



The Anchorage Times

Music Scene: S.J. Pearson

The man with the soft, lilting Irish brogue takes the stage and greets the crowd with a happy-to-see-you smile that could light the sky. Seamus Kennedy is back in town for his sixth tour of Alaska. He plays the guitar and the bodhrán, a traditional Irish drum.

He sings with the strong voice of an Irish balladeer and tells stories and jokes that make the crowd rock with laughter. He has the repertoire of any great Irish traveling bard and sings the songs of his native land, filling in the performance with Scottish country and folk songs.

His quick wit tailors itself to the audience and his vast store of songs keeps the crowd happy. Among the most entertaining are the yodeling songs, in which inexperienced yodelers are encouraged to join the cacophony, but then, he's always encouraging the audience to join in on any songs they may be familiar with.

During his recent performance at the Mary Conrad Center, he had everyone singing along. Don't think he's all fun and games though. He can bring a room near tears singing such great old Irish ballads as "Danny Boy," and his clear baritone rings true to the end, and even more beautiful and full when he sings a cappella.

This year's tour of Alaska will bring Kennedy to Nome, Soldotna, Unalakleet, White Mountain and Juneau in addition to his fund-raising performances here in Anchorage.

Kennedy was born and raised in Belfast, Ireland, and first came to the U.S. to play on Gaelic Football and Hurling teams in New York. He began performing after the games and it's simply grown from there.

"It's like prostitution," he says, "You start doing it for a few friends, and the next thing you know, You're doing it for money." We won't touch that one!

Seamus travel throughout the country to Irish, Scottish and folk festivals, as well as concerts and pubs and clubs.

His Pub Tours of Ireland are also very popular in the summer, and are booked months in advance.

He has seven recordings, four of which showcase his live performances, with the comedy and participation songs, while the other three display his more serious side.

In 1993 and 1994 he won back-to back W AMMIES (Washington Area Musicians' Association Awards) for Irish Male Vocalist of the year in the Folk Music category. This is an award he values greatly because the recipients are chosen by fellow musicians and performers.

So this is how he makes his living.

Performing the songs he loves, and giving people the chance to throw their cares to the wind as he tells his jokes and gets another chance to lighten someone's heart. If you have the chance, go check out this wonderfully entertaining Irishman with a heart of gold that shines through a captivating performance.

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