

- 20 How I Got Here - Joan Carey Gallagher ● 21 The wedding album
- 24-25 The Hills are alive with the sound of music
- 26 Choices for DVD movies, music and CDs



George Kilby Jr.

Bringing Americana to Donegal

BY SEÁN P. FEENY

This Friday, 17 August, Donegal music lovers will enjoy a night of Americana at the Balor Theatre, Ballybofey.

Americana, represents American culture and its music and the man who has been bringing it to Ireland for well over a decade now is none other than, George Kilby Jr and his band.

Speaking to George before catching his flight from New York to Ireland, he said that the band was really excited to be playing in Donegal, on their annual tour, for the first time.

Coming to Ireland is like coming to a home from home George and the band are here that often, and every time they're here hte tours ends up in Kerry.

"It's our tenth wedding anniversary so my wife Katy and I are particularly looking forward to relaxing in Kerry for a few days after the tour.

"Katy's parents have a strong connection to Kerry so we've always been to the southern end of Ireland a lot, but we're really looking forward to performing in the North West."

George's wife, Katy Keen is an accomplished artist started of designing for Fiorucci and still designs for Swatch.

George remembers the very first time he and his band came to play in Ireland it was down to a huge gamble.

He said: "A family that runs a pub in Carrigaline, County Cork, had heard about me and took a huge chance in booking me and the band and bringing us over to Ireland.

"The gig went so well and since then we have become really close friends with a lot of people in Cork and stay with them when we're down there.

"We've played the Guinness Jazz Festival a

lot as well and it's so great to come over here and see people at the gigs singing along to your music and knowing the lyrics," George said.

Although the have been to Ireland on so many occasions, this will be the very first time George and his band will be coming to Donegal.

The one thing that George loves about performing in Ireland is that his music is, to some extent, appreciated more here.

"Now people must be aware that the music we play is not pure blues, which is sometimes a pre-conception they have when coming to our gigs.

"Our music is more Americana, which is just classic American music with influences in blues, gospel, country and other music forms."

HANK WILLIAMS

There is no surprise to George's influences as he grew up in a place known for its musical talent, the State of Alabama, home of Hank Williams and many more.

"Don't expect us to be covering and Muddy Waters tunes or so as the night will be all about original music," said George.

"Muddy himself always said get out there and do something new. It was Muddy who picked up and electric guitar when people thought a blues man should only play acoustic and as far as I'm concerned Muddy invented Rock'n'Roll."

The reason why George loves performing here in Ireland is because of the appreciation of his craft.

"More than anywhere else in the world people actually listen to the words which is very special to people like me," he said, "I think it's probably down to the music tradition of storytelling here."

George and his band are one of two bands to have a residency at the

BB King Blues Club & Grill, New York.

He said: "We've had several residencies in roots clubs, including the Red Lion on Bleecker Street and the Chicago Bar.

"The amount of roots clubs, not only in New York but around the States, that have closed is staggering, so it's great to have a place like BB King's that still has live music seven nights a week."

Some of the best gigs the band have done here in Ireland include a concert at Cork City Prison.

"What an interesting gig that was," George laughed, "We must have played Johnny Cash's Folsom Prison Blues about three times before the crowd were satisfied."

Irish people, in particular Cork and Donegal people, associate the blues with Rory Gallagher.

"I was certainly aware of Rory when I was learning my craft and knew that it was guitarists like him and Peter Green that paved the way for people like me by proving that you didn't have to be black or American to play the blues.

"It was the legendary Pinetop Perkins, the piano player of Muddy Waters' band, who was my mentor. Pinetop just turned 94 last month and is still performing."

George will be joined on tour by the very talented musicians Neil Thomas (accordion, piano, blues harp, vocals), Bruce Martin (drums, piano, guitar, accordion, percussion, vocals) and Arturo Baguer (bass & vocals).

More information, downloads, albums, iTunes and much more you can log onto on www.georgekilbyjr.com

Tickets for the concert are only 15 so don't miss this rare opportunity to enjoy real American talent at the Balor Theatre this Friday.