



SAM

by Gaye Teather

From the very first encounter with Sam Millar, you are struck by his sheer joie de vivre and energy and if you have the good fortune to hear or see him perform his music you will see that his happiness and enthusiasm permeate each and every song. Recently nominated Newcomer of the Year in the Horizon Awards and having performed at the Americana International Show, Sam is currently enjoying the success that he has long deserved. I managed to catch up with him recently and we chatted about his career to date and his plans for the future.

Born into an Irish family who performed Country and traditional pop songs of the era, Sam was singing with them from the age of seven and there was no doubt in his mind, even then, that his future lay in music. He told me, 'I can honestly say it was my ambition as far back as I can remember. My first gig was at a working men's club in Hackney where I often went with my family. I sang I Can Help by Billy Swan and afterwards a man came over and held out a generous amount of money. At seven years of age and coming from a poor family, I thought I'd won the pools.'

Inspired by his family and in particular his father who taught him to play the guitar, the young Sam began listening to a wide variety of artists as diverse as Johnny Cash, Glen Campbell and the Eagles to Michael Jackson, Paul McCartney and Liberace, all of whom were to shape his future career in different ways. He also cites Elvis as a major influence on his musical career.

As a talented songwriter for some 20 years, Sam has produced some excellent material and in 2002 he sent a demo of his work to the head of CMR in Nashville which led to a meeting with the owner, Lee Williams, who told him, 'pack your bags, you're going to Nashville'.

Countless hours in the studio resulted in 12 tracks, one of which, She Is Just Too Hot For Me was released as a single and subsequently nominated for Best Single in the Country Radio Awards in 2003. The song also featured on numerous tv broadcasts and radio stations throughout

To the uninitiated, Country music is rife with misconceptions and myths. The stereotypical image of American cowboys raised on farms singing maudlin songs about cheating, drinking and lying is still uppermost in the minds of many. When it comes to British Country music, strangely enough, the image isn't that much different and our own home grown talent has the hardest job in convincing an often naive public that Country music really doesn't have to be like that. Who will stand up and say, 'Hey, we are Country but we are different?' Cue Sam Millar!

MILLAR

the UK and Europe. That debut album, 9 Hours 2 Nashville, saw Sam's feet firmly planted on the road to success. Constantly inspired to write, he soon had 11 more tracks penned and ready to share with the world and a second trip to Nashville resulted in his latest album, Saturday Night which features all 11 plus one cover version of the Johnny Nash hit, I Can See Clearly Now. The album proved to be an instant success attracting glowing reviews and being hailed as Sam's best work to date.

As the title suggests, the theme of the album sets out to promote the fun and pleasure of a Saturday night out and it does just that. He has that rare ability to create around himself an atmosphere of happiness and fun that is incredibly infectious. That quality extends into his music, resulting in a collection of songs that raise the spirits imbuing every song with the feel good factor.

Thank You Very Much released as a promotional single, picked up numerous plays worldwide and charted in the top 20 of no less than three indie charts. The unusually titled, Just Give Me One Beautiful Girl On A Horse With Some Lemonade is receiving regular airplay and attracting much interest.

At the start of this year he was at number one in the Country music charts and has reached the same position in various other charts where he has remained for several weeks at a time. Sam is delighted that dancers, too, are enjoying his music and in particular his song, Saturday Night.

'What a thrill it is for me that a dance has been choreographed to the title track from my album. I now have to learn the steps to it.' He adds, laughing, 'Oh, dear, watch out.' Asked about his own dancing abilities Sam says, 'I love dancing and try to put a little Sammy Davis Junior into my performance but line dancing is something I love to see. People in a line co-ordinating steps is just amazing and puts me in mind of Michael Jackson and his Thriller routine.' As a fan of Michael Jackson, Sammy Davis Junior and Liberace, he has had some excellent role models and is very much the showman himself when on stage. A natural born entertainer, he just loves to perform. I asked him what he enjoys most about his craft and his reply was 'I just love

everything about the entertainment business. I would perform on a street corner. I've played the Birmingham NEC, radio and tv are so much fun and I just love songwriting. Lionel Bart of Oliver fame once gave me some good tips and one thing he taught me was how not to write a song. I love it. It's like playing a game of chess but there is only one player, me.'

It's impossible to feel down for long when in Sam's company. His personality just sparkles and talking of sparkling, I asked him about his famous 'flashing' shirt which is fast becoming a trademark of his stage appearances. 'Well, it's like this', he began, 'I had a late booking at the famous Lakeside complex in Frimley and it was too late to get a band together, so I asked my four year old daughter, Josie, what her daddy might do to stand out all alone on that big stage. Her reply was instant. 'Wear lights in your shirt, dad.' I laughed but then I thought about it and my admiration for Liberace and the next thing, my son Alfie, had produced Christmas lights which we embroidered into my shirt.' The image was born!

When speaking with him, the overriding feeling you get is one of joy. He exudes happiness and enthusiasm. Here is a man who is happy with his life and his work. Sam told me that his only ambition yet to be realised is, 'to be recognised as a true singer/songwriter. It is so hard, especially in Britain, to get the recognition. There are so many musicians out there striving to become well known and it's really difficult.' The decision to turn professional wasn't made lightly but two years ago Sam took the plunge, leaving his job as a school caretaker to embark on a full time musical career which he is pleased to say paid off. In a world where laughter seems to be in short supply, we need people like Sam Millar. His endearing sense of fun, superb voice, undeniable talent for songwriting and ebullient approach to life will convince the most hardened sceptics that Country music can and should be fun.

If you go to see Sam at one of his gigs you won't just be sung to, you will be thoroughly entertained, energised and uplifted by a man who is not only extremely talented but also a genuinely nice person. For details of Sam's music, bookings etc visit www.sammillar.com.

