

NEWS FEATURE

DANCEHALL DAYS STELLA BALLROOM: EXHIBITION CELEBRATING SHOWBAND ERA IN LIMERICK

'Are you dancing?' Relive the city's dancehall days

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AN EXHIBITION marking Limerick's proud dancehall heritage will launch in Limerick city this Saturday.

Are You Dancing? - Remembering Limerick's Dancehalls is a two week exhibition in the Stella Ballroom will feature photographs and other memorabilia from Limerick's dancing past, spanning from the late 1950s right up to the showband era of the 1970s.

Showband star Tommy Drennan along with the editor of Limerick's Rock 'n' Roll Club publication The Golden Era of Irish Showbands, Paddy Brennan, will launch the exhibition and organisers have promised a host of unforgettable stories will be recounted throughout the day.

Limerick's Creative Communities chair Karen O'Donnell O'Connor will al-

"The exhibition will be personable and relevant to those who remember the Dancehall Days"

so speak at the launch.

Locals who frequented 'dances' have contributed personal photographs taken at such iconic city locations as Todsie's, The Stella, Jetland and Cruises Hotel along with a host of others will be on display for the duration.

Exhibition organising manager David Studer explained that visitors to the exhibition will virtually relive the special atmosphere of those days before entering the ballroom at the Stella.

As visitors pass the box-office the mumble from a busy ballroom has been faithfully recreated by sound engineers and as they move closer to the ballroom entrance the busy sound of a full room will get progressively louder.



Todsie's 1959 Michael, Rita Drew, Ger Cusack, Patsy Prendergast, Tony Kiely and others Picture: Ger Cusack



St John's Pavilion 1963 Mary Flanagan, Michael Tully, Patsy Tully and Pat O'Regan Picture: Joan Garry

A timeline of images will line the route along with newspaper cuttings of the day and four original advertising posters.

The exhibition will include a sound and visual display reliving the dances and

"The boys used to sit on one side and girls on the other and someone would ask: 'Are you dancing?'"

includes a life-size image of The Monarchs - Limerick's first professional showband - with their music playing in the background.

The exhibition will also feature some of the Limerick acts that took to the



Brenda Carroll, Pat O'Connor and Ann Kelly at the Stella Ballroom. Are you Dancing? - Remembering Limerick's Dancehalls the exhibition takes place at the Stella from Saturday June 14 Picture: Pat O'Connor

stage during those heady days, including the Johnny McMahon and Bud Clancy Orchestras and stars like Tommy Drennan.

Mr Studer expressed his thanks to the Bird family for allowing them the use of the Stella to host the exhibition.

The highlight of the two-week event will be a dance day on Sunday June 22, from 2.30-5.30pm at a specially constructed marquee complete with dance floor at St John's Square.

This free family event will feature music from The Kaddilacs with Bryan Meehan of The Monarchs headlining and who will be joined at the concert by Margaret Ring and Michael Shortt, plus

Tommy Drennan, Denis Allen and Shaun O'Dowd. "During the dances, the boys used to sit on one side and the girls on the other and someone would ask: 'Are you dancing?'"

"I don't know if we'll go to recreating that but we'll relive the days with dances like the Jive, Foxtrot, Twist, Waltzes and the two step," said Mr Studer.

The festival is one of over 100 locally organised projects for Limerick's City of Culture under the umbrella title of Made In Limerick.

For more information contact the organising committee on 061-419388 or visit the Facebook page Limerickdancehalls.