

Kerrville Folk Festival

Two Nights At Threadgill Theatre

During the mid-week periods between the first and second, and second and third, Kennedy Theatre weekends the Kerrville Folk Festival evening concert relocates to the Threadgill Theatre in the heart of the Quiet Valley Ranch's campgrounds. The structure was named after the late Kenneth Threadgill (1909-1987), musician and proprietor of Threadgill's Tavern—a former service station on Austin's North Lamar Boulevard that became, and remains, a legendary eatery. If my memory serves me well, the current theatre is the third incarnation and boasts a vast (and when storms pass, wonderfully sheltering) corrugated metal roof. At ground level, near the stage, there are rows of fixed, wooden benches. Beyond the benches there's a series of wide, raised stone steps where, during musical performances, festival patrons can bring their own chairs. Here's what happened on two consecutive Threadgill evenings this year...

Day 12 – New Folk In-The-Round

The 7-9pm Sundown Concert on Monday June 3, brought together a quartet of former New Folk Songwriting Contest winners for an In-The-Round song session. Salt Lake City's Alicia McGovern and West Virginia/Connecticut duo The Sea The Sea were 2012 winners, while Austin's BettySoo and Nashville based Robby Hecht won four years earlier.

McGovern (vocal, acoustic guitar) opened with *I'll Keep Tryin'* from her sophomore collection *WORDS THROUGH THE SEASONS*



MC Hansen & The Sentimentals & Friends - Tuesday 4th June 2013: Dana Cooper (acoustic guitar)

(2010)—'It's one of the songs I played in the contest last year.' Hecht (vocal, acoustic guitar) introduced *Freight Train Lady* with the confession that he had entered the song in 2006 and 2007, on both occasions failing to make the contest final. He was accompanied vocally by BettySoo who also, in a previously unseen departure, played accordion. BettySoo (voice, acoustic guitar) reflected: 'Bet you never seen a Korean on an accordion,' then picked up her guitar and performed the, yet-to-be-recorded, torch song *Love & Better Days*—'who knows when it will be out on CD.' West Virginia based Mira Stanley (vocal, acoustic guitar) and Connecticut's Chuck E. Costa (vocal, acoustic guitar, banjo) began performing as The Sea The Sea during the Fall of 2011, and opened their Threadgill account with a few verses of the almost 90-year old *Bye Bye Blackbird* that morphed into their *Guess It Was*.

Following BettySoo's 'new song' lead, Alicia launched the second round with *Dear, I'm Calling Your Name* and Robby followed suit with *Stars*. BettySoo continued the trend with *Right On Time*. If you'd been standing on the banks of the Black Sea in 401 BC, you'd have witnessed 10,000 trek-weary Greek soldiers excitedly declare: 'Thálatta! Thálatta!' sic. The Sea The Sea. The similarly named duo completed round two with *Battered Hatches*. More newly birthed creations permeated the third round in the shape of Alicia's *Long Day*, Hecht's *New York City* and BettySoo's *Not Enough For You*, while The Sea The Sea offered *Watertreader*.

Alicia McGovern pigeonholed *Ruby Red Sky*, her fourth selection, as a 'summer song.' With accordion support on the skipping tempo melody—BettySoo had never heard the tune—it proved to be a cheerfully positive affair. Robby followed with his Amy Speace co-write *The Sea & The Shore*. Already recorded by Speace, in my humble opinion it's a creation the writers should be inordinately proud of and one I predict will become an audience favourite. Having laid down



New Folk In-The-Round - Monday 3rd June 2013: L. to R. Mira Stanley (vocals) & Chuck E. Costa (acoustic guitar) aka The Sea, The Sea, BettySoo (accordion), Robby Hecht (acoustic guitar) and Alicia McGovern (acoustic guitar).

the 'new song' challenge, BettySoo 'broke the chain' by performing *Never Knew No Love* the opening song on her, Gurf Morlix produced, third album *HEAT SIN WATER SKIN* (2009). Next, *Love We Are We Love*, the 'palindrome rich' title song from The Sea The Sea's soon-to-be-released debut album was performed as a round.

Alicia's debut album *WE JUST FLY* (2009) furnished her fifth offering, *You Ran Off With The Gypsies*—'I wrote the song for my sister. We travelled a lot through most of our 20s.' Hecht's choice was the mighty fine *A Reckoning Of Us* from his sophomore release *LAST OF THE LONG DAYS* (2011). An owl, dog and songbirds adorned the cover of Hecht's debut, flying elephants graced his 2011 release. Whither next I wonder? Having mentioned *MORE LIES* (2012), her second 'cover song' collaboration with Canadian guitarist Doug Cox, from that album BettySoo delivered a spine-tingling rendition of Jo Carol Pierce's classic *Loose Diamond*, and The Sea The Sea sang about *Ten Thousand Birds*.

Returning for an encore, Hecht intimated that they would perform 2002 New Folk winner Nels Andrews' *Big Oaks Sway*—'He was a contest judge this year, but he's gone, so we don't have to look at him while we're singing it.' Their performance complete, from the stage festival producer Dalis Allen enquired: 'Are you up for another solo round?' which brought a positive audience response. McGovern's new *If I Just Ask You* was answered by Hecht's *LAST OF THE LONG DAYS* tune *Pot Of Gold*, while BettySoo sensitively interpreted Townes Van Zandt's *Tecumseh Valley*, and The Sea The Sea brought the festival's latest In-The-Round concert to an end with *Fists Full Of Flowers*.

Day 13 - MC Hansen & The Sentimentals & Friends

The Sundown Concert on Tuesday June 4, was listed in the programme as MC Hansen & The Sentimentals & Friends. On his opening evening, 2012 Kerrville main-stage debut Matt Harlan's band had included Hansen, and over the ensuing year the & Friends plan was hatched. When solo American songwriters tour Scandinavia, they're regularly supported by MC Hansen (lead electric guitar, vocals) & The Sentimentals—namely, Nikolaj Wolf (upright bass) and Jacob Chano (drums, percussion). The plan being to replicate on the Threadgill stage, what occurs onstage in European venues. Here's what happened...

Hansen & Co. launched the proceedings with his *Baby Blue* and partway through MC requested that Matt Harlan (vocals, acoustic guitar) join him. Together they finished the song, and Houston based Harlan then introduced his 'musical and now matrimonial' partner Rachel Jones (vocals). Matt's sophomore release *BOW AND BE SIMPLE* (2012) was recorded in Denmark with The Sentimentals, and from that collection he delivered *Darker Shade Of Grey*, *Too Much Going On*, and closed with the title song. Following Harlan and Jones' departure, MC introduced long-time festival favourite Dana Cooper (vocals, acoustic guitar). Recalling one writing assignment while on a songwriting retreat, Dana began with *No Second Comin*—'This is one of my religious songs that I'm so well known for'—and followed with the heartfelt *Right The Wrong* penned after a 2012 visit to Belfast, Ireland. 'It's a sad, beautiful place filled with people who have all been wounded, directly or indirectly, or have had a loved one killed.' From his most recent studio recording *THE CONJURER* (2010), the Independence, Missouri bred musician closed with *Enough* which he co-wrote with Kim Carnes.

Chelsea, New York based 2013 New Folk winner Ed Romanoff (vocals, acoustic guitar) was a surprise addition, and accompanied by MC & Co. performed *The Ballad Of Willie Sutton* and *Little Less*



MC Hansen & The Sentimentals & Friends - Tuesday 4th June 2013: L. to R. Jonathan Byrd (vocals, acoustic guitar) and MC Hansen (electric guitar)

Broken. Next up, currently residing in Brooklyn, New York, Ana Egge (vocals, acoustic guitar) opened with *Hole In Your Halo*, a song inspired by her experiences in dealing with the self-destructive impulses of family members. *Halo* appeared on her Steve Earle produced *BAD BLOOD* (2011), from which she also aired *Motorcycle* and *Shadow Fall*. Called to the stage, 2003 New Folk winner Jonathan Byrd (vocals, acoustic guitar) was met with a wave of rapturous applause. Byrd, joined by Egge, performed *We Used To Be Birds* as a duet. The song opens *THE BARN BIRDS*, the recently released duo album by Byrd and Oregon based musician Chris Kokesh. Byrd's *I Was An Oak Tree* from *CACKALACK* (2010)—'That's just short for Cackalacky, which means Carolina. I'm from North Cackalacky'—was followed by *The Law & The Lonesome* from his 2008 album of the same name.

MC had opened with one of his compositions, now it was time to loosen things up. Hansen & Co. were then joined by Egge, Byrd and Harlan (acoustic guitar) for MC's *Sail The River To The Sea* replete with a six-string solo from the Houston musician. Recalling the occasion when Byrd urged him to pen 'a song about poultry,' MC confirmed that *Neighbourhood* was the result. To performing it the Scandinavians were joined by Cooper (harmonica), plus Egge (guitar), Byrd (guitar) and Harlan (guitar). In performance, as well as Wolf's bass solo, the three guest guitarists also delivered solos. Moving on, Byrd sang *Can't Outrun The Radio*—'a song about submitting to a power greater than yourself'—and, closing *& Friends*, Egge took the lead vocal on her, yet-to-be-recorded, Gary Nicholson co-write *Rock Me*. It was time to hoot and holler and display some appreciation... **Arthur Wood**

2013 Wildflower!

Arts & Music Festival

Three Nights, Three Headliners

Friday May 17 - Eliza Gilkyson

During his intro singer-songwriter festival stage manager Al Johnson mentioned that a decade ago Eliza had been elected to Austin's Music Hall of Fame, her take being: 'You just have to be old.' A Wildflower! Festival stage regular, on this occasion, Gilkyson was accompanied by son Cisco Ryder (drums, cajon, percussion) and Mike Hardwick (electric guitar, Dobro). Prior to her opening number, when a fan, obviously well-known to Eliza, requested *Mamma's Got A New Boyfriend* she retorted: 'You're like a broken record.' *Blue Moon Night* followed.

In recent times the influx of well-paid, former West Coast techies has made living in North Austin expensive, resulting in Gilkyson's move to the Emerald Forest sub-division south of the river. As for 'the beautiful Forest,' Eliza explained: 'It's not,' nevertheless employing a neat link to *Emerald Street*, a song in which she proves irrevocably girls can whistle! Urging audience members to partake, Eliza's skilful (whistling) gymnastics far outstripped their efforts. *Roses At The End Of Time*, the title song from her current Red House Records album, was followed by brother Tony's composition *Death In Arkansas*, and her own *Rare Bird*.

Announcing that she'd postponed release of her new album *THE NOCTURNE DIARIES* till early 2014, Eliza delivered the aside: 'These are songs written in the middle of the night,' and assisted vocally by Cisco, debuted the gospel flavoured *Touchstone*. A rendition of *Beauty Way* was followed by the audience request *Greenfields*. Penned by her late father Terry, for his wife, Eliza recalled an occasion when she enquired about the song's meaning. Her father's reply: 'Stop looking for hidden meanings in everything.' Having performed *On The Borderline*, the audience request *Separated* saw Cisco play cajon. Having asked the audience to whistle, plus they'd clapped their way through her up-tempo songs, Eliza broke into *Slouching Toward Bethlehem* with an invitation to sing on