

ALY BAIN BIOGRAPHY



Dr Aly Bain MBE

Aly Bain is Scotland's supreme traditional style fiddler. His playing is unique – driving, impassioned and pure – with vibrant, unmistakable tone that has earned him a following of ardent fans throughout the world. Born in Lerwick, Shetland 15th May 1946, Aly began playing the fiddle at the age of eleven. In his early twenties he headed to mainland Scotland to make Edinburgh his home and musical base. His dramatic playing, with superb tone and technical ability brought early recognition as the outstanding traditional musician of the folk music revival, and almost overnight, raised the level of expectation for music lovers throughout the country; Aly embarked on a life of intensive playing, recording and travel that continues to this day.

In the early days Aly formed part of the band The Humblebums with two other 'unknowns' Gerry Rafferty and Billy Connolly. Subsequently he helped establish the Edinburgh folk band Boys of the Lough, with whom he toured extensively and recorded for many years: producing more than 30 albums and receiving several honorary citizenships in the USA. Simultaneously, Aly pursued a solo career in collaborative and television projects.

Although Aly's musical base is Edinburgh his extensive travels have led to an appreciation and mastery of many kinds of music. In collaboration with Pelicula Films he has applied this knowledge to the production of networked television series: The Down Home Recordings; The Shetland Sessions; Aly Bain Meets The Cajuns, and six series of Transatlantic Sessions – in 2010, winning the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards "Good Tradition Award" and in 2011, the MG Alba Trad Awards "Music In The Media" award.

Since the early eighties Aly has regularly collaborated and recorded with prominent musicians from across the globe – including: Jerry Douglas; Emmylou Harris; Mark O'Connor; Jay Ungar; Mary Black; Iris DeMent; Mairead Ni Mhaonaigh; Dan Tyminski; Rosanne Cash; James Taylor; Eddi Reader; Darrell Scott; Michael Doucet; Paul Brady; John Martyn; Martha Wainwright; Kate and Anna McGarrigle; Eric Bibb; Danny Thompson; Karen Matheson; Donal Lunny; Joan Osborne Allison Moorer; Bruce Molsky and Allan MacDonald – bringing traditional music to a constantly widening audience.

His teaming up – star studded collision – with the brilliant accordionist/ composer Phil Cunningham has added yet another dimension of appreciation for audiences everywhere – in 2005, winning the BBC's coveted "Best Duo of the Year" award.

Aly and Phil have to date produced eight joint albums: The Pearl; The Ruby; Another Gem; Spring The Summer Long; The Best Of Aly Bain & Phil Cunningham; Roads Not Travelled; Portrait; Five And Twenty and in 2013 The Best Of Aly Bain & Phil Cunningham, Vol.2. Their sell-out annual Scottish Tour – now in its twenty-sixth – has become something of a national institution.

Aly also tours with Swedish multi-instrumentalist Ale Möller and together they have created two albums – Fully Rigged, and Beyond The Stacks – in celebration of a shared Nordic heritage. In 2009, joined by esteemed American old-time

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fiddler and singer Bruce Molsky, the trio releasing their first joint album: Meeting Point in 2013.

Aly's collaboration with Norwegian composer Henning Sommero and the Scottish Ensemble saw the release of the widely acclaimed album Follow the Moonstone. His regular appearances at the Usher Hall and other venues as a star guest of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra are looked forward to by orchestra and public alike.

Following a concert in August 2005 Mike Russell of the Herald wrote:

"These days he has gone beyond mere technique. As was once said of Paganini, it is hard to know if he is playing the music, or the music is playing him."

Aly Bain has received many honours for his services to music: in 1989 he received a Silver Disc from the Record Industry Association for his Aly Meets the Cajuns recording. A further Silver Disc followed in 1991 for The Pearl recorded on Aly's own Edinburgh Record Label 'Whirlie Records'. His autobiography, 'Fiddler On The Loose', co-written with Alistair Clarke was published by Mainstream in 1983.

In 1992 Aly Bain was awarded the MBE for his services to music. To date he has received six Honorary Doctorates – five Doctor of Music (DMus) degrees: The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (2003); The Open University (2005); Glasgow Caledonian University; The University of St Andrews and Edinburgh University (2009). In addition, in 2007, Aly was awarded Doctor of Letters from Glasgow Caledonian University for his contributions to music and to the education and encouragement of young musicians.

In celebration of his 60th year, in 2006, Aly was given a Civic Reception by Edinburgh City's Lord Provost. In the same year, an hour long television program documenting Aly Bain's life and works was broadcast by the BBC. Also in 2006, Aly Bain was inducted into the Scots Traditional Music Hall of Fame. In 2012 he was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Celtic Connections, BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards.

In 2009 Aly collaborated with classicist, Nicola Benedetti to create an hour long television programme for BBC Scotland: "When Nicola Benedetti Met Aly Bain".

In 2010, together with Pelicula Films and Billy Connolly, Aly made a further hour long TV programme for the BBC, entitled: "Fishing for Poetry", celebrating the life and works of his friend, the late, great Scottish Poet, Norman MacCaig.

Today, Aly continues to be an ambassador for Scotland abroad and a powerful advocate for traditional music.

Undoubtedly his greatest gift, and most lasting achievement, has been to inspire many thousands of young people to take up fiddle playing and traditional music.

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