

BELFAST NASHVILLE SISTER CITIES

Nashville Event Unites Top Nashville, Belfast Tunesmiths

Belfast and Nashville are celebrating 16 years as sister cities, a partnership designed to promote cultural, tourism and business development opportunities between the two cities. One highlight of the sister city relationship is the annual Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival Showcase, a three night series of performances featuring top writers from Belfast and Nashville. This year's event is March 11, 12 and 13 at The Belcourt Theatre, Bluebird Café and Dan McGuinness Pub.

Both cities enjoy a rich musical history incorporating a variety of genres. The Belfast music scene has produced stars from a wide-variety of formats including multi-Grammy winner Van Morrison, movie soundtrack composer David Holmes ("Oceans Eleven," "Out of Sight") '70s rock hitmakers Thin Lizzy and acclaimed flautist Sir James Galway. Bringing together songwriters from Belfast and Music City to celebrate the art of songwriting enables everyone to discover more about the links between a shared musical heritage and the traditional roots of American songwriting.

Scheduled for the Showcase are: (admission to every event is free)

Thursday, March 11, 8:00 pm, Dan McGuinness Pub: Aaron Shanley, Ricky Warwick, Anthony Toner.

Friday, March 12, 6:30 pm, Bluebird Café: Tia Sillers, Mark Selby, Gareth Dunlop, Iain Archer.

Saturday, March 13, 7:00 pm, The Belcourt Theatre: Bobby Bare, Jr., Elizabeth Cook, Dave Olney, Pat Alger, Aaron Shanley, Ricky Warwick, Iain Archer, Gareth Dunlop.

In commenting on the event, Belfast Lord Mayor Naomi Long said, "*The Festival promotes and strengthens our Sister City link and enhances our cultural exchange. Belfast's new music scene receives high international praise and our latest generation of musicians is playing a crucial role in revitalizing the city.*"

BBC's Ralph McLean

“There are many things that unite the cities of Belfast and Nashville but nothing symbolises our Sister City relationship better than music. The mastery of timeless tunes and the magical weaving of words is a semi-mystical process to many but it’s something we’ve always done with ease.

You can hear it in modern country music, so rooted in the traditional Irish and Scottish songs transported in their primitive form across the Atlantic all those years ago.

It’s there to enjoy in the Celtic poetry of Van Morrison and the big, heart swelling anthems of bands like Snow Patrol. Listen closely and you can hear that shared magic in the pure acoustic soul of the humble singer songwriter who’s playing seven nights a week in both Botanic Avenue and Lower Broadway. Music is a second language in both Belfast and Nashville and that thrilling, life affirming beat throbs through our collective bloodstreams.

Walk down the main thoroughfares and side streets of Belfast and just like Nashville you’ll hear music, of just about every description, pouring out of just about every doorway. It’s how we define ourselves and it’s how we present ourselves culturally to the world. It’s a legacy of great art that we are rightly proud of and when a musician from Belfast meets a fellow performer from Nashville they know they’re talking to a like minded soul, an individual for whom the thousands of miles of separation mean nothing.

SINGER-SONGWRTERS

The following artists were selected by a panel which included representatives from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival, BBC and Belfast City Council.

IAIN ARCHER

Iain Archer won an Ivor Novello award for co-writing Snow Patrol's song 'Run' which was also a world-wide chart hit for Leona Lewis. As a solo artist he has released four CDs, the most recent 'To the Pine Roots'. 'Canal Song' from Archer's album [Magnetic North](#) was featured on the popular American series '[Grey's Anatomy](#)'.

It would appear that a sense of place is a thing that matters to Iain Archer and the poignant music he creates. It can be heard literally throughout his work, the geography of 'Frozen Northern Shores', the imaginings of 'Black Mountain Quarry', or the live favourite 'Holywood Seapark'. And each new piece of work reveals a fresh sonic landscape.

www.iainarcher.co.uk www.myspace.com/iainarcher

FEEDBACK FROM IAIN ARCHER

"In so many ways the trip proved to be a real success for me personally. Both of the In-The-Rounds at the Belcourt and in the Bluebird were fantastic shows, and I shared the stage with other great songwriters. I also had the opportunity to make contact with new writers at the shows including **Bobby Bear Jnr**. There were some great music industry meetings set up by yourselves, including the Music Row radio show, always great to connect with American Media. I was also able to meet up with my American publishers who set up a variety of co-writes, including the following:-

Dennis Matkosky – Dennis recently had country hits out with Martina McBride's (RCA Records) "I Just Call You Mine" and David Nail's (MCA) "Red Light." The David Nail single was Nail's debut and stayed on the charts over 40 weeks before peaking at #5. Dennis is one of the top Nashville writers right now and has also been making frequent trips to LA to work on pop/rock projects. Dennis and I are still working on this via skype!

Chris Lindsey/Aimee Mayo – Chris and Aimee have teamed up to write tons of hits over the past several years by too many country artists to mention. Some of their biggest hits are "Let's Make Love" by Tim McGraw and Faith Hill, "Amazed" by Lonestar, and "This One's For The Girls" by Martina McBride. In addition to their country success, they have recently written with huge writer Ryan Tedder in Nashville which resulted in a cut on Adam Lambert's debut record.

Natalie Hemby - Natalie is one of the hottest writers in Nashville right now with recent cuts by Carrie Underwood, Lee Ann Womack and nearly half the Miranda Lambert record including the recent #1 Country single "White Liar." Natalie and I finished a fantastic song which she is planning to perform at a Round in Nashville in April.

One of the key moments of the trip was working with **Pam Rose** who I'd shared a stage with at the In-The-Round during the Belfast festival. We hit it off instantly and were determined to write together when in Nashville. So, in a very short space of time at Pam's house out there, we wrote a very special song together called 'Map Of The World,' which we are now in the process of recording between Nashville and here. I'll also be putting a copy in the hands of my publishers both in Nashville and the UK. I know from conversations with Ricky, Aaron and Gareth, all of us at different points and with different approaches, that we've all found this trip invaluable for connecting with Artists, Writers, Music Industry and great human beings in Nashville!"

GARETH DUNLOP

Gareth is one of our finest young talents and his repertoire has style, soul and substance.. I have no doubt great things lie ahead for him..." Lisa Flavelle (radio presenter)

With a wonderful voice and great songs, Gareth has become one of the most popular singer songwriters on the local scene. He works hard, regularly playing local venues to get his name known and create his own following. On hearing Gareth perform his song 'Firefly' Snow Patrol's Gary Lightbody asked him to make a guest appearance at their recent sold out concerts in the Waterfront Hall. Local radio DJ's are now beginning to give him airplay so the word is spreading about this talented young artist.

www.myspace.com/garethdunlop

FEEDBACK FROM GARETH DUNLOP

"To round up in a few paragraphs how I feel the Nashville trip has helped me as a performer and a songwriter I'd like to start by saying a huge thanks to Colin and Ann who were kind enough to ask me to come out.

The first show case in the infamous bluebird café went incredibly well and the night ended with a short encounter with Dianna Mayer, a very reputable publisher from Nashville. After Dianna read and heard my press pack she immediately set up several meetings to discuss what she does as a publisher and what she could bring to my business. I found the several industry meetings hugely beneficial, and they provided rare opportunities to ask questions about the music industry and how to get your music out there in the popular domain. I personally gained an insight into royalty collection and song pitching which prior to these meeting I had no knowledge of.

The second showcase at the Belcourt theatre was a special night for me as a song writer. Playing alongside amazing songwriters in the round and hearing stories about how there songs were crafted was a special moment.

Every meeting and showcase set up by Panarts lead to other doors opening. I plan to revisit Nashville in June and follow up on some of the great contacts I made as a result of the trip."

AARON SHANLEY

Nineteen year old Aaron Shanley is already showing great promise as a songwriter. He began writing at 16 and within a short time started producing songs that demonstrate maturity and a unique style. In 2008 he wanted audiences to hear his songs so he began busking and playing at open mic nights around the city. Since then he has started to reach an even wider audience with the monthly Aaron Shanley Show on ustream.com. Local radio presenters are now playing Aaron's music and he has been a guest on a number of popular programmes including Gerry Anderson. He is a young man committed to making it in the music industry and is certainly making waves.

www.myspace.com/aaronshanley

FEEDBACK FROM AARON SHANLEY

DAN MCGUINNESS', 11th March

This was the first showcase I played in Nashville and made many contacts with people from various parts of the music industry such as Jewel Coburn from Ten Ten Music, Melissa Fuller from Capitol Records and Cris Lacy from Warner Bros, all of who gave me very encouraging feedback and have since kept in touch regarding my work.

I also met Taurian Marolt from Gibson guitars who spoke to me about a potential endorsement with the company to represent their guitars in Europe.

I met Ramona E. Simmons from Global Eyes Entertainment for the second time that I had a great discussion with and who gave my songs a very heartening reaction.

I met many Nashville songwriters and producers at this event including Bruce Wallace (Roots Three Music) and Dave Brainard (Mix Dream Studios) who I worked with the very next evening in a studio on 16th Ave.

BELCOURT THEATRE, 13th March

This event opened many doors for me. It was sold out and everyone I had the opportunity to speak to enjoyed the evening very much, including myself and the other people involved.

I made further contacts with people such as Kim Sorensen from CMT and Ralph Murphy from ASCAP, who both have kept in touch with me since the occasion.

Again, I met many great songwriters at this showcase, including songwriters who were performing who I had great conversations with and swapped email information.

The feedback I got from the audience was great and I made many new fans and friends that night who were ever so kind and who have all kept in touch with me via my social networking sites and email.

Music Industry Meetings

Meeting with Ramona E. Simmons at Global Eyes Entertainment

We met Ramona E. Simmons from Global Eyes Entertainment who talked to me and helped me understand the process and importance of Artist Development and how their company works with their artists to look after them and take care of their needs. A great education about the world of Artist Development!

Meeting with Tim Fink at SESAC

This meeting with Tim Fink was very interesting and answered a lot of questions I had regarding SESAC and royalty collecting companies in general and how they work with publishers and artists and the various types of exposure the songs get. I learned how a writer's song is recognised on radio, for example, and how they are paid for each performance of their work.

This particular meeting really helped me comprehend the full procedure of royalty collection and the significance of it, as well as learning how SESAC differs somewhat from other comparable companies regarding the writers they work with.

Meeting with Scott Gunter at Universal Music Publishing

Very much like the previous meetings, this meeting with Scott Gunter answered a lot of questions I had about how things work. I got a much better understanding of the affiliation between the publisher and the writer and how the writer's work is always much more successful if it is absolutely authentic. I learned a great deal about co-writing from this meeting also and how to best go about having a victorious co-write. This meeting helped a lot with the co-writing I did the rest of the week and helped me put things into perspective.

Overall Comment

This opportunity was absolutely magnificent and very helpful to my career as a songwriter. It opened up many doors and helped me understand certain things within the music industry that had always confused me slightly. I made many great contacts with people who have stayed in touch with me and have shown genuine interest in my career, some of who I am sure I may have a professional relationship with for a long time. After the Dan McGuinness showcase I found myself booking studio time with Bruce Wallace and Dave Brainard and I demoed 11 new songs I had been working on in Dave Brainard's studio.

I also did co-writing with both of these songwriters just a couple of days later as well as co-writing with Madeleine Slate. The Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival was very popular in town and so many great, wonderful and very supportive people from a range of jobs within the industry came to all of the showcases, answered many questions I had and gave me very kind and useful feedback.

I also got to know the other Northern Irish songwriters I was there with a little better and I made good friends with them, which has resulted in penning co-writing dates and new gig dates with them into my diary.

I had a wonderful time; this trip has made everything much clearer.

-Aaron Shanley

RICKY WARWICK

Ricky got his first taste of the world of rock n roll, when he joined UK punk/folk band New Model Army, he then went on to found The Almighty who enjoyed ten Top 40 singles and four Top 20 albums in the UK.

In 2002, embarked on an acoustic solo career and recorded his first release, *Tattoos & Alibis*. Ricky collaborated with Peter O' Toole of Hothouse Flowers and Scott Gorham of Thin Lizzy fame. This album brought about a much different feel than his past work with The Almighty, with Ricky drawing from his influences such as Steve Earle, Johnny Cash and the Ramones. In 2005 Ricky released *Love Many Trust Few* and his last album *BELFAST CONFETTI*, a collection of gritty acoustic rock steeped songs, full of passion and stories of his youth in Belfast.

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FEEDBACK FROM RICKY WARWICK

"A fantastic week extremely well organized and nothing but positive feedback since my return home. Whilst I was there I got to write with esteemed Nashville songwriter Rob Crosby who has won a Grammy for the song "Concrete Angel" recorded by Martina McBride. I also had the cameras of BBC Northern Ireland shoot my show at our showcase in McGuinness's Bar as part of a TV show they are doing on me about ex pats from N. Ireland now living in America. All the meetings that were set by Panarts were informative, interesting and beneficial.. (even for an old dog like myself who has been a professional musician for 23 years) I really learned a lot about the industry in Nashville.

The week culminated in a sold out show at The Belcourt Theatre where myself and my fellow Northern Irish songwriters shared the stage "in the round" with some of the best songwriters that Nashville has to offer and if I say so myself, we more than held our own.. judging by the crowd reaction.

The contacts and feedback that I have had because of this great week has been fantastic and I am already planning a return visit. This Festival is something that is going from strength to strength judging by the welcome and level of interest that was generated by our visit. I will be part of it again in a heartbeat if I am asked."

Panarts Report on Nashville March 2010

6th Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival Showcase, Nashville

On Stage at Dan McGuinness's, 8pm Thursday 11th March. Capacity 140 seats

Belfast songwriter Jackie Rainey opened the showcase with a first-class performance of her own songs. We added Jackie and Anthony Toner to this event as both were in town and deserved an opportunity to be heard in Nashville. Aaron Shanley and Ricky Warwick performed 'In The Round' with Anthony and with every seat taken and several people standing around the back of the venue, this was an exceptional night of music. At the end of the showcase, Aaron Shanley was approached by a major musical instrument company, Gibson Guitars, who expressed an interest in offering a sponsorship deal. The value of the deal will be evident after his management has negotiated with Gibson Guitars. We estimate around 150 people turned out to hear the showcase. Ralph McLean Media recorded the live performance for BBC Radio Ulster and was perfect as MC. Michael Beattie and crew filmed part of the show for a forthcoming BBC NI documentary on the life of Ian Brick. Before the show began, BBC also filmed one song by Gareth Dunlop and judging by the crowd reaction, he will have a warm reception anytime he performs in Nashville. As Gareth himself has said: *"Every meeting and showcase set up by Panarts lead to other doors opening"* Gareth Dunlop

World-Famous Bluebird Café Showcase, 6.30pm Friday 12th March. Capacity 100 seats

We asked multi-million selling Nashville songwriters Mark Selby and Tia Sillers (several No 1 hits written) to waive their fee as a gesture to help Panarts at the Bluebird. Iain Archer and Gareth Dunlop performed their songs 'In The Round' with Mark & Tia and this particular event was one of the most magical shows we have ever organised. It is rare that every song performed would be of such high quality and we knew the visiting Belfast songwriters would perform at the same level as our good friends from Nashville. We were approached at the end of the evening by Mark's publisher who asked would we book one of their leading artists for Belfast 2011. Gareth has already been invited back to Nashville for performances and further talks about publishing and a business deal. The value of this particular business deal secured at the Bluebird Showcase will become evident in the next few months.

We filmed the session and caught Iain Archer's rare performance of his number one co-written hit song 'Run'. The song was instantly recognised, having been a recent hit for Leona Lewis in USA. Throughout the showcase, which was very well attended, Tia & Mark encouraged the crowd to visit Belfast for our annual songwriters festival and they even managed to talk about tourist attractions in Northern Ireland; the Giant's Causeway, Antrim Coast Road, Crown Bar and the people of Northern Ireland. We couldn't have asked for more from this particular showcase.

Belcourt Theatre Showcase, Saturday 13th March, Capacity 300

"The line up of Nashvillian songwriters was like a who's who of the very best writers. Bobby Bare Jr, Pat Alger, Elizabeth Cook and David Olney waived their performance fee, which would have been thousands of dollars. We had two Belfast and two Nashville songwriters on stage together in the first and second halves of the showcase concert. In each half, the combination of different styles of writing and performing made for an exceptional concert. Several people commented on the line up and with more than approximately 250 people in the audience, this event was a great success. However, the Mayor of Nashville, Karl Dean and Chairman of Development Committee, Councillor William Humphrey both spoke at the concert, highlighting the important historical and cultural ties that exist between the two cities. The concert was recorded for belfastnashville.com website and Ralph McLean, BBC Radio Ulster, who was excellent as MC for the evening. Overall, an excellent showcase event with an audience made up of important music industry people and the general public who were encouraged to visit us in Belfast for the 7th Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival 23rd-27th February 2011.

One of the most important events to take place was our two hour radio show interview at the Clear Channel building. Over the past two years we have been working on bringing The Music Row Show to Belfast. Every Sunday, The Music Row Show is broadcast to 29 States in America and we were invited to record their full show during our visit. During the two hour interview with WLAC 1510AM we talked about our festival in Belfast and each songwriter was given the opportunity to perform their songs live on radio. The show has been broadcast and is still available online. Scott sent the following email to fans all over the world:

Feedback from Sister City Partners

BBC Ralph McLean

"I just thought I'd drop a line to say thanks for everything at this year's Nashville event. Everything was extremely well organised as always, the welcome from Nashville was incredible and I know the artists involved from this end all felt they benefited from the event enormously. Aaron, Ricky, Gareth, Anthony and Iain were all delighted to be there and really made the most of their chance. I think they all did us proud with some amazing performances. From a personal perspective it was a delight to again host proceedings and meet so many good people. Please pass this on to council and everyone involved in this year's event. Well done."

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."

Dr Ian Brick, Nashville

"The Nashville/Belfast music link has never been stronger. Each year it grows in popularity and this year we had standing room only. Also our Mayor attends all events!! Sincerest Congratulations"

Heather Cochran Cunningham, Executive Director, Sister Cities of Nashville

"Songwriters from Belfast dazzled Nashville audiences on three successive nights with a diverse array of talents. We are thankful the Panarts Organization continues to strengthen the link between our two cities by organizing these amazing songwriter showcases"