

Rating Guide

None = Unmissable



= Unwatchable

Page number refers to the Fringe programme

North Sea Gas in Concert - (p125)



Drams

Music Folk music

Band Dave Gilfillan (guitar, banjo, vocals); Ronnie "Mac" MacDonald (guitar, bouzouki, harmony vocals); Grant Simpson (electric fiddle, harmony vocals)

Venue Acoustic Music Centre, (venue 123)

Address St Bride's Orwell Terrace

Date 19 August 2006

Reviewer Julian Davis

After an absence from the Fringe of two years, it was with anticipation and excitement that the many disciples of one of Edinburgh's finest and successful folk bands welcomed back North Sea Gas and a slightly slimmer than I last remembered, Dave Gilfillan to the steeply terraced auditorium of the Acoustic Music Centre. It's a great venue to be able to see the group perform and the acoustics are exceptionally good as many converted churches are.

However, in that aspect also lies one of the problems with seeing a band like this. Those of you who have followed the various line ups over the 26 years since they first burst upon the scene at the White Hart Inn in the Grassmarket but more importantly and particularly for most, at Platform One in the Caledonian Hotel (among many other temporary venues) will remember nights of the banter back and forth with Dave and hearty singing and clapping as the beer flowed. The festival setting with its regimented rows of seats and tight inflexible time schedules do not necessarily sit well with this informal concept and the performance appeared similarly sanitised.



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That's not to say that it wasn't good - it was up to the usual high standards of musicianship and harmony that we have come to expect from this band. Obviously with an album recently released called **Lochanside** they chose to showcase it and perform excellent renditions of many of those tracks - *The Gallowa Hills*, *I'm looking for a job*, Tunes (jigs and reels comprising *Jig of Slurs*, *Stan Chapman's* and *McArthur's Road*), *A little bit more*, *Sae will we yet*, *Shift and Spin*, *Joseph Baker* and *The Overgate* being among those selected.

There were several occasions where the audience could clap along or help out singing a refrain, and there were many occasions for tall and ribald tales to be told as the sharp wit of Mr Gilfillan still pervaded. We also had time for a silly song in *Paradimethylaminobenzaldehyde* (hope I spelt that right) a sort of supercalifragilistic type song recounting NSG's ingredients for a successful cocktail, beautifully sung by Dave and showing that he has lost none of his infamous vocal strength. The *I'm looking for a job*, carefully updated to include reference to our dear Holyrood politicians, gave us a brief chance for a sing along combined with actions - take a bow the audience! It was great to see "Mac" back and just as amiable as before. His playing and harmonies augment Davie's powerful tones well. And Grant's fiddle playing is just exquisite - a rose between two thorns?



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But there was only time for two from older material - the *Haughs O' Cromdale* from **Schiehallion** and *Our town* from **Dark Island**. I can understand the need for a disciplined show for the Fringe venue; perhaps the new line up reflects a certain slight change in direction which allows the undoubted multi instrumental talents of the group to shine through, but I left with throat barely warmed up let alone hoarse. I left with a slightly deflated feeling that maybe all those nights of raucous singing of *Wild Rover*, *Irish Rover* or *Will ye no come back again* are possibly passed? I do hope not - for all the old fans' sake.

I do look forward to the chance of once again hearing Dave 'folk' it up, but it's still good to see them back even if it is in restrained mode.

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