almost imitating its inflections and its silences.

It requires concentration and precision from the pianist. Georgeson clearly knew these pieces inside out and the result was impressive. But by far the most successful was Angela Davis's singsong voice ably matched by the piano. Brilliant!

I loved the way this contemporary piece was framed by two Schubert songs in transcriptions by Liszt. It was an interesting parallel to the Ablinger with Schubert's vocal line here being replaced and ornamented by the piano notes; imaginative programming of two Austrian composers, and what a cold atmosphere here was created in *Der Leiermann (The Organ-grinder)* from *Winterreise*.

The composer, and long time resident of Orkney, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies died earlier this year and Georgeson marked this with a performance of Davies' *Farewell to Stromness*. This folk-inflected piece was written as an interlude to his 1980's *Yellow Cake Revue*, a musical protest at proposed uranium mining near Stromness.

It was an understated interpretation perhaps needing more richness but clearly full of respect for this



Neil Georgeson blended classic and contemporary music with some style at Mareel on Thursday.

Photo: Dave Donaldson

slow introverted recitative-like passages to episodes of tumult

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of gentle contrast in his playing. As ever with Bach he concludes with a fugue, this one based on a posthorn call and rounding off one of the composers more unusual keyboard works.

Georgeson is a keen advocate of new music and as well as being a member of Piano Circus, a renowned group which specialises in contemporary music, he has also worked with a number of other new music groups as well as forming his own, the Ossian Ensemble. Last week he brought to Shetland a piece by the contemporary Austrian composer Peter Ablinger.

but clearly full of respect for this great composer's work. It's become a classic and played frequently today perhaps overshadowing Davies' more gritty, and characteristic music which demands a hearing also.

Debussy rounded off Georgeson's programme in style with a rousing performance of *L'isle joyeuse* and a scene of earthly paradise inspired by the artist Watteau. It's a vision interpreted in plenty of flowing watery arpeggios and exotic harmonies with no rest for the hands.

A little slower tempo than I'd expect but full of excitement in the fanfares ringing out in the affirmative conclusion and with the final flourish Georgeson was on his feet and off the stage. Characteristically, he didn't linger but did return to polish off Chopin's *Fantasia-Improvisation* in C sharp minor Op.66 with fire and crackle leaving us all wanting even more.

And he'll be back for more two recitals this season. Don't miss him!

Peter Davis

“

Georgeson handled perfectly the sudden changes in mood from

Halloween EP launch lined up for rockers

Local rock four-piece Forgotten Sons are gearing up to launch their debut EP with a Halloween concert at Mareel.

The group is composed of Sandy Middleton on vocals and guitar, Danny Carter on bass, John Gair on drums and former The Last member Robert 'Birdy' Burgess on lead vocals.

After forming in 2015 the group has been working on writing and recording debut material, which got its first live outing at the Pier Head in Voc at the weekend.

The band were originally meant to make their debut appearance at ShetFest, which was organised by some members of the band, but instead opted for a later date to allow for the EP to be released ahead of any shows.

Delorean – a band fronted by Ten Tonne Dozer's Dave Kok who perform comical heavy metal covers of classic pop songs – also performed as part of the band's warm-up show.

The Forgotten Sons combine rock harmonies with punk energy and raspy vocals with soaring choruses, signalling themselves as another sterling addition to an already thriving local rock, punk and metal scene.

The title track and lead single from the EP – titled *Just So You Know* – starts with a lone guitar reminiscent of The Gaslight Anthem's terrific Springsteen meets The Clash track *The '59*

and metal scene.

The title track and lead single from the EP – titled *Just So You Know* – starts with a lone guitar reminiscent of The Gaslight Anthem's terrific Springsteen meets The Clash track *The '59 Sound*.

Over the course of its three-minute run time the track builds up steam, eventually culminating with a frenzied crescendo of frantic strumming and the duelling vocals of Burgess and Middleton.

Burgess's gravelly vocals lead the line on the two tracks which follow, backed ably by Middleton's catchy guitar hooks and the driving rhythm section of Carter and Gair.

Hate the Way You Left Me is a particular highlight on the four track offering, coupling stuttering guitar riffs with impassioned vocals which build to a barked refrain.

On the final track, *Blackened Heart*, guitarist Middleton tries his hand at lead vocals. His exposed voice begins and ends the song, lending it an emotional clout.

If this short release is taken as an opportunity for Forgotten Sons to find their feet as artistes then *Just So You Know* suggests a bright future for the band.



Hjaltibonhoga welcome Gunn to Mareel

■ Isles' fiddlers 'make us proud' ■ Couper's guitar is a highlight

It is said that great oaks from little acorns grow. This is surely true of Shetland fiddle group Hjaltibonhoga.

Margaret Robertson was asked to assemble a group of 40 Shetland fiddlers to be part of the Edinburgh Military Tattoo for 2014. They were required to play every night for four weeks.

This was clearly a big ask but Margaret saw it as a "one off" – a wonderful opportunity to showcase Shetland fiddlers and Shetland music in general.

This is the third year of being in Edinburgh performing for a crowd of 8,000 people each night and the commitment is to appear at the tattoo for the next 10 years. Between times a smaller group has been to Australia and New Zealand. Brigadier David Allfrey, the man in charge of the tattoo, is suggesting that the size of the group could be increased to up to a hundred musicians.

Margaret supported by house parents, members of the public and the fiddlers themselves have worked incredibly hard making costumes and raising money to meet expenses.

The fiddlers, in addition to all that, are required to learn new, difficult, music playing on different keys to blend with pipers.

The Tattoo, in common with Up-Helly-A', is never postponed for bad weather so it is necessary to have "expendable" instruments

available. A soaking from heavy rain could easily ruin an expensive fiddle.

The concert in Mareel on Saturday night, part of the "Hairst Helly", was a game of two halves. The first featured Hjaltibonhoga and the second featured the great Caithness fiddler Gordon Gunn.

On the night the fiddlers were 30 strong out of a total of 190 on the e-mailing list. They opened with a set of American reels learned from the New England fiddler Rodney Miller. A slow air followed, one written by a Fiddle Frenzy attendee, entitled *Young Willie Hunter*.

Hjaltibonhoga might not want to be described as a fiddle orchestra but they are really tight together and the bowing is beautifully synchronised. This speaks volumes for the hours of playing together not only in Edinburgh but practising all year round. It is truly a tidy, pleasing sound.

The music they play comes from all over the world – from America, Ireland, Australia, Scotland as well as the native Shetland tunes. Some of it is traditional and some contemporary showing that nothing is static, the music progresses and evolves.

And so it is with the musicians, as some older ones go from the top there are many young ones ready to step in. One such lass is Yelena Anderson.

She will travel with the fiddlers to Edinburgh next year but in the meantime she does not know all the tunes so, on the night, she was on and off stage doing what she could to be part of this super group.

The theme for the 2016 Tattoo was "Tunes of Glory". This gave Margaret food for thought but it did not take her too long to decide that the most glorious thing she knew was her native Shetland and the plentiful music that she loves so much.

She has written many tunes and one piece is a slow air donated to the Children in Need Appeal entitled *Rosie Ann*.

Hjaltibonhoga never sound better than when they play traditional Shetland reels. A highlight of their performance was their rendering of the three reels that are known collectively as the Greenland tunes. Second only to this is the popular Irish reels.

They finished with three of their favourites, *The Silver Spire*, *Cooley's*, and *Toss the Feathers*. All are traditional but the middle one is associated with the great



Caithness fiddler Gordon Gunn was as impressive as ever when performing at Mareel at the weekend.

Photo: Dave Donaldson

accordion player of yesteryear, Joe Cooley.

When Gunn took to the stage

he was ably supported by Margaret Robertson on piano and Ryan Couper on guitar. Gunn has long

been acclaimed as a great musician and like all great fiddlers his bowing is outstanding. He showed a bewildering array of shivers and slurs in a wide mixture of material.

He played many of his own tunes and tunes from his native Caithness by composers such as the legendary Addie Harper who was leader of the Wick Scottish Dance Band. He also has a liking for the music of French Canada.

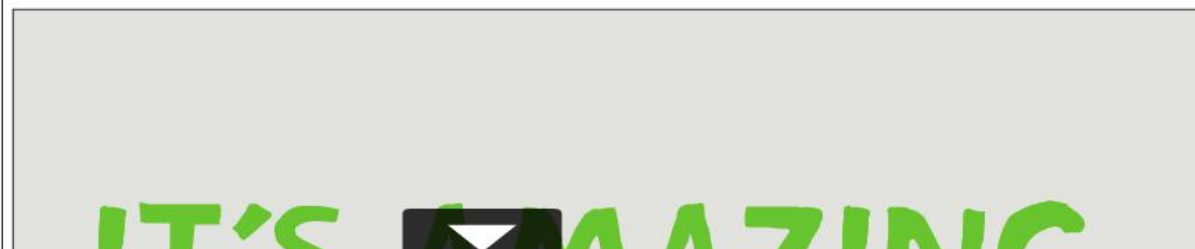
Gunn had spent his day conducting a workshop for around 20 Hjaltibonhoga fiddlers and they appeared on stage to play the fruits of the day's doings.

No disrespect to Mr Gunn but the highlight of the second half came when Couper played a guitar solo. He played the tune that he composed for his baby daughter, Jessi.

She is now aged one and she was present on the night. Whither she heard this lovely tune, named for her, is a moot point because she only wakened up when the music stopped!

All in all it was a super show and, Hjaltibonhoga, more power to you, you make us all proud.

Lawrence Tulloch



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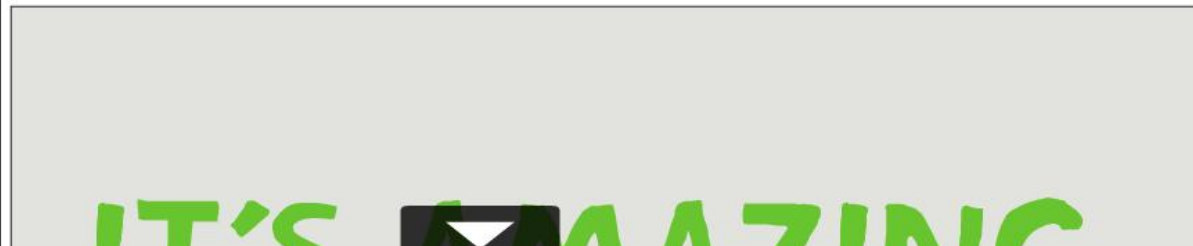
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All in all it was a super show and, Hjaltibonhoga, more power to you, you make us all proud.

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Learn about higher education options at open day



Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and UCAS are having a local Higher Education Exhibition in Lerwick where young people can find out more about careers, college and university.

The event, in Mareel on Tuesday brings together representatives from 20 Higher and Further Education institutions in Scotland and elsewhere. These representatives will be on hand to offer advice as well as information on a variety of courses and learning pathways.

SDS personal adviser Rebecca Laidlaw said: "This year's exhibition gives young people, their parents and carers the opportunity to find the information about their options in one place at one time. It also gives them access to experts which is also very valuable. Choosing which course, university or career is

one of the biggest decisions people make, so it is vital they have all the information to ensure that decision is well-informed."

Rebecca added: "My World of Work Live will be at the exhibition and there will be sessions in the Green Room on choosing a course at university, creating a personal statement, one for teachers on writing academic references and another which is a 'survival guide' for parents.

"While the exhibition is aimed primarily at fifth and sixth-year pupils, anyone interested in finding out about Higher Education opportunities, including parents, carers and college students are very welcome to come along."

Don't forget to register at www.ucas.com/events/exhibition and remember to print your

barcode or bring it on your phone. It's good to plan who you want to speak to and which seminars you want to attend. You can also find the ten questions to ask about Higher Education courses at www.myworldofwork.co.uk/learn-and-train/events-and-fairs which is really useful."

Careers advisers from SDS will be at the free event to give impartial, one-to-one advice on options and opportunities including employment, training, apprenticeships and volunteering.

The Exhibition will run from 6pm until 9pm. #HigherEd16

To find out more visit www.myworldofwork.co.uk, the SDS centre at Charlotte House, Commercial Road or contact rebecca.laidlaw@sds.co.uk.

#HigherEd16

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Could you bare to pose nude?

Life drawing sessions are returning this winter – and the organisers are looking for a model.

The sessions have been running successfully at Mareel for the past two years, with regular attendees of all abilities enjoying the chance to practise drawing a nude model. The classes have a very informal set-up, with artists encouraged to bring their own materials and the poses led by the model.

Previous life models have included Floortje Robertson, who said: “Although I found it daunting at first, I soon relaxed and started to enjoy the process. This was really because of the artists who came along each week – it’s a really relaxed atmosphere and, not being someone who draws, I found it really interesting to see their pictures develop.”

The sessions take place in the green room at Mareel.

Meanwhile, Shetland Arts will again run Stage 1 drama classes for seven to 11-year-olds on Saturday mornings from 29th October to 3rd December.

The workshops are led by John Haswell and introduce children to a range of drama skills, developing confidence, encouraging creativity and having lots of fun. They culminate in a performance for friends and family.

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Dolly and the Cricketers slots

Two tribute acts have been lined up to play concerts in the run-up to Christmas.

The Dolly Parton Story will appear at the end of November while Buddy Holly and the Cricketers will play in December, on the 26 and 27 November, followed by Buddy Holly & The Cricketers on Monday 12 December.

The former act is a new one featuring Andrea Pattison and the Partoners, a four-piece band, paying homage to one of the greatest icons of popular music. They will be joined by Peter White as Kenny Rogers.

next month in *Magic Fire* tour

- Band hopes to soak up plenty of Shetland culture
- The birds have been making a splash in folk circles

BY KEEGAN MURRAY

Pennsylvanian Americana trio The Stray Birds are packing their “warm clothes” as they prepare to take their *Magic Fire* tour to Shetland.

Following positive reviews at last year’s Cambridge Folk Festival the group are set to return to the UK next month to tour their fourth album.

On their latest record the band have worked with the three time Grammy Award winning producer Larry Campbell, famed for his work with artistes such as Bob Dylan and Paul Simon.

The ability to attract a name as big as Campbell is evidence of the big waves which The Stray Birds have been making in folk music circles.

Their lush three-part vocal harmonies, instrumental virtuosity and accomplished songwriting abilities are sure to go down well with fans of roots music in Shetland.

Banjo and bass player for the group Charlie Muench, speaking ahead of the UK tour, said that the band – which also features Maya de Vitry on fiddle, guitar and banjo and Oliver Craven on fiddle, guitar, and mandolin – were “really excited” for what will be “the most northern show we’ve ever played.”

The American said that the band didn’t “know too much about the islands other than your famous ponies and strong musical history”.

“

We make sure that we remember why we sing and play for the people. If the music is obstructed by anything, physically or mentally things can go flat.

Charlie Muench

”

However, Muench added that one of their favourite activities when visiting new places was to “catch a quick history lesson or story”.

Their only concern is that they won’t have enough time to soak up the Shetland culture due to their packed tour schedule but according to Muench the band are already thinking to “come back before too long”.

Muench spoke of the growing interest in roots genres in Shetland and said that he hoped the band’s music steeped in “the traditions of folk, blues, and country” would



The Stray Birds: Charlie Muench, Maya de Vitry and Oliver Craven are looking forward to their “most northern” gig.

Photo: Emilia Paré

allow them to “connect ourselves to the audience.”

He said: “The Stray Birds try to make sure that our heads are all in it for the music before we step on to the stage each night. We make sure that we remember why we sing and play for the people. If the music is obstructed by anything, physically or mentally things can go flat.”

Muench added that the group were keen on being themselves between songs, and trying to connect with the audience on a personal level by “trying to make people laugh with a story or tell people what our day-to-day is like.”

“Especially in the UK we love to chat with fans before or after the show to try and get a feel for what makes them tick.”

On *Magic Fire* the band have tried to

evolve their sound. The group have recently added a drummer meaning that they will be visiting the isles as a four piece, with Shane Leonard taking up the position of an as yet unofficial member.

Part of their evolution is down to their work with Campbell.

Speaking about the process of recording their fourth album Muench said: “Working with Larry was an absolute treat. It was surreal leading up to it really. We had a few group phone calls with him before the session just to make sure that we were more or less on the same creative wavelength.”

“He told us that we could try anything we wanted with this record and that nothing was out of the picture. His refrain of ‘don’t take it out until you put it in’ prob-

ably started there and didn’t stop until the record was mixed.

“Larry offered up his services as an instrumentalist as well which was a dream come true for us.”

He added: “The whole way through recording we felt like we could trust our instincts and Larry would stretch those instincts out.”

“All the way through the recording we got the sense that although we were trying all kinds of new sounds in the studio Larry’s vision at 10,000 feet would keep it tight and he absolutely did.”

• The Stray Birds are performing at Marcel on Friday, 14th October. Support will be provided by Glasgow-based roots act Daniel Meade and the Flying Mules.