

Feedback from Sister City Partners

Arts Council of Northern Ireland

“The Arts Council is keen to raise the profile of Northern Ireland arts and artists on the international stage. The partnership with Belfast City Council and the Nashville Steering Group has proved to be one effective means of achieving this objective for the benefit of our thriving music sector.”

Queen’s University

“Queen’s University welcomes the opportunity to develop its strong ties with Vanderbilt University at Nashville through its growing series of academic partnerships that bring together students and Faculty members across all of the academic disciplines represented in both educational institutions. Our association with the Sisters Cities committees offers an opportunity to expand and diversify such educational opportunities in a manner that can only be of benefit to Belfast as well as Queen’s. We welcome the opportunity to work together in creating new international synergies in research and education for the benefit of our local communities.”

Tourism Ireland

“Tourism Ireland is committed to working in partnership with organisations and agencies to raise the number of tourists coming from the US to Northern Ireland. The association of Belfast with Nashville at the level of the mayor’s office and the Sister Cities committees has led to increased attention to Belfast by respected American musicians and broadcasters. These underpin our efforts to promote Belfast and Northern Ireland as a place with a great music tradition and vibrant live entertainment scene that is worth travelling the Atlantic to experience.”

U.S. Consulate

“The United States Consulate is proud to acknowledge and support the unique links established between Belfast and Nashville. The historic connections between these proud Cities epitomize the deep genealogical and cultural bonds that exist between Northern Ireland and the United States. Those behind the Sister City partnership should be applauded for their achievements in building creative, mutually beneficial, and exciting partnerships in areas like music, education, and tourism. Relationships like these improve the quality of life of residents, they foster civic and community pride, and they help improve their respective economies. We wish those involved in the Belfast-Nashville initiative every success in their ongoing efforts”.

Northern Ireland Tourist Board

“A vibrant music scene is a real bonus for any tourist destination and Belfast is one of the most exciting and dynamic in the world today. Our music and diverse range of festivals offer the visitor great reasons to visit Northern Ireland. Our challenge is to make sure that our music and festivals are presented in a way that enables the visitor to experience it.”

Feedback from Musicians

Eilidh Patterson:

I feel so privileged to have been included in this trip to Nashville. It has given me such encouragement to know that Belfast City Council, the Arts Council of NI, the Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival are actively supporting me, a local musician, through trips such as these. I was able to invite some key players in the Nashville music industry to the gigs in Nashville - from whom I have received positive feedback. To be given a platform such as this under the banner of the Belfast Nashville connection has helped enormously and is continuing to help me progress my career as a songwriter and performer, on both sides of the Atlantic.

This year, I connected with Gary Nicholson (songwriter), Beth Nielsen Chapman (songwriter), Thomm Jutz (writer / producer), and with the Centricity record label. I am also continuing to connect with a host of Nashville songwriters for co-write sessions and advice on the best way forward in the music industry. A song I co-wrote with Lisa Aschmann in Nashville last April is the first track on my debut album, scheduled for release in N.Ireland in Autumn 2009. Producers such as Bil Vorndick and Gary Paczosa have shown an interest in my music and just yesterday I recorded background vocals for Beth N Chapman's new album. These are just some of the many connections I have through the visit Nashville and I will continue to build on these over the next few years.

I think the strong sense of community, in particular between Belfast and Nashville musicians, is what is being established through these trips and it is this which will ensure that the Belfast Nashville connection strengthens in the coming years.

Anthony Toner:

The trip to Nashville proved to be an invaluable experience for me, in many respects. Of course it was dazzling to be part of such a high profile showcase at the Belcourt in Nashville, there was some serious work done – there were a large number of opportunities to make industry connections and find out how the business works, through having the chance to observe it at close quarters. Every songwriter on this trip is hoping for the same thing - we want to do business, we want to work and we want to develop as writers and artists with others who are on the same journey.

- I had a meeting and lunch with one of Nashville's top songwriters (with the potential to generate further contacts in publishing in the city, and the chance of co-writes on a return trip). The contact has promised to spread the word among some of his contacts in the industry. It's impossible to overstate the importance of the face to face element of such meetings.

- I handed out many promotional EPs to figures who attended the concert at the Belcourt Theatre in Nashville. Strengthening of ties with some of the Nashville-based songwriters who attended the show, with the possibility of creative collaboration, co-writes and referrals to other people in the industry. Again, to be face to face with the artists is invaluable.

- Getting to know some of the informal 'rules' which govern how the industry operates in Nashville, and how best to approach a future visit and develop relationships.

- Everyone that we met seemed inspired by what was coming out of Belfast, and keen to visit either as a performing artist or a visitor.

- Many thanks to all the staff and councillors from Belfast City Council who were so supportive and encouraging throughout the trip. I think we all did each other proud, and it was a pleasure to be part of something so positive.

Ben Glover:

The St Patrick's Day concert gave me the opportunity to invite music industry professionals whom I had been in contact with to watch me perform and showcase my songs. Being involved in that show has certainly raised my profile in Nashville and given a great deal of weight and credibility to my CV. The show also introduced me to a number of Nashville songwriters who I hadn't met before and, since March, I have been writing and working with them. By being based in Nashville, I feel I was able to really capitalise on the benefits of the Council's initiative, and so I was able to follow up on the opportunities that resulted from being part of the event...From a civic point of view and from the feedback that I have received here in Nashville I believe that the event helped to promote Belfast as a very proactive and creative city. I would like to thank Belfast City Council and all the sponsors for providing excellent support and the opportunity to be part of this event.

Ken Haddock:

I was very excited and thrilled to be asked to take part in the Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival, both here in Belfast and in Nashville back in March past. Specifically, the fact that I would be sharing the stage with Nancy Griffith was really something very special for me as a singer-songwriter. This trip had me salivating at the prospect of putting my camera to work on the streets of Nashville during the day, my guitar to work on the stages of Nashville in the evenings.

Panarts, Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival:

With every visit to Nashville we build on connections and the goodwill we have maintained over six years. It was important to find songwriters who had written quality songs and could perform alongside world-class Nashville hit writers Guy Clark, Nanci Griffith, Gary Nicholson and Lee Roy Parnell. The Belfast Nashville Songwriters Celebration was an excellent event and raised the profile of each songwriter from Belfast. It is very rare to have Guy Clark on stage with Nanci Griffith at any event and both performed as a goodwill gesture to Panarts, waiving their fee. In a series of business meetings, we secured our leading song writing teacher for the 6th Song Writing Convention 2010 (Jason Blume has songs recorded on over 50 million CD's), met with leading record companies, confirmed radio coverage in Boston and secured sponsorship support from leading songwriter organisations. Amongst our many meetings, Rounder Records gave us advice and having heard about our annual songwriters festival in Belfast, Chad Paul recommended us to WGBH Radio in Boston. We met with ASCAP's Ralph Murphy and hit-writer Pat Alger to encourage them to continue their support. Our meetings with Burt Stein and Nanci Griffith were important and we have a commitment from Gold Mountain to work in partnership with us once again in February 2010. We collected 1000 promotional CD's and distributed most at the showcase events. Thank you to Belfast City Council and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland for making the visit to Nashville possible.

Mark Selby:

Nashville Singer Songwriter (written more than 10 top-40 singles and 4 No1 hits including Grammy Awarding Winning Dixie Chicks).

I fell in love with Belfast – the people are so wonderful and there is a wealth of musical heritage. This poetic history shines through in your current talented musicians - I'll always come back.

Nanci Griffith:

The songwriters festival in Belfast has become my annual vacation. It's an extraordinary event.

Stuart Fleming Performing Rights Society:

I'm so pleased Belfast Nashville has grown to be such a huge part of the Northern Ireland Music Calendar and I am even more delighted we're involved.

Dr Ian Brick:

The Belfast Nashville relationship has grown from almost nothing to now everyone wants to be part of it and the talent is just incredible. The centre of our relationship is music and the music industry – Nashville is music city USA and I see Belfast as being a music city. We have so much talent that it can only develop. I want to see many more tourists going from Nashville to Belfast as our cities are almost identical, almost same population, same friendliness and we have so much in common that we can share together.

MUSICIANS

NASHVILLE ARTISTS

Guy Clark

Song writing legend and folk icon Guy Clark was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2004. In 2005 he was honoured with the Americana Music Association's Lifetime Achievement Award for Song writing. His latest CD Workbench Songs (2006), released to universal critical acclaim was nominated for the 2007 Grammy award as Best Contemporary Folk/Americana Album.

Gary Nicholson

Multi-platinum songwriter, accomplished musician and Grammy Award winning producer; Gary Nicholson has had more than 350 of his songs recorded, has won 26 ASCAP song writing awards and is responsible for more than a dozen major hits.

Nanci Griffith

One of the most admired and acclaimed of singer songwriters with her beautiful voice, brilliant song writing and uncommon emotional commitment.

Grammy award winning artist Nanci Griffith's musical journey has taken her from folk and country roots, to her own brand of "folkabilly"; from Austin's Hole In The Wall bar to New York's Carnegie Hall, Nashville's Grand Ole Opry and London's Royal Albert Hall.

Lee Roy Parnell

A successful songwriter and performer, Lee Roy Parnell is a 3-time Country Music Association (CMA) award winner with over 145 songs published including 4 #1s and 11 top 10 hits. Over the years he has garnered the respect of fans and industry veterans alike with his soulful vocals and award-winning slide guitar playing.

BELFAST ARTISTS

BAP KENNEDY

Bap Kennedy is a singer/songwriter from [Belfast](#), Bap was in a successful band,

[Energy Orchard](#), for many years and has written and performed songs with artists such as [Steve Earle](#) and [Van Morrison](#). He has also recorded a number of successful solo albums including Domestic Blues, Lonely Street and The Big Picture. Following the release of The Big Picture, he toured the USA with [Mark Knopfler](#) of [Dire Straits](#). At the Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival 2007 he played on stage with Colin Hay (Men at Work) and Grammy award winning Nashville artist Gary Nicholson. For video clips of Bap visit www.youtube.com.
www.bapkenedy.com www.myspace.com/bapmusic

BEN GLOVER

Ben is fast building a reputation as one of the most intriguing and captivating artists emerging from Ireland. His subtle acoustic rock is influenced by the likes of Tom waits, Neil Young and Bob Dylan and his instantly recognisable voice makes him and his songs distinctive. Ben and his band the Earls picked up the award for 'Best new Irish Pop Band' at the Big Buzz Awards 2006. In February 2008 Ben and the Earls released their CD 'The Week the Clocks Changed' which he recorded in Nashville. Tracks from Ben's latest CD are played regularly on local radio.

www.benglover.co.uk www.myspace.com/benglovermusic

KEN HADDOCK

A naturally gifted vocalist, Ken Haddock has been a hugely popular professional artist among Belfast audiences since the late '90s. Ken's CDs 'The Sweetest Hour' and the most recent release 'Almost' are collections of beautiful, inspirational original songs. As a successful local performer, Ken has made a number of appearances at the 'Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival' where he has appeared on stage with internationally acclaimed artists including Paul Brady and in February 2009 he will appear on stage with Nanci Griffith at the 5th Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival. For video clips of Ken visit

www.belfastnashville.com or www.youtube.com

www.kenhaddock.com www.myspace.com/kenhaddock

EILIDH PATTERSON

Eilidh Patterson is a 25 year old singer/songwriter based in Belfast. Her style is influenced by a combination of folk, country, gospel and bluegrass music. In recent months Eilidh's prodigious talent and exquisite aptitude for live performance has seen her supporting such distinguished artists as Bap Kennedy, Gretchen Peters, John Spillane and Kimmie Rhodes or playing 'live' on BBC Radio Ulster. She is currently preparing material for her debut album which follows her first 3-track demo which has had extensive air-play locally, nationally and even as far afield as New York City.

www.eilidhpatterson.com

www.myspace.com/eilidhpatterson

ANTHONY TONER

Contemporary singer/songwriter Anthony Toner has been a professional session musician, solo performer and band member for a number of years.

In 2008 he featured in the Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival, sharing the stage with song writing greats like Benny Gallagher, Iain Archer, Pat Alger and Ralph Murphy. His latest album 'A Sky For Every Day' has notched up impressive sales, with the singles 'Sailortown' and 'Marion, That's All Right', being playlisted by the major radio stations in Northern Ireland. The album – and its predecessor 'Eventually' (2002) – have attracted strong reviews.

www.anthonytoner.net

www.myspace.com/anthonytoner