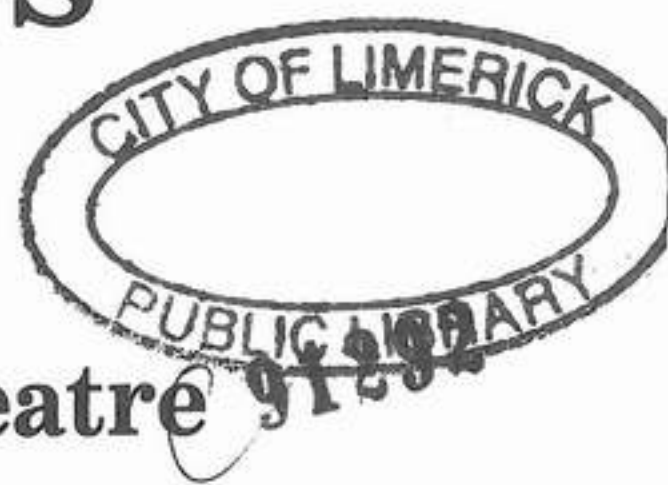


Rock and Roll Days at the Savoy

The last years of Limerick's great theatre



The vast changes to the cityscape of Limerick over the past fifteen years have helped create a new sense of pride in the city for its inhabitants. The riverfront development in particular has renewed and re-awakened one's appreciation of the fine old town that Limerick is. This has been a much-needed boost for a city that was ailing for many years.

The late 1970s to late '80s were hard years for Limerick people's sense of who they were. The old industrial infrastructure of the town was failing – the bacon processing, milling and clothing industries were either disappearing or gradually weakening and the dockland area seemed to limp through the whole period. The close-knit city community had largely dispersed to the new suburbs and some of the old forces of cohesion, based on Church practice, such as the Arch-Confraternity, had lost their hold on the general community. Most obviously notable was the disappearance in quick succession of many of the city's defining institutions. First, in 1984, the city's senior soccer team left its city ground at Garryowen, the Markets Field, moving to Rathbane, an under-developed venue which never gained the affection of the soccer fans of Limerick (who are inclined to date the decline of senior soccer in Limerick back to that move). Then Limerick lost its city hospital, Barrington's, which generations of Limerick people had attended. The historic and iconic Cruise's Hotel, in an act of planning barbarity, was sacrificed in favour of a new retail street that was never to overcome its contrived, artificial feel, quickly assuming the nickname *Legoland*. And, perhaps the most damaging and hurtful loss of all was that of the Savoy Theatre.¹

Opened to primarily serve as a cinema in 1935 the Savoy became Limerick's main large theatrical venue for more than fifty years. Generations of Limerick people (and, indeed, people from all over the hinterland, in Counties Limerick, Clare and Tipperary) had deeply felt memories of the theatre. Its loss in 1989 was a brutal knife to the heart of a city that was already in a fragile state.

During decades that had been most notable for economic hardship, emigration, gloom and drabness, the Savoy, with its Moorish-influenced, castle courtyard interior architecture, offered an occasional escape from these concerns. It was per-

by Mike Maguire

haps the only place where ordinary people could savour an opulent atmosphere of thick carpets, heavy, long, red drapes, soft seating and warm lighting. On entering the auditorium one was transported away from the sometimes harsh reality of life to somewhere that could be London, New York or Paris as we knew these places from the movies.

The history of the Savoy Theatre has been written about before and those accounts tell great stories of the people who worked there, the people who attended there and the people who performed there.² What has not yet been told is the story of the Savoy's later years, the years it served primarily as a rock music venue. While those earlier written accounts of the Savoy note the appearances there of world stars such as the great Austrian violinist, Fritz Kreisler and Paul Robeson – perhaps the world's most popular singer of his time – they fail to note the later appearance there of newer world stars and to recount the famous venue's last days.

The first rock show to play at the Savoy Theatre came as the world-wide phenomenon that was The Beatles proved to venue owners and promoters that rock and roll music could only be ignored at their peril. It took a while but gradually they realised that a new generation had taken up a new music and that, like it or not, commercial realities dictated that they would have to accommodate this fact.

So, on March 22nd 1966 the Savoy entered the rock'n'roll era, hosting a multi-act show promoted by the beat and showband-orientated music magazine, *New Spotlight*. The late Joe Dolan and his band, The Drifters, headlined a bill that included "Ireland's top beat group", The Creatures, "Munster's top show group", The Axills and "Limerick's own Empire Showband". This was the venue's first venture into an exclusively youth-orientated music event and paid off handsomely with a capacity audience responding rapturously to the show.

In the ensuing months rock bands continued to appear at the Savoy, though usually as part of poorly thought-out 'variety' line-ups. Thus we had Limerick's finest beat group, The Intentions (later, of course, Granny's Intentions) making their debut at the venue in June 1966 on a bill

that included old-style, variety entertainment like Frank Corr, the Merrimen and Frances Fleming. This show also hosted the *Limerick Pub Singing Contest* for which the top prize was an impressive £25. Not very rock'n'roll though!

Some of these shows suffered due to the incongruity of their line-ups where the beat group fans were less than welcoming of Irish dancers, old-time ballad singers and cabaret comedians. Reviewers of these shows in the local press were invariably righteously indignant about the bad manners and general misbehaviour of the beat fans. In fact, the tone of reviews of rock and roll music ranged from patronising acceptance to outright derision. This, combined with a general ignorance of rock music, remained the dominant tone of local modern music journalism right into the 1980s.

The first major international star of the rock and roll era to appear at the Savoy was the Welsh phenomenon, Tom Jones, who

A new SPOTLIGHT presents
LATE NITE VARIETY
Spectacular

SAVOY CINEMA, TUES., MARCH 22
AT 11.30 P.M.
With Show business personality of the year

JOE DOLAN
AND THE
DRIFTERS

PLUS
IRELAND'S TOP FOUR GROUP
THE LUDLOWS
IRELAND'S TOP BEAT GROUP
THE CREATURES
MUNSTER'S TOP SHOW GROUP
THE AXILLS
AND LIMERICK'S OWN
EMPIRE
SHOWBAND
Compere: **JIMMY MAGEE**

BOOKING NOW AT THE SAVOY DAILY.
3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Tickets 8/6 and 6/6

ST. PATRICK'S NIGHT
★ **GARRYOWEN F.C. SOCIAL**
AT PAVILION, DOORADOYLE



Granny's Intentions

played two sell-out shows there on 15th June 1967 and was able to charge the astonishing price of 15 shillings for tickets.

The folk-music revival of the late 1960s was also catered for at the Savoy and The Dubliners made the first of many appearances (and reputed occasional non-appearances) at the venue in November 1968. In the following five years they would grace, and usually fill, the Savoy on thirteen occasions.³ As to the 'non-appearances', there was, in fact, only one occasion on which they failed to show up for a concert but local mythology turned this into a recurring event. Folk music was taken up by a largely young audience at this time and even a band such as The Johnstons, with support from Sweeney's Men, were brought in to play this large venue of 1,500 seats.

Another international star of the time to appear at the Savoy was Roy Orbison who played there on June 30th 1970 (top ticket price, £1.00). This wasn't, however, Orbison's first Limerick appearance as he had previously performed at the famous Ennis Road venue, The Jetland Ballroom.

While Tom Jones and Roy Orbison were identifiably of the modern music generation both still retained aspects of more traditional performance – Jones had some of the Las Vegas, supper-club, cabaret-style show to his performance while Orbison harked back to a country music tradition.

So, one could say that the first truly 'rock' performer to play at the Savoy Theatre was Rory Gallagher with his band, Taste, in October 1970. While Gallagher was Irish his band was internationally popular, regarded by many in the same light as The Jimi Hendrix Experience and Eric Clapton's band, Cream. Gallagher was to continue an association with the venue that would last to its demise.

Perhaps one of the most famous Rory Gallagher concerts, certainly now the

Savoy's most famous, took place on May 9th 1972. In a rare show of modern music enlightenment Ireland's national broadcasting company, RTE, recorded the concert and this film has become an historical document of both the venue itself and of Gallagher at that stage of his career. The concert film was transmitted several times by RTE and now much of the film is freely available on the internet.⁴ Gallagher gives blistering performances of some of his early hits such as *Tore Down* and *Bullfrog Blues* but even for those not particularly interested in the music the film is worth watching as it gives some sense of the venue (though its grandeur doesn't really come through) and there are occasional glimpses of the audience which enables local people to have some fun trying to identify audience members.

The footage also illustrates one of the issues that constantly bedevilled the Savoy as a rock music venue – that of the management's insistence that the audience remain seated. In the film one can see audience members really getting down to Gallagher's hard rock and blues sound, clapping, stomping feet, shaking those long locks, but all with bums planted firmly on seats. No matter what kind of raucous sound was coming from the speakers the audience was expected to observe old-fashioned decorum and not "disturb others' viewing pleasure." While the venue had opened its doors to the commercial realities of the time, psychologically it remained rooted in the era of Sydney McEwan recitals and Jack Cruise variety shows.

Perhaps it would be reasonable to suggest that, in truth, The Savoy was not really suited to rock music concerts. The fixed seating ran right up close to stagefront, leaving no significant space for dancing. But, as the biggest venue in the city, it was the only place that could accommodate the

SAVOY
IN CONCERT
Taste
WITH GUESTS
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15
8.30 p.m.
Admission Prices : 15/- 12/6 10/-
CAPPAMORE – THE REGAL CINEMA, Sun. at 3 and 8.15 : Jerry Lewis, Anne Francis – HOOK, LINE AND SINKER. Extra : Vince Edwards, Jack Palance – THE DESPERADOS. Tues. & Wed. : Robin Phillips, Susan Hampshire, Eileen O'Sullivan – DAVID COPPERFIELD. Thurs. & Friday : John Wayne, Sean Connery and 43 International Stars in THE LONGEST DAY. (f3c)



Rory Gallagher and band on stage at the Savoy, 1972

audiences for the big rock acts of the 1960s, '70s and '80s. And the rock music fans loved the Savoy and felt it was their space just as much as their parents did.

Between those two Gallagher concerts in 1970 and 1972 the Savoy hosted Julie Felix, Skid Row (supported by Duster Bennett), "the famous group" Stud (?), Val Doonican (it wasn't all rock'n'roll) and Donovan (supported by Planxty or The Woods Band? It was Planxty according to the newspaper but the Woods Band on the ticket).

Limerick's own Johnny Duhan was scheduled to make an appearance with his new band, Brogue, in December 1972. There must have been some excitement amongst those who remembered Duhan's electric performances with Granny's Intentions but on the day before the concert was scheduled to take place it was cancelled. Whether the cancellation was due to poor advance ticket sales or some other reason has not been ascertained. Duhan had to wait another 10 years before gracing the Savoy's stage again when he remarkably revived his career in the early 1980s.

The Savoy management made occasional serious miscalculations in their bookings. The British pub-rock band Brinsley Schwarz, featuring Nick Lowe who later had a very successful solo career both as performer and record producer, played in front of an audience of no more than 20 people.⁵ This was a popular live act in Britain but not having had hit records and thus a lower profile in Ireland probably accounts for the lack of interest in Limerick, though one would have thought the presence of the very highly regarded Bees Make Honey on the bill would have attracted more people. These commercial disasters were reasonably regular occurrences and helped ensure the Savoy was kept on an ongoing knife-edge regarding its survival until the rather more modern-music savvy Brendan Murray took over in the late 1970s.

For music fans of that decade many of their favourite Savoy memories relate to performances there by the band Horslips. This band, along with Rory Gallagher and Thin Lizzy, gave the young people of Limerick their first tastes of the glamour, colour, energy and sound of large-scale live rock music. And of those three acts Horslips were particularly special, partially because their incendiary lead guitarist, Johnny Fean, was a local boy but also because of the way in which they married Irish tradition to a full rock sound. While older generations may have regarded Horslips as just another loud rock and roll band the significance of what this group did should not be under-estimated. At a time when most young Irish people had difficulty reconciling their received traditions with their sense of modernity Horslips found a way of combining the two. Their themes were the myths and history of Ireland and they managed to make these themes fit with young people's modern consciousness and to make them powerful, exciting and cool. It could even be seen as an early shoot in the developing self-confidence in our 'Irishness' that would

fully flower in the late 1980s and 1990s.

While Thin Lizzy and Rory Gallagher spent much of their time focussed on their international touring commitments Horslips were, for many years an almost exclusively Irish phenomenon. Though later they did achieve some international popularity their career up to the late 1970s was mostly centred on the home touring circuit. All over the country they sent shivers down the spine of the entrenched showband establishment by filling the ballrooms, which up to now had been the showbands' exclusive domain, and making a turbo-charged rock sound with a traditional tinge that echoed across the sleepy parishes of Ireland. However, very few rock bands were able to replicate the success of Horslips and the showbands continued to dominate the rural ballroom scene until the disco phenomenon and the out-dated style of the showbands themselves led to their general demise in the late '70s.

Horslips in the Savoy presented the most serious regular challenge to that management 'please remain seated' policy. As soon as the band appeared on stage, usually accompanied by explosions of green lighting, there would be a rush for the stagefront and the security team would have a difficult job trying to 'encourage' people to resume their seats. Horslips' first Savoy concert was on 4th January 1973 and they filled the house on many occasions between then and their demise in 1980.

Another Savoy debut in January 1973 was that of Thin Lizzy. Already a firm live favourite in Limerick from their Franciscan Hall ("the Frans") concerts, Lizzy became major stars with their international hit single *Whiskey in the Jar* and had no trouble filling the Savoy. Support act for their Savoy debut was the blues-rock, Dublin band, Cromwell. A mere three months later Lizzy filled the Savoy again.

Further concerts during 1973 included Tir na nÓg, Hawkwind, The Incredible String Band, The Dubliners, Mushroom (supported by Emmett Spiceland) and Planxty. The Hawkwind show, which they called *Space Ritual*, was particularly notable for an elaborate lights display includ-

ing strobe lighting. Also eye-catching at that show was the presence on stage of Stacia, the exotic dancer – this was not the kind of thing the young people of Limerick would have had too much exposure to in 1973!

Later that year the Savoy was closed for a number of weeks due to an industrial dispute and there followed a period of great uncertainty about the theatre's future. But after the conclusion of the strike the venue re-opened with a great spirit of enthusiasm and optimism. As well as re-opening as cinema and concert venue a new cabaret was also launched and appeared initially to be a great success. But in November 1974 the bombshell story hit the front pages of Limerick's newspapers that the Savoy was to close. There followed a frenzy of activity in effort to save the venue. Local business groups attempted to put together deals to buy out the owners, the Odeon Cinema Group, but Odeon appeared not to be interested in selling and intended to leave the building idle for some indefinite period.

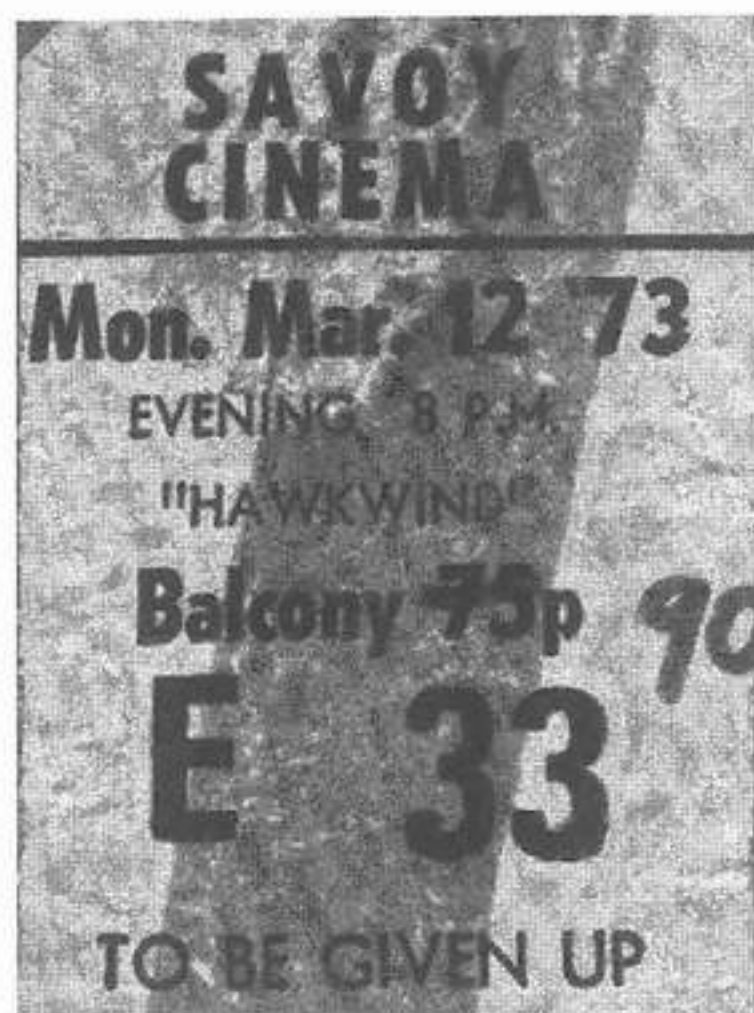
On Friday 7th February 1975 at the last event to be held in the Savoy, Jack Cruise, former manager of the Savoy and producer of hugely successful variety shows, made an emotion-filled plea, saying, "Don't let this building die ... if you do part of Limerick goes too." At the end of the evening show, manager, John Likely, closed and locked the doors of the theatre for what everybody believed was the last time.

But then in July it was announced that the Savoy had been bought by two local businessmen (Tony O'Mara and P. J. Hayes) and would re-open for business later in the year. The theatre was given a £20,000 face-lift and got back in business on 3rd October with Maureen Potter's *Gaels of Laughter* show and big-time live rock music returned to Limerick with Thin Lizzy in December.

Later in December Tony O'Mara threatened to stop bringing rock music to the theatre after riotous behaviour by an element of the attendance at a Horslips show. This appeared to be another manifestation of the hooliganism bug that infected much of the early to mid 1970s – similar disturbances had happened at other Limerick cinemas and were becoming regular occurrences at the Markets Field, home of Limerick Football Club. While expressing sympathy for the genuine music fans Mr. O'Mara said, "It is unlikely that we will bring this type of entertainment to the Savoy again ... it seems to attract a wrong element, even if they are very much in the minority." The *Limerick Leader* reporter who covered the incident showed much less understanding and sympathy, unfairly suggesting that Horslips' music itself "seemed to incite the hooligans."⁶ It was particularly unfair to make such an accusation in relation to Horslips because the atmosphere of their concerts was always good humoured and celebratory.

It would be close to a year before another rock show would come to the Savoy but it would be a really big one.

In the meantime, most of the 1976 Savoy concerts harked back to the old-time



variety revue days but perhaps the owners and management began to revise their thinking about what kind of event would sustain the theatre when Noel Pearson's *You Ain't Seen Nuthin' Yet* production, which was confidently expected to be a big success, played to two-thirds empty houses.

Another of the shows that year was by the hugely popular TV comedian, Dick Emery. He performed two shows to capacity crowds but there was general disappointment at the quality of the performance. The *Limerick Leader* review quite amusingly suggested that Mr. Emery's smutty brand of humour would have been unacceptable if he was Irish but since he was an Englishman it was ok!

Rock music of a kind returned to the Savoy when the pop music phenomenon of the period, The Bay City Rollers, played their only concert in the Republic of their 1976 tour at the Savoy. This promotional coup paid off handsomely as 'Rollermania' hit Limerick with full force, screaming and fainting girls in tartan being the order of the day. The concert went off well and general manager, Pat Ryan, was relieved to report no trouble and no damage to the venue, saying, "I have great confidence in the youth of this country."

But in truth the Savoy was struggling. The no rock music policy resulted in many less than full houses. In fact, Pat Ryan admitted that only four shows in the past twelve months had filled all 1,500 seats.⁷ It was no surprise, then, that February 1977 saw the return of rock to the Savoy. Just over a year after their controversial last appearance Horslips were back on the Savoy stage in a show that also featured the locally hugely popular band, Reform. This was the first major Brendan Murray promotion at the Savoy and the same bill played again later that year. Murray had previously operated a very successful youth disco and a 'Rock'n'Soul' club which brought bands as diverse as Cado Belle and The Buzzcocks to the Savoy top floor venue. He would remain the key figure in the story of the Savoy right to the end.

In April 1977 he claimed that he had an option for an Eric Clapton concert at the Savoy which might take place the following month.⁸ This was a frankly incredible tale as Clapton was a stratospheric star, known as *God* to his fans. When the concert failed to materialise at that time perhaps many people in Limerick began to think the young Mr. Murray (he was only 22) was living some kind of fanciful existence, thinking he could bring a star like Eric Clapton to town. But before too long Murray would show that his plans were, indeed, firmly rooted in reality.

The threat of closure emerged again in late 1977, a mere two years after the most recent 'rescue'. This failure, it was suggested, was the fault of the people of Limerick for not supporting the venue. But when one looks at the fare that had been offered over the previous two years one would have to say that it was management that was mostly at fault. They still appeared to not have fully adjusted to the realities of the modern music world, continuing to try

to draw crowds for many events for which there simply no longer existed a meaningful market. Meanwhile, many of the rock music stars visiting Dublin and Cork were not optioned for the Savoy in what would undoubtedly have been commercially successful ventures.

But then Brendan Murray really got into his stride and single-handedly brought the Savoy back from the brink of extinction and carried it through another ten years.

Local cameraman, entertainer and show producer, Eamonn O'Connor, gave the Savoy a great fillip at the end of 1977 when his Christmas show ended up running for an incredible and almost certainly unprecedented six weeks. During the course of 1978 the theatre was kept relatively busy, starting with a Horslips concert on January 31st, this time supported by another popular Limerick band, Village.

Not everything went smoothly for Murray, though, as Dana's scheduled February concert was cancelled at a late stage due to poor advance ticket sales. Once again, the people of Limerick were held responsible, the artist's Irish agent, Neilus O'Connell, describing them as 'fickle-minded' for their failure to support the concert. But, again, perhaps the problem was not so much the fickle but more the discerning nature of the Limerick music fan. After all, Dana was hardly crucial listening by 1978, it now being close to ten years since her famous Eurovision win. The failure of this concert kept the pressure and tension on relating to the possible survival or otherwise of the venue. At this stage perhaps someone should have been spotting a pattern with the failure in quick succession of concerts by Dana, Val Doonican, Berni Flint (the *Opportunity Knocks* star) and Vince Hill – obviously there was little appetite in Limerick now for this middle-of-the-road style music.

It was a rare occasion for a local act to headline at the Savoy but in May 1978 this happened when rock violinist, Joe O'Donnell, came home to Limerick. Joe, from Prospect, had recently had some success with his solo album, *Gaodhal's Vision*, and his return to Limerick after years performing with bands abroad was warmly welcomed.

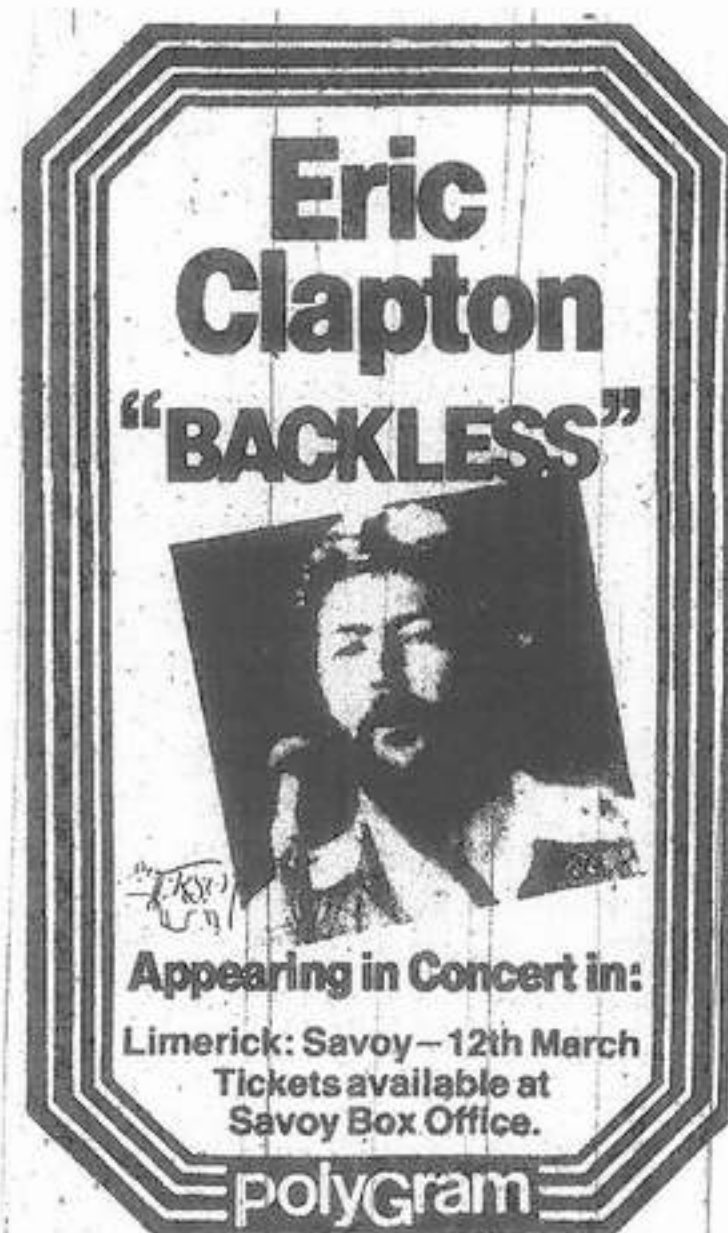
Following a sell-out Don McLean concert in late May and a less well-supported concert by Fairport Convention, further successful shows by Mary O'Hara and Horslips (yet again) delighted Murray as promoter and renewed his optimism about bringing acts to Limerick. Further success with Up With People, Nana Mouskouri and Smokie continued the positive trend though a *Christmas Spectacular* show failed – Eamonn O'Connor had planned to put on another Christmas show but found that the Savoy had given preference to the Ferenka *Tops of the Town* show only for the Ferenka workers to cancel in the end. A hastily put together *Christmas Spectacular* failed to pull in the crowds. Yet again the local press seemed only too keen to join the promoters in blaming the people of Limerick for this failure – "Limerick audiences stand accused once again" was the

conclusion of a *Limerick Leader* article about the failure of the Christmas shows.

At this stage every concert at the Savoy was being presented as a 'test' for the people of Limerick – would they prove themselves worthy of this venerable theatre by buying enough tickets to make the next show a financial success? Every concert carried with it the threat that a failure would result in no more big-name acts coming to town and perhaps even the closure of the Savoy entirely.

But the 1979 concert season started in spectacular fashion. While the Carpenters-style MOR act, Peters & Lee, drew a very disappointing crowd of only about 500 there was no problem filling the venue for the act that appeared for a concert on 12th March. Two years earlier a mooted Eric Clapton concert had failed to transpire but now Brendan Murray announced that the world's greatest guitar hero had committed to playing at the Savoy in one of a series of gigs around Ireland. Clapton was a huge star and, in spite of being in the music business for well over a decade, his career had never been in a healthier state. His most recent record, *Slowhand*, sold millions of copies worldwide, only being kept from the number 1 album spot in the USA by the *Saturday Night Fever* soundtrack. Clapton himself had shied away from his 'guitar hero' status in favour of a more relaxed, country, blues and reggae-tinged rock but he was still revered as the greatest living rock guitar musician of all. It seemed incredible that he had been booked to play in Limerick but Clapton, in a strange and as yet unexplained move, actually played a tour that included even smaller towns like Sligo, Dundalk and Kilkenny. No star of such stature, at the zenith of their career, had ever toured Ireland in this manner.

It may be the case that Clapton viewed this as a 'rehearsal' tour with a largely new band before launching into tours of the more important markets in Britain, Europe, the USA and the Far East. His recently



ERIC CLAPTON



**FOR THE FIRST TIME, A NATIONAL TOUR
BY THE WORLD'S GREATEST GUITARIST!**

CURRENTLY IN THE U.S. TOP TEN WITH HIS ALBUM "BACKLESS" AND HIS SINGLE "PROMISES"

CORK • KILKENNY • TRALEE • LIMERICK • SLIGO • DUNDALK • DUBLIN

Tour begins in Cork on March 8th and finishes in Dublin on the 17th. Booking for Cork and Dublin dates at Pat Egan's Record Shop, other dates to be announced in local press.
Phone (01) 771840 or 714865 for further information.

SANTA ANNA DO THE BEST GIGS.

published autobiography reveals that Clapton's life was actually in turmoil at this time – his marriage was ending and he was severely addicted to alcohol.⁹ None of this was apparent to the rapt, adoring audience at the Savoy as he and his band turned in a magnificent performance that more than justified his superstar status.

The evening was further enhanced by a sterling performance by the support act, The Freddie White Band. Freddie would, of course, go on to have a very successful career as a solo musician. Among the members of his group that night was bass-player, Declan McNelis, whose name would become tragically associated with the Savoy a number of years later.

Late 1979 proved to be a dramatic time for the Savoy. In a *Limerick Leader* interview Brendan Murray talked very frankly about the fragile nature of his business as big-time concert promoter. True, he said, a successful concert made a lot of money but the bigger the act the greater were the associated expenses and some of the apparently very successful concerts actually realised little profit. He said his policy was to try to make more profit from reasonably successful ventures with slightly lesser acts so that he would have reserve funds to cover losses when the bigger shows didn't go as well as hoped. Again the editorial line was that the people of Limerick would have to come through for the Savoy, "Limerick on trial" being the article's headline.¹⁰

But the "Limerick on trial" line got turned around to "The Savoy on trial" in November when the biggest controversy ever associated with the venue occurred. The *Limerick Leader* front page headline on 3rd November read, "4 Black Students Barred at Savoy". A doorman at the Savoy Bar had refused entry to the students and when asked, "You don't allow blacks in here?" he replied, "Yes, that's right...I have my orders from management." Unfortunately for the doorman and for the Savoy's

management and owners, *Leader* journalist, Fergal Keane and photographer, Owen South, both clearly heard this remarkable exchange and South had photographed the students engaged in discussion with the doorman. A storm erupted around this incident and the Savoy managers failed to cover themselves in glory with the manner in which they handled the matter. They responded with fudging and counter-claiming which only worsened their position in the eyes of a very disapproving public. Officials came from the Nigerian embassy in Dublin and the Mayor of Limerick, Bobby Byrne, investigated the incident and spoke to the parties involved. While insisting that no policy of racial discrimination existed at the Savoy no reasonable explanation could be proffered by management for the exclusion of the Nigerian students on the occasion in question. Eventually, well over a month after the incident took place, Tony O'Mara, owner of the Savoy, placed a statement in the form of an advertisement in the local papers headlined "APOLOGY" and the text of which read, "The Savoy wishes to apologise for any embarrassment or inconvenience caused to coloured students on the nights of October 25th and 26th 1979." The statement went on to offer free use of the venue to the Students' Union of NIHE (the National Institute of Higher Education, now University of Limerick) in the New Year, an offer that was not taken up.

Although Brendan Murray was in no way implicated in these events which related to the Savoy Bar and not the theatre, naturally the Savoy as an entity became tainted in the eyes of the public. Planxty had been scheduled to perform in the theatre but pulled out of the show in protest at what had happened and instead played at NIHE.¹¹

The storm died down and the Savoy got back to regular business as the new decade dawned. Successful ventures at the

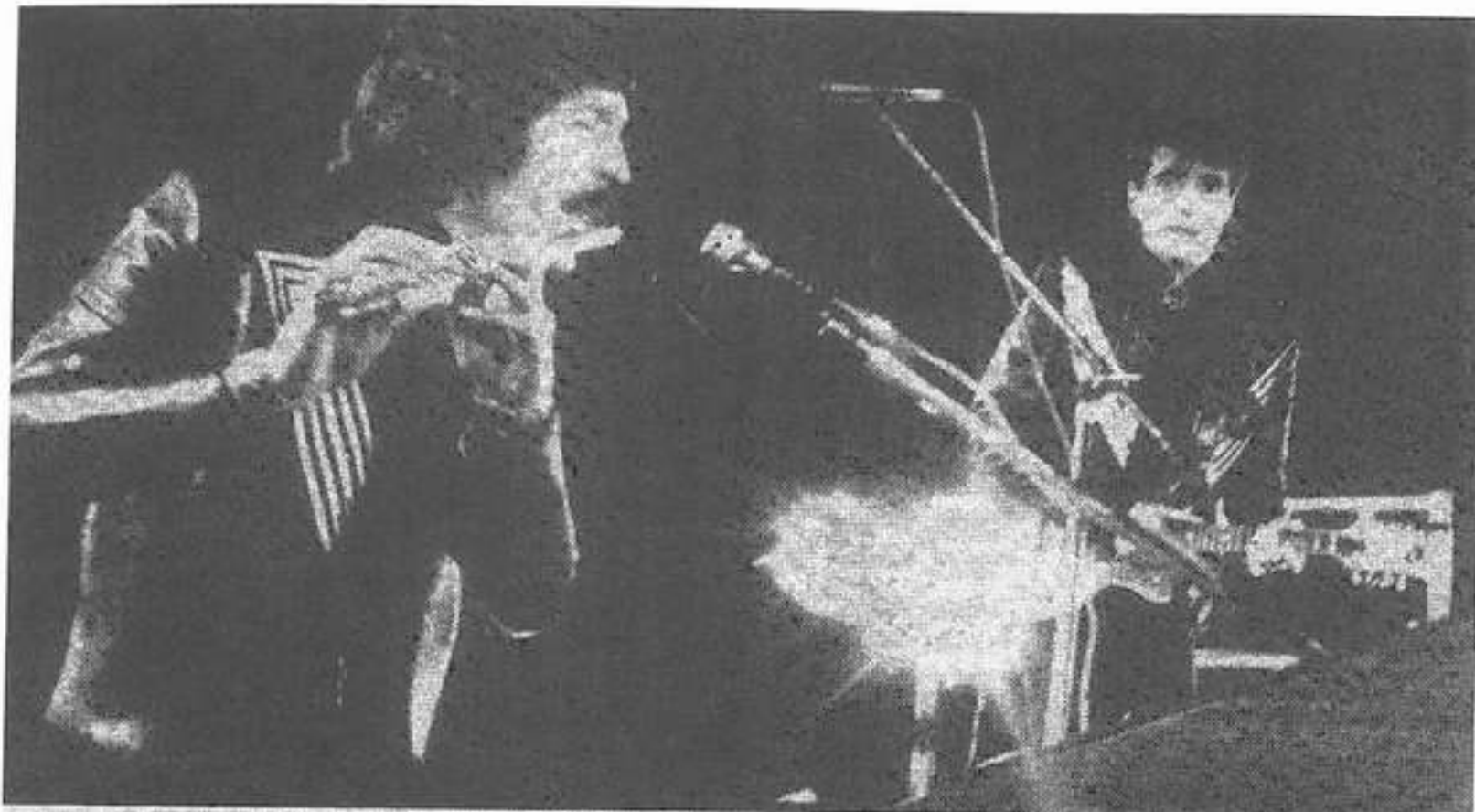
venue with Gallagher & Lyle (and guest artist, Judi Tzuke) and Makem & Clancy – perennial favourites at the Savoy, possibly Murray's most bankable regular act along with Horslips, who also filled the venue that January – were offset by a disastrous turnout of only 200 for The Supremes.¹²

Up to this point Murray had resisted bringing any punk or new wave acts to the Savoy¹³ – he said he had turned down an option to book The Stranglers even though they would undoubtedly have drawn a decent crowd. It may be that he was concerned about the violence that was often associated with this new, more aggressive form of rock music. Nevertheless he booked Derry new wave band, The Undertones, for a show in February 1980 and was to come to regret this decision. Although tickets sold very well for the gig and The Undertones turned in a fine, energetic, fun-filled performance there was some serious trouble at the concert. A writer for the Irish rock music magazine, *Hot Press*, who witnessed the disturbances, claimed the fault for the trouble lay with the security personnel who attempted to heavy-handedly implement the 'remain seated' policy which provoked a violent reaction from the fans in that section of the theatre.¹⁴ Wherever the fault lay, Murray ended up dealing with a hefty damage bill (mostly broken seats) and said he would no longer be booking such acts for the Savoy.

Concerts by Rory Gallagher and Thin Lizzy, which had been planned for the Savoy, were now moved to alternative venues – Gallagher played at the Parkway Ballroom and Lizzy at the Oyster Ballroom in Dromkeen, about ten miles from Limerick City. In truth these venues probably were more suitable for these acts but this writer can attest he didn't feel that way on the long walk back to Limerick from Dromkeen on the night of the Lizzy gig!

After hosting *Tops of the Town* and Limerick Civic Week events the Savoy fell quiet for some months. Very little happened there apart from concerts late in the year by Loudon Wainwright III (supported by local folk-singer, Jon Williams) and Max Boyce. The Wainwright concert had a rather strange atmosphere. Although his

Savoy Limerick
in Concert
**LOUDON
WAINWRIGHT
III**
SUN. 9th NOV. 8.15
STALLS
No --- 227



Lockhart blows as O'Connor does his Eamonn Carr impersonation.

HORSLIPS (Savoy, Limerick).

HORSLIPS sauntered on with all the confidence of a band who know where they're at and where they're going. Straightaway, it was noticeable how they have swung towards mainstream rock 'n' roll stage presentation, and away from their celtic/trad. roots, which until last years' tour had always been strongly in evidence.

Their new stage presentation no more features the large celtic circle design at the back, towering above Eamonn Carr, and nor does the "beastie", as my eloquent friend put it, lie at Carr's feet. They have not, however, dispensed entirely with the music of the Ould Sod as a backdrop, as the curiously dreamy and airy keyboard intro to "Summer's Most Wanted Girl" demonstrates. This track was presented, not surprisingly, alongside other numbers from the new album, such as "Ricochet Man", with its reggaeish overtones, "Unapproved Road", with its memorable hook, and the single "Guests Of the Nation".

And then after a few more, it was "You all know the chorus to this one", and the audience were surprised to find "The Man Who Built America" being pushed across the table, with its rather unsingable chorus line, "Ooooh, not him", or something equally silly. But despite this it was still magic, as was "Lonliness", from the same album.

It is obvious, and perhaps a little sad, that Horslips still rely on the old songs to wind up their set, beginning in this case with "Trouble" and "King of the Fairies"; sad only in that their new direction is so different to that on "The Tain" and "Dancehall Sweethearts" for instance, because it is from the former album that their best loved track and set finisher is taken "Dearg Doom". Still a marvellously powerful track, with its vibrant riff, it has been further 'rocked up' by Johnny Fean's lovely protracted screeching guitar solo at the start, while Charles O'Connor's fiddle is put away, to be replaced by his Fender Telecaster.

And finally, "Shakin' All Over" (the encore), again truly indicative of the 'Slips new direction, was chased off the stage and into the madding crowd by a new, different Johnny Fean to put the lid onto a night of sheer enjoyment.

Horslips deserve great credit for being the only band (Irish or otherwise) to keep plugging away at Limerick, where an awareness of rock is developing, albeit slowly. The audience will continue to improve, and so too will Horslips.

Philip Owens.

Review of Horslips concert,
January 1980
(Hot Press magazine)

performance was impeccable, enjoyment of the show was being impaired by a lone, presumably somewhat drunken, fan who sang along loudly with every song. He only desisted after being rather violently attacked by a hand-bag wielding female member of the audience. The assault was a little unnerving but Wainwright made light of it, suggesting that maybe it would be appropriate for him to sing his song, *The Heckler* at this point.

Another scare story about impending closure hit the local press front pages in November 1980. "Theatre facing the final curtain" ran the headline under which the now-familiar story ran that the people of Limerick had 'let down' the Savoy and its owner, Tony O'Mara. He claimed that over the five years of his ownership the public had effectively 'cold-shouldered' him despite being offered the 'best in the entertainment world.' In an ultimatum-style statement Mr. O'Mara said that support for events over the coming six months would decide the theatre's fate. It may be that this type of scare story had become so recurring by now that people had stopped really believing it. It appeared that the Savoy was in a perennial state of crisis but that it would always, somehow, be kept going. A 'boy who cried wolf' situation had developed.¹⁵

Fortunately the ensuing events were successful - full houses for Don McLean and Makem and Clancy as well as good support for local school and community group shows. During his performance Don McLean spoke very warmly about the theatre. He said he loved the old design and pointed out that venues such as the Savoy were custom-built for acoustic performance, demonstrating this by singing one song completely free of amplification.

As 1981 progressed it looked like the people of Limerick would pass their latest Savoy 'trial' as they turned out in great numbers for shows by Paul Brady with his new electric band, The Furey Brothers & Davy Arthur, John Martyn and Shakin' Stevens.

But in the press release for the Stevens concert the Savoy management found it necessary to assure patrons that "the Savoy will positively open" for the show. Such reassurance was necessary presumably because, in another bizarre twist in the Savoy story, Brendan Murray had just been arrested and charged for his role in an armed robbery! He had been angered that a 10-date tour of Ireland which he organised for the American group, The Supremes, had left him out of pocket due, he later claimed, to the group not honouring certain contractual obligations. In an extraordinarily naïve and ill-judged effort to exact justice Murray decided to take matters into his own hands. He and a rifle-wielding accomplice held up The Supremes' van as it travelled back to Dublin and relieved them of a briefcase that turned out to contain £9,000. Though gifted in many areas, robbery was not one and Murray was quickly apprehended and confessed his guilt. In the subsequent trial many high-profile people in the music business,

SAVOY LIMERICK

IN CONCERT

**JOHN MARTYN
AND BAND**

Thur., 28th May

AT 8.15 P.M.

Nº 598

ADMISSION

STALLS — £3.50

Savoy — Limerick

SUNDAY

18th October, 1981 — 8 p.m.

PAUL BRADY

Nº 199 **Unreserved Seating**

Front Stalls — £4.50

This portion of ticket to be retained

SAVOY, LIMERICK

Saturday, 3rd October, 1981

at 8-30 p.m.

JANIS IAN

IN CONCERT

Nº 892

FRONT STALLS (Unres.) — £6.50

This portion of ticket to be retained

witnesses, including Tony O'Mara, all of whom said they would have no hesitation to work with Murray again in the future. He was nevertheless found guilty and sentenced to six years imprisonment, three of which were suspended.¹⁶

In Murray's absence the Savoy continued to host occasional events and there were successful shows late in the year by Janis Ian and Chris de Burgh and by Bucks Fizz in April 1982. This still failed to lift the air of gloom and doom that had settled on the place in the wake of Murray's incarceration.

Tony O'Mara who, in fairness, had rescued the theatre from certain extinction six years earlier was clearly tiring of the effort involved in keeping the place going without the initiative and energy of Murray. He actually offered the Savoy 'free of charge' as a cultural centre to Limerick Corporation but this was turned down, apparently because the corporation felt that management of the Savoy would prove a serious drain on resources.¹⁷ The Savoy became a political football for a while with City Council debating its fate and Mayor, Tommy Allen, seeking central government funding for a council takeover of the venue, an approach seemingly in direct contradiction to the earlier corporation decision.¹⁸

Murray and O'Mara would have had a jaundiced view of the 'concern' regularly expressed by the local authority regarding the survival of the Savoy. One of the main reasons the venue was under constant financial pressure was the crippling level of rates payment that had to be made. Requests to Limerick Corporation for derogation or even an amelioration of these charges on the basis of the Savoy's cultural significance to the city were rejected.

Brendan Murray was back in action within a year and re-commenced his efforts to keep the Savoy going. He scored another major promotional coup by bringing Roxy Music, one of the world's most popular rock bands, to the Savoy in August 1982. Again, the band may have viewed a concert in Limerick more as a 'live rehearsal' than concert proper, but if there were rough edges to the band's playing the audience didn't notice as they enjoyed what seemed an immaculate performance. Later in the year Chris de Burgh had two sell-out nights and in the New Year various community group and *Tops of the Town* shows ran successfully.

But, significantly, in late 1982 it became apparent that Galway's Leisureland was coming to be regarded as Ireland's third destination (after Dublin and Cork) for bands on Irish tours. Groups such as U2, who were gradually moving towards the superstar level, and the immensely popular UB40 played the Galway venue on tours that failed to include Limerick. As the 1980s progressed this became a more common occurrence and many Limerick music fans found themselves making their way to Galway for concerts on a regular basis.¹⁹

In the summer of 1983 Murray began to use other parts of the Savoy complex to host rock music events. This was a major fillip for local bands who had been struggling for years to find venues, The Roundhouse in High Street and Tony's Bar in Wickham Street being the only city centre venues for local rock music at the time. Limerick bands like The Outfit and 16 Tons of Jive now had an outlet in the new rock club, Studio 5, at the Savoy. More touring bands now also began to include Limerick on their itineraries because of the availability of this venue. In 1983 popular bands of the time such as the Zen Alligators, Perfect Crime and Tokyo Olympics all played at Studio 5.

The theatre itself was enhanced and the press release for the Makem and Clancy concert in January 1984 emphasised to potential ticket-buyers that the heating system was now fully operational and that the theatre would be warm and comfortable – coldness had often been a criticism made of the theatre.

Use of the theatre became more selective now – having had his fingers badly burned on so many occasions Murray was only inclined to book 'sure things' like Chris de Burgh, Up With People, Joe Dolan and Makem & Clancy – no risks with any of these acts! As the Savoy approached its 50th birthday it appeared to be in a very healthy state – the healthiest since its original closure in 1975. A succession of concerts took place over late 1984 and into '85, ranging in styles from Foster & Allen's hokey Irishry to teenage angst merchants, The Smiths. A successful run of the musical, Annie, and concerts by Max Boyce, the fleetingly popular Jim Diamond, Chris Rea and the ever-popular *Tops of the Town* show kept the new-found tempo going.

Suddenly the Savoy was filled with activity, most of it involving live music. It became a multi-venue complex – there was the Pink Elephant bar, in its time the most successful pub in Munster,²⁰ which occasionally hosted live bands; Eastwoods nightclub also held gigs, mainly by local groups like The Groove and Average Contents but also visiting acts such as John Martyn, the now Galway-based Johnny Duhan and In Tua Nua; the venue on the top floor of the Savoy (which, quite reasonably, became known as The Top Floor) was also a rock music venue and gradually became the main music venue in the complex.

Management ran into a bit of controversy by bringing a 'Female Mud-Wrestling'

B.L.M. PRESENTS

ROXY MUSIC

At Savoy, Limerick

THURSDAY, 12th AUGUST

At 8 p.m.

STALLS — £8.00

Nº 461

To Be Retained

including Ireland's top concert promoter, Jim Aiken, made very favourable character statements on Murray's behalf. They described Murray as honest and reliable and Aiken adjudged the incident itself as a bizarre, out-of-character action. This was the view shared by the other character

M.C.D. Presents

MADNESS

SAVOY, LIMERICK

THURSDAY, 24th OCTOBER, 1985

Doors open 8.00 p.m.

ADMISSION — — £7.00 Balcony

No. 153

CONDITIONS OF SALE
No Alcohol; No Refunds; No Re-
admission; No Cameras or Recorders.
Ticket Holder assumes all risk of
injury and all responsibility for
property lost, destruction or theft
and releases the Promoters from all liability therefor. This ticket
is not to be resold; any violation will render it invalid.
Under 16's must be accompanied by an Adult.
To be Retained Right of Admission Reserved.

event to Eastwoods but one can be quite sure they were happy enough to see the Mayor of Limerick, Pat Kennedy, complaining about it on the front page of the *Limerick Leader*, the old adage about bad publicity being undoubtedly applicable in this instance.²¹

The main theatre itself was relatively quiet but was filled in October and November by two contrasting acts – in October the nutty boys, Madness, came to town with their effervescent ska-beat sound and in November the older patrons of the Savoy returned in droves to hear 'the new Caruso', tenor, Mario Malagnini (the first and only music act in the Savoy's history to hit the £10 mark for tickets). However, a gala show planned for the theatre's 50th birthday was abandoned and, instead, heavy rockers, Mama's Boys (formerly known as Pulse) performed on the occasion – perhaps a final sign that the rock and roll generation was now firmly in charge.

The Savoy was now 'hopping' – on any given weekend six or more acts might be playing at the various venues in the complex. And, very encouragingly for the local music scene, Limerick bands were able to draw crowds as effectively as visiting acts. The Top Floor regularly hosted local bands like Frontline, The Groove, Garfield Soul & Blues Revue, Toucandance and Tuesday Blue. The O'Malleys played every Sunday night and never failed to draw a big crowd for their anarchic blend of country, trad, rock and roll and the occasional bit of Hungarian folk music too! Their hilarious parody of U2's song, *Bad*, and Ger Costello's rendition of Joe Dolan songs in the style of Bob Dylan would have audiences begging for mercy!



Toucandance - Mike Ryan, Seán Fox, Mary Yelverton, Eamonn Hehir, Des O'Dwyer, Des O'Grady



The O'Malleys - Joe Maguire, Brian Mulcahy, Ger Costello, Peter Donnelly, Eddie Clancy. Guitarist, Tom Cronin, not in picture (By Darren and Derek Towell)

The theatre itself was in reasonably regular action. There were concerts by Christy Moore, Makem and Clancy (now catching up on Horslips for the number of times they visited the Savoy), internationally famous heavy metal band Def Leppard and The Damned (a tiny crowd of about 50 witness punk music making its belated debut at the Savoy). While Shane Foley in his *Limrock* column in the *Limerick Leader* (at last someone who knew something about rock music was writing in the local press) bemoaned the fact that Limerick was missing out on bands that should have been coming here,²² a full page ad for the Savoy listed the following acts as 'coming soon' attractions in November – Status Quo, The Damned (with Blue in Heaven),

Big Country, Mary Coughlan and Maura O'Connell. This was a very healthy and varied line-up for a couple of November weeks in Limerick. And these concerts were all *in addition* to whatever gigs were happening at the Top Floor and other venues in the Savoy complex!

The hot streak hit a bump in the road with the failure of the Howard Jones concert in March 1987. The attendance of only about 500 illustrated the sometimes ephemeral, fleeting nature of pop music fame – had Jones played the same venue one year earlier he would undoubtedly have filled it but now, with memory of his several big hits fading, filling one third of the Savoy's seats was all he could manage.

Unlike Tony O'Mara, who appeared to view such failures as betrayals of himself, or at least of the Savoy, by the people of Limerick, Murray didn't become angry about these things. He saw it more as the nature of the business he was in. He did express some bemusement at trying to figure out what would be a success and what wouldn't – some shows which he expected to be very successful didn't go so well while others, which he just hoped would do ok, would sell out.²³

But if anyone was in need of a sense of perspective about these things the tragic event at the Savoy the following month would certainly have provided that. The Pitz was one of the venues at the Savoy complex, situated in the old foyer of the



The Groove - Paul Healy, Brian Healy, Charlie Smith, Alan Cheevers, Brendan Wallace

theatre. One of the acts to play there regularly was the jazz band, Hotfoot, from Dublin, who had a Thursday night residency. After their gig on the night of Thursday 9th April, the bass player, Declan McNelis, was loading gear into the band's van at the Henry Street side of the Savoy when he was approached by a man with whom he had earlier had a disagreement. McNelis was assaulted and fell and struck his head. Initially he appeared not to be badly injured but he later collapsed and was brought to Barrington's Hospital. He was subsequently moved to Cork Regional Hospital where he died late on Sunday night.

This tragedy shocked and distressed the entire Irish music community. McNelis had been a professional musician for over a decade and was known and well-liked by many in the business.²⁴ He was a quiet, gentle, unassuming character who had played with many of the best-known Irish acts including Christy Moore who later said that he could never contemplate playing the Savoy again because of the emotional association the venue now had for him following his friend's death.²⁵

All of Limerick's top bands – Tuesday Blue, Toucandance, The Groove, The O'Malleys, Barry Warner and others – participated in a benefit gig for McNelis's family at the Savoy later that month. A similar benefit gig also took place in Dublin.

Energy and imagination continued to be poured into the Savoy project. As well as all the regular music activities now taking



The Freddie White Band, 1979, with Declan McNelis at far left

place there were also some rather unusual bookings – a group of Chinese Kung Fu and Qigong performers, world championship wrestling featuring Giant Haystacks et. al., and a snake charmer among the attractions offered.

In the theatre between May and year end there were performances by Billy Connolly, The Dubliners, Cry Before Dawn, Mary Coughlan, tenor, Denis O'Neill, Paul Brady, Bad Manners, Lloyd Cole & The Commotions, Suzanne Vega



The Savoy

(Picture by Michael Cowhey, courtesy Seán Curtin, *Stroll Down Memory Lane*, vol. 1)

and The Hothouse Flowers – possibly the busiest year in the theatre since the 1975 re-opening.

New Year 1988 kicked off with a refurbished Pitz, a Mary Black concert in the theatre and an announcement that the Savoy would host the local *Tops of the Town* heats and the national semi-finals of the competition. All looked set for another good year at the Savoy.

Then, on Thursday 4th February 1988, tragedy struck the Savoy once more. This time, on top of the human tragedy, came a tragedy for all of Limerick. On his way home to Lisnagry his car went out of control and in the subsequent collision Brendan Murray was killed.²⁶

While one has to acknowledge the key role Tony O'Mara played in rescuing and sustaining the Savoy since 1975, it would have been impossible for him to do so without Brendan Murray. It was Murray's sharp business acumen, willingness to take chances, boundless energy, love of music but, most of all, his love of the Savoy itself which had enabled it to survive through the previous decade. This is not to suggest that he was some kind of saintly figure – he was, after all, a shrewd and hard-nosed businessman and reputed not to always be the easiest person for bands to deal with. But the truth is that the death of this one person sounded the death knell for Limerick's cherished Savoy – there simply was no-one who would be able to do what he had done. Tony O'Mara commented that were it not for Murray's initiative and enterprise, "the Savoy would have closed years ago."

One has to speculate about what might have happened if Brendan Murray had not died in that crash at the extremely young age of 33, considering what he had already achieved in his life.

It appears to be little-known that on the day after he died Brendan Murray was scheduled to sign the papers to purchase the Savoy outright.²⁷ He had major plans for the development of the theatre, including the replacement of much of the stalls seating with portable seats so that the theatre could be properly adapted for the rock concerts he envisaged bringing to the theatre.²⁸

It is chilling to consider that, had he lived, Mr. Murray could still possibly be running the Savoy Theatre and today be bringing some of the world's great acts to Limerick.²⁹

The story of the Savoy Theatre after the death of Brendan Murray constitutes a mere epilogue that ends with the wrecking ball. Mr. O'Mara stated that he no longer had any plans for the Savoy; he clearly was not going to attempt to keep it going without Murray. Some final bookings were filled – the last concert was by Mary Black³⁰ and the last big show to take place on the Savoy's stage was the local area *Tops of the Town* final on Saturday, 26th March 1988.

As in 1975 there were various calls from local politicians to save the Savoy but this time there was to be no reprieve. Surely one of the saddest front pages of the

Limerick Leader in its history was that of Monday 28th March 1988 – it featured two stories, one headlined "Closedown [of Barrington's Hospital] Commences" and the other, "The Savoy's Last Big Audience." At least the edifice of Barrington's remains in place on George's Quay today whereas, in May 1989 Limerick looked on sadly as the Savoy Theatre was demolished.

APPENDIX (on-line)³¹

REFERENCES

- 1 For an analysis of the changes that occurred in Limerick during this period see "Aspects of socio-economic development in Limerick City since 1970: a geographer's perspective" by Des McCafferty in *Limerick: History and Society* ed. by Liam Irwin et. al., 2009.
- 2 "Memories of the Savoy" by Anthony Riordan, *Old Limerick Journal*, no. 26, Winter 1989
"Memoirs of a Savoy Pageboy" by Joe Malone, *Old Limerick Journal*, no. 1, December 1979
"When God Save the Queen was played in the Savoy" by Denis O'Shaughnessy in his book, *Stories of Limerick*, 2006
Earl Connolly wrote about the history of the Savoy on many occasions in his "E.C." column in the *Limerick Leader*. Some of these articles are held in the 'Savoy' file in the Local Studies Department of Limerick City Library
- 3 The Dubliners made one further appearance at the Savoy, in 1987, bringing their total number of appearances there to 14. The highest number of appearances during the period 1966-1988 was 17, by the RTE Symphony Orchestra; The Dubliners came next, followed by Horslips with 13, Jack Cruise productions, 11 and Makem & Clancy, 9.
- 4 Use search terms "Rory Gallagher Savoy Limerick" at www.youtube.com or use the following url – http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=rory+gallagher+savoy+limerick&aq=0
- 5 This attendance figure is from anecdotal evidence only – the actual figure may have been somewhat higher.
- 6 "Teenagers riot in Savoy", *Limerick Leader*, 22/12/1975, p1.
- 7 "New-style Savoy?", *Limerick Leader*, 4/12/1976, p20.
- 8 "Clapton here?", *Limerick Leader*, 2/4/1977, p8.
- 9 "Eric Clapton: the autobiography" by Eric Clapton, 2007.
- 10 "Limerick on trial", *Limerick Leader*, 8/9/1979, p8.
- 11 "Band cancels concert in racism row", *Irish Times*, 21/11/1979, p1.
- 12 "Murray down a cool £3,000", *Limerick Leader*, 23/2/1980.
- 13 Graham Parker and The Rumour had played there in 1978 but whether one would include this group in the 'punk/new wave' category could be debated.
- 14 "Heads were rolled" by Bill Graham, *Hot Press*, vol. 3, no. 17, Feb. 1980, p5.
- 15 "Theatre facing the final curtain? Last chance for the Savoy stage", *Limerick Leader*, 22/11/1980, p1.
- 16 "Agent robbed US pop group", *Irish Times*, 3/7/1981, p11 & "Limerick men get jail for robbery", *Limerick Leader*, 4/7/1981.
- 17 "City was offered Savoy free of charge", *Limerick Leader* 17/4/1982, p1&4.
- 18 "Mayor asks Govt for cash for Savoy", *Limerick Leader*, 17/4/1982, p2.
- 19 Among the acts that performed at Leisureland, Galway on tours that did not include any Limerick date between 1982 and 1986 were, U2, UB40, Simple Minds, Big Country (who played in Limerick a couple of years later), Simply Red, Elvis Costello, Joe Jackson, The Waterboys and The Boomtown Rats.
- 20 The Pink Elephant was far ahead of its competition in the mid-1980s; Murray had installed banks of monitors, showing the latest video hits, as well as the first video jukebox in Limerick.
- 21 "Mayor objects to mud fight", *Limerick Leader*, 10/8/1985, p1.
- 22 "Promotion opportunity", *Limerick Leader*, 8/10/1986, p6.
- 23 "Limerick on trial", *Limerick Leader*, 8/9/1979, p8.
- 24 "Declan McNelis: an appreciation", *Irish Times*, 14/4/1987, p11.
- 25 Christy Moore, in an interview with Mike Maguire and Helena Close for *Hatch 33*, journal of the Limerick Unemployed Centre, September 1987.
- 26 "Top showbiz personality killed in motor crash", *Limerick Leader*, 6/2/1988, p1&2.
- 27 "Big shows at Savoy in danger", *Limerick Leader*, 2/3/1988, p1 – "A spokesman for Murray Sweeney, Solrs. confirmed to the *Limerick Leader* that on the eve of his death, Mr. Murray (no relation) had put together a package to purchase the Savoy and that contracts were to have been finalised a day later."
- 28 Lorcan Murray, in an interview with Mike Maguire for this article, April 2010.
- 29 Murray's brothers, Frank, Kieran and Lorcan, all believe there is every chance this could be the case. Lorcan, in particular, believes that Brendan would have relished and thrived on the challenges of the changing technologies and music styles of the past 20 years.
- 30 A concert by Rory Gallagher was advertised for 24th February but it has not been ascertained if this took place – Brendan Murray's brothers are convinced that it didn't. This is a pity as a Rory Gallagher concert would have been a neat bookend to the Savoy's rock and roll history, given that Gallagher's, with his band, Taste, was the first real rock concert there, in 1970.
- 31 For an online appendix to this article which gives a listing of all events at the Savoy from 1966 to 1988 go to: www.limerick.ie/library/localstudies/localstudiesbooksandjournals/theoldlimerickjournalcontentsofvol36-43