

MARTYN BENNETT 1971-2005

Bennett's signature sound was his cross-fertilization of Scottish folk traditions with the rhythms and technology of club culture, but his creative arena extended wider and deeper, from classical to world music, found sounds to free jazz. His earliest years provided the seed-bed for this diversity, spent as they were in various parts of Canada's cultural melting-pot, including the Highland-descended, Gaelic-speaking rural communities of Newfoundland's Codroy Valley.

Martyn Bennett 1995

Written in Edinburgh, this self-titled album is first venture into the world of electronica and cross-over. Inspired by the rave scene in the early 90s, he played fiddle and bagpipes over programmed dance beats. His self-titled album was released on a small label in 1996, and immediately received attention from the Scottish media. "Recorded and mixed in just seven days, I listen to this album now with a hidden smile. Yes, I can hear the limitations of my knowledge of electronics and the small amount of equipment I had at my disposal, but this album, for me, is like a child. It's full of fun and abandon. It does not care about the 'correctness' of the sounds or complexity of arrangement, it only cares about energy and light. I often wish I could repeat that energy now, but it was the energy of the moment. An energy of being unknown, an energy of no expectations, and an energy of being in love."

In 1998, he released his pioneering album **Bothy Culture** on the Rykodisc label. It launched him internationally to the forefront of the Celtic scene while topping the US college radio charts. "Bothy Culture is a celebration of my culture. It is also a celebration of two other cultures that have really spoken to me through their music even though I did not know much or any of their language. The music of Islam has long been a fascination for me - how could it be that the modes, vocal and instrumentalism be so similar in emotion to Gaelic styles? And how is it that the music of Scandinavia could have the same solitary sweetness and heavy-beat rowdiness of the ceilidh music I had grown up playing?"

Bennett and Dundonian musician Martin Low composed **Hardland** in the Isle of Mull in 1999. It is an album that reflects a harsh rural environment, but is also strongly connected to modern urban culture, it is an album all about simplicity, bass and power.

"As a fashion statement **Hardland** does not follow current trends. Dance music is evolving so rapidly, that it became our conscious decision not to try and emulate any particular dance genre and focus instead on making it sound 'Hard and Scottish'. I believe **Hardland** makes an important statement about how old traditions can survive. Fundamentally this album forces a relationship between two apparently opposing worlds, at one end of this spectrum are the roughest elements of a very, very old folk tradition, whilst at the other there are the hardcore elements of an ultra modern club culture."

Hardland Live enjoyed critical acclaim from the art houses and club fraternity, producing one of the most professional and euphoric sounds in Scotland. Their live setup involved a heavy mix of technology and acoustic instrumentation. Bennett was famed for his incendiary live performances, which included Edinburgh's millennial Hogmanay

celebrations, and a legendary set at the Cambridge Folk Festival in 2000, after which Hardland went on to sell a record-breaking 1000 copies over the weekend.

Glen Lyon 2001

A song-cycle that takes its name from a remote area in the Central Highlands of Scotland. "I spent several weeks making field recordings of elements such as wind, water, agricultural and maritime machinery, birds, and even insects (listen for the bee!). These are the sounds that pertain to a songs' ambience or inner meaning."

October 2000 Martyn is diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma and has to pull out of all future engagements. He starts a course of chemo and radiotherapy and during this time Martyn sets up the studio to write GRIT.

GRIT 2001

Released on Realworld Records this was Bennett's fifth commercial album and first project in which he exclusively used archive material. GRIT is an album of descriptive music that incorporates many singers that Bennett knew in person or, at least, listened to as he was growing up. The material is split between the North Eastern traditions of traveling people (especially Romany gypsy) and the Gaelic traditions of the West Highlands.

"GRIT is a serious artistic attempt to bring my own Scottish heritage forward with integrity. Many of the tracks on GRIT could be termed as quite 'hard'. Again this is just my own means of reflecting realism in a stark and uncompromising way. I find so many modern representations of Celtic culture careless and fanciful to the point that the word 'Celtic' has really become quite meaningless to me. As globalisation is set to expand, I feel it's time for us to face our own reflections in the great mirror of our cultures."

MacKay's Memoirs [Released 2005]

Commissioned for the opening of the Scottish Parliament, July 1999.

Martyn Bennett's composition for pipes, clarsach and orchestra was written for the students of the City of Edinburgh Music School and in honour of the late Dr Kenneth A MacKay of Badenoch. It was recorded the morning after Martyn's death by the young people of Broughton High who never knew that Martyn had passed away, the news was broken to them after the recording. This is Martyn's final recorded work.

The Martyn Bennett Trust, founded in his name, aims to support young musicians who seek, through the medium of music, to bring the spirit, eloquence and beauty of marginalised voices and cultures to audiences that might otherwise never be aware of them.

Please see www.martynbennett.com for further information.