



All the fun of the shows

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The Shetland Times

Established 1872

Printed and published in Shetland

Friday, 17th August, 2012 • 95 pence

Inspirational walker arrives in town



MEMBERS of the Lerwick Junior Jarl's Squad provide a guard of honour for Phil Packer at Clickimin. Story, p.3. **Photo:** Ben Mullay

Pharmacy could take over PO at Scalloway

By RYAN TAYLOR

A controversial new pharmacy in the heart of Scalloway could provide a post office once Yealtland Books gives up the service.

The final touches are currently being made to Norsepharm Ltd's development on the village's waterfront next to the Kiln Bar in time for an anticipated opening later this month – although no firm date has been set.

News emerged on Friday that the small bookseller was giving up the post office side of the business, having run it since 2008.

Norsepharm's Torquil Clyde told *The Shetland Times* yesterday he would be interested in taking over the service, although he admitted other businesses in the village would no doubt also be keen.

He said delays in getting groundworks completed for the necessary water connections and other external works were the only things holding up the new shop.

Mr Clyde will attend a meeting with NHS Shetland's pharmacy committee next week to seek the approval of a pharmacy licence.

He said: "I hope the pharmacy will be open by the end of August. We do hope to be open in the next few weeks, so we shouldn't be too far away. The building is more or less complete."

When news of the pharmacy broke last year it sparked fears over the future of the nearby doctor's practice, which has relied on its dispensing income for a third of its annual income. Many turned out at a public meeting to voice their concerns over the plans.

Patients at the practice have now been told dispensing of prescriptions there will stop from 14th September.

The new pharmacy is also unpopular with owners of the nearby Scalloway Hotel, Peter and Caroline McKenzie, who say the building blots out picturesque views out of the harbour.

Mr Clyde admitted running the post office could be a way of getting people through his door who otherwise may not have been keen to support his business.

He said: "The post office is a great thing in the UK. I can see the logic of running it. The problem is all the other shops are interested as well, so it depends which shop is

(Continued on page two)

Mareel poised to open doors at last despite another raft of snags

■ Cancelled DJ Kutski gig may result in compensation claim

■ Builders DITT still owed six-figure sum following dispute

By JOHN ROBERTSON

Last-minute delays with the completion certificate have again thwarted Shetland Arts' plan to open Mareel this week for its first-ever concerts and public film screenings.

The latest frustration is due to a failure to satisfy the remaining requirements of Shetland Islands Council's building standards team. A list of outstanding matters was issued to the arts agency on Wednesday, one of which is understood to relate to the fire alarm system.

The council's head of planning Iain McDiarmid said yesterday he expected to receive the outstanding information from Shetland Arts "imminently", which would clear the way for the £12 million entertainments complex to open. "As soon as

we get it we will be dealing with it," he said.

The breakthrough – if it comes – is too late for local promoter Klub Revolution which is set to lodge a compensation claim for up to £10,000 from Shetland Arts. It comes after Mareel was unable to stage what should have been the first event tomorrow – a night of hard dance music with superstar DJ Kutski.

Alan McLeod of Klub Revolution said he was "bitterly disappointed" when it was confirmed on Wednesday that the venue was not going to be ready despite assurances given "at every juncture" by Mareel management when he was planning the event.

He has been able to relocate to the Hamnavoe Hall in Burra at considerable loss and inconvenience, he said yesterday. "It's

been a busy 12 hours and a hell of a lot of work."

Meanwhile, it has emerged that builders DITT are still owed a six-figure sum of money by Shetland Arts which it had withheld due to a dispute over technical contractual issues. Recently an arbitrator ruled that the arts agency must hand the payment over.

The issue was not denied yesterday by DITT director Peter Tait although he declined to go into detail. But he said it had not affected preparations for opening Mareel with Shetland Arts having had control of the building for several weeks to fit it out.

Only a small amount of work remained to be done by DITT yesterday and today, he said, and the company was "keen to get the building off our hands as quickly as possible".

Shetland Arts director Gwilym Gibbons was not available to comment and give an update on the remaining problems as we went to press.

There is some concern that what is now scheduled as the first concert – Tuesday's visit by US alternative country singer Devon Sproule – may have to move to the Garrison Theatre. Promoter Neil Riddell said the event would go ahead whether or not Mareel was available.

The last-minute problems and cancellations generate the kind of organisational headaches and bad publicity that Mareel and Shetland Arts do not need right now as they seek community support for the controversial £12.2 million venue and cinema.

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THE NEW DEAL

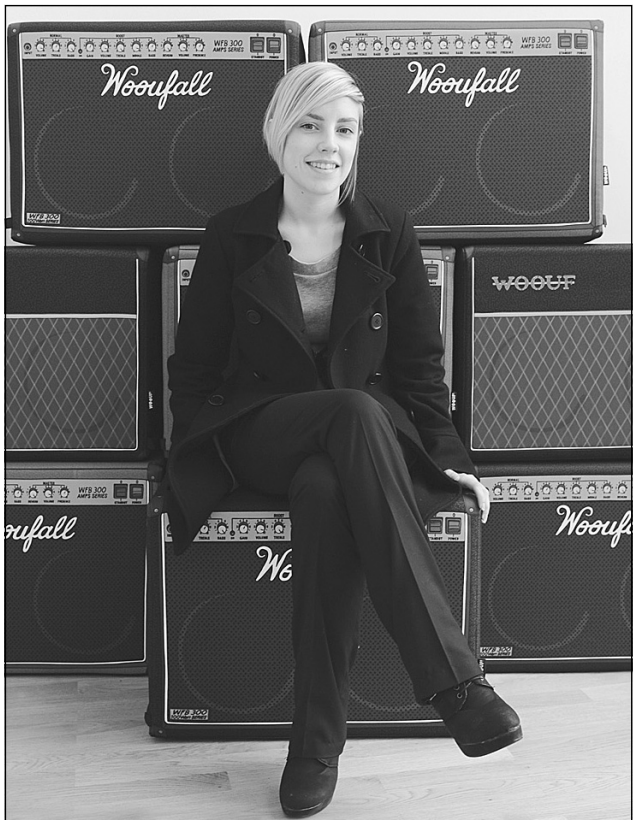
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SIMPLY UNBEATABLE

New venue will be trendy, comfortable,

A local councillor once ranted that a bomb should be planted under Mareel. But now, after being dogged by years of controversy and delay, the £12 million dream has been delivered. *Shetland Times* reporter John Robertson got the guided tour . . .



Shetland Arts marketing officer Lisa Ward lounging on one of the Woof! pouffes in the cafe-bar. Photo: Dave Donaldson



An area to mingle in upstairs outside two cinema screens.

Photo: Dave Donaldson

Dear people of Shetland – you are at last about to enjoy some of the most stunning sights and sounds of your life inside Mareel's revolving door. I am lucky enough to have seen the future of our finest entertainment: it begins next week and I for one cannot wait.

From the big comfy seats of Screen 1 we watched thunderous trailers for Hollywood's newest 3D blockbusters and it is hard to believe that this hotly debated 161-seat cinema is going to be anything other than a fabulous success. At weekends it will be bursting with bug-eyed youngsters queuing for this riveting new social experience and you will be lucky to get a seat.

Dig out the 3D specs and feast your eyes in the coming weeks on *Brave*, *The Amazing Spider-Man*, the new Batman film *The Dark Knight Rises*, *Prometheus* and *Ice Age 4*.

Projectionist and lighting chief Keith Morrison even treated us to a preview of next year's 3D remake of the classic *Great Gatsby*, with Leonardo DiCaprio's giant cigar sticking so far out of the screen it was almost in your face. This is cinema but not as we've known it.

Shetland Arts says the key to getting major releases up to Shetland quickly is that a venue must undertake to give a film at least 21 screenings – something never possible at the Garrison Theatre with its limited appeal and limited availability. Apparently it only takes eight punters to make a screening pay.

Already pasted up on the advertising hoardings at the North

Ness is a host of other visual feasts including *Lawless*, *Beauty and the Beast 3D*, *The Hobbit* and, for the more discerning, *Las Acacias* and *The Last Projectionist*.

It will cost up to £8.50 (£6.50 concessions) to get in to a 3D film at peak viewing time on a Friday and Saturday evening. 2D films will cost £1 less. For £15 you can buy a Gold Card giving unlimited access to films at any time for a whole month. Does that not sound like the best bargain in Shetland this century?

It is a relief to report there is an extravagance of legroom so you can avoid that awful cramped-up knees feeling and the raking of the seats is so deep that even the big, bushy heads of the tallest Shetlanders will not spoil your gaze into Jodie Foster's pin-sharp eyes.

Away from the bustle of peak times, older folks can meet up on Tuesday mornings for the Senior Screenings of recent and classic films, costing £4 with free cake, biscuits and tea or coffee thrown in.

Downstairs at reception you can indulge in all the unhealthy fripperies associated with a trip to the "movies": fresh popcorn, nachos, pick 'n' mix and the rest.

Of course, the cinemas are licensed too so if a pint of real ale tops off your cinematic experience you can have it sitting in the metal container at the end of your seat.

And no, you can't hear overspill from music gigs in the main venue, as some of Mareel's detractors have speculated. It has been tested with the PA cranked up far too loud and "almost" nothing was heard once the

big doors swished shut.

Just along the corridor is the cosy Screen 2 with 37 seats. This is where special interest films will be shown, such as world and independent cinema and documentaries. But it won't all be po-faced and intellectual because you can hire it out for £60 and bring your friends. With food and drink thrown in you could be looking at as little as £8 a head for a cracking time out.

Already there is a henny party booked in for a knees-up and a private screening of last year's hot comedy *Bridesmaids*. If you screen your own home-made DVDs (I don't mean bootlegs) it will cost nothing extra. Whatever you want to see, from a Rush rock concert to a private screening of *Citizen Kane*, the staff at Mareel will be able to quote you a price for how much it will cost to license the performance.

Okay, by this point you've obviously twigged that in the poisonous Mareel controversy I'm biased. I'm a supporter and have been since day one when, as a trustee of the Shetland Arts Trust in the late 1980s/early 1990s, we proposed a venue/cinema, originally known as The Shed.

I've had nothing to do with the project since and have nursed doubts along the road, particularly as the project became ever grander and further from the original idea of a basic multi-purpose venue.

Viewing it now, courtesy of marketing officer Lisa Ward, the inside of the giant tin shed is indeed grand, magnificent even. It exudes quality and style but it does not strike you as any more extravagant

than the Clickimin Centre.

Everywhere is the sweet smell of new wood, which Lisa says reminds her of a sauna.

Some may even be surprised by the rather drab decor of the foyer with bare concrete pillars which are perhaps more at home in a multi-storey car park. But that is not the bit of this complicated building that matters.

The centrepiece is the 600-capacity auditorium with its high balcony, meaty lighting rig and a massive low stage with a cloth backdrop of sparkling stars. From upstairs it is vaguely reminiscent of the classic North Star view but there any resemblance to that squalid death trap ends.

In here we should get to experience great orchestras, some of the hottest bands from every musical field and the best of Shetland's fine artists.

Every true music fan in Shetland is probably desperate to hear who is going to be playing in the venue in the coming months, but all I can tell you is that a tasty line-up is promised with big names among it.

It's testament to the quality of the venue and the interest being generated already down south that the Mareel people have been able to sign up a famous British rock singer (not yet revealed) to curate the first season of bands in the run up to Christmas. Mareel is tied in with DF Concerts, promoters of T in the Park and many of the big tours in Scotland, so who knows what might be unveiled soon.

Lisa – a great performer and



The recording studio with the live room through the glass.

Photo: Dave Donaldson

Film tickets should be on sale inside two weeks

(Continued from front page)

Mr McLeod said the visit by Radio 1's DJ Kutski had been sold to the artiste on the basis that he would be among the first to play in a prestigious brand-new venue, not in a small rural hall – although he emphasised his gratitude to the Hamnavoe hall committee for moving mountains to host his event at the last minute. He said the DJ had agreed to the transfer but some of those who had bought tickets want refunds.

"What should have been a fairly profitable gig for

us which would have got us off to a good start with Mareel has now turned into a complete and utter headache.

"I can't believe that what seem to be fairly minor faults with the building couldn't be repaired before this weekend. The snagging list just seems to go on and on."

It is not the first time that broken promises from Mareel have let Klub Revolution down. Last year it had to reschedule a gig by former Happy Mondays singer Shaun Ryder, switching it out of Shetland.

There is a suspicion among some people that following the failure last Saturday to host a folk gig by Blazing Fiddles, the arts agency might have been reluctant to have a raucous rave-type event as the first-ever event in the venue.

Shetland Arts blamed "snagging" for preventing the fiddle concert, which went ahead in the Garrison as originally planned. Mr Gibbons said the building "didn't reach practical completion".

In its latest cancellation announcement on Wednesday, Shetland Arts apologised to ticket holders

and Klub Revolution. It continued: "Full practical completion of Mareel is imminent and we expect to put tickets on sale for films and other events in the next couple of weeks. Please check the Shetland Arts website and the Shetland Box Office for updates."

Mareel has taken over three years to build and was meant to open in spring last year. Slower progress led to a proposed completion date of April this year, which was pushed back to late May. Since then missed deadlines has led to mounting frustration for those eager to start enjoying the new building.

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spacious and even the beer will be tasty

musician herself – is itching to divulge names, especially “one special act” lined up for October, but she can’t. Looking at the DF website gigsinscotland.com there are many big name bands touring in the next few months, including The Charlatans, Dr Feelgood, Scissor Sisters, Mary Chapin Carpenter & Shawn Colvin, Muse and Amy Macdonald. But who knows?

It is now likely that the first gig – and so far with Mareel nothing has been very certain – will be on Tuesday when US alternative country singer Devon Sproule swings into town with her band. For the audience it will perhaps be as much about exploring and experiencing Mareel as enjoying the talents of the Virginia-based chanteuse.

It will be a seated gig, with the auditorium’s rack of tiered seats levered out of their alcove to seat about 330, including some upstairs along the side of the wooden balcony and behind the state-of-the-art 48-channel Midas mixing desk.

The power rating of your PA doesn’t much matter these days, according to production manager Iain Waddell. For the record the venue has a d&b audiotechnik Q-series compact line array. He assures me it is “bloody loud” and “more than enough” for every conceivable musical act.

Senior sound technician Jonathan Ritch is absolutely delighted with the set-up and says that down on the floor you will feel that disconcerting thump in your rib cage from the bass if it’s cranked up.

In fact, the in-house gear hidden under the stage and flying from the ceiling is so impressive that many visiting bands will only need to bring with them their instruments and one or two bits of specialised back-line amplification – if it can’t be sourced from local musicians.

If you’re not visiting the cinema or the venue every week you might be popping into the trendy and somewhat retro-looking cafe-bar with its giant glass frontage looking out onto Hay’s Dock and the Shetland Museum.

This is one place in town where punters out to socialise with pals are going to be able to enjoy an interesting pint and blether without being jostled by roaring drunks, particularly those in fancy dress.

The bar is to have a revolving array of good beers. One tap will host the best European beers, starting with Amstel and moving on to the likes of Estrella Damm and Peroni Nastro Azzurro. Another tap will serve a range of real beers from the Brewdog chain, which was set up a few years ago by guys who were sick of the limited choice offered in the pubs.

A Scottish blonde beer will be on another tap, the Harviestoun Bitter and Twisted real ale. Of course there will also be the usual Tennent’s brands to keep everybody happy.

Mareel – the star attractions

Two cinemas will show three to four films a day.

Screen 1 – 161 seats. 3D-enabled projection.

Screen 2 – 37 seats. Private hire charge from £60 plus film fee.

Gold card costs £15 a month and gives access to unlimited film screenings.

Silver card cost £10 a month for access to any film off-peak (all day Monday-Wednesday, before 5pm on Thursday and Friday or before noon on Saturday and Sunday)

Popcorn and other typical cinema snacks will be on sale. Both screens are licensed for alcoholic drinks to be taken from the bar and they have wheelchair access.

Music venue – 600 capacity standing, 330 seated. Suitable for gigs of all kinds, orchestral performances, dances, discos, weddings and conferences. Sound desk and PA equipped to world-class standard.

Cafe-bar – open for breakfast, lunch and bar snacks plus brunch at weekends. Real ale and European beers on tap. Free wi-fi throughout the building



Inside Screen 1, which is able to show the latest 3D blockbusters.

Photo: Dave Donaldson

Mareel is even to have its own special brew, a light ale being created as we speak by Unst’s beer wizard Sonny Priest at Valhalla. Real cocktails are promised later in the year and for the wine drinkers there is a carefully selected wine list.

On a fine day customers will be able to step outside and enjoy a drink on the water’s edge. Of course there is already sniping that this watering hole is elitist. But it’s just offering a bit of variety, desired by many, along with some quality.

There is even talk of having a dog-friendly policy. That could be a controversy on its own.

The cafe-bar is not large, perhaps not large enough for busy nights – of which there will surely be many. However, there is a quieter area always open upstairs, part of which can be booked.

Along with the James Bond-style chairs and retro-leather seats the cafe-bar has a pile of Woouf novelty “grab and plonk” pouffes designed to look like classic Vox and Marshall amps. No doubt folk will want to pinch them!

In this part of the building your host is the ever-popular Autumn “Minty” Robinson. She will have food and drink on offer seven days a week but so as not to compete with other outlets there will not be much in the way of hot meals.

Within the warren of rooms that make up the rest of the £12 million building are Shetland Arts offices, toilets with the best views in Shetland, a grand piano store, large dressing rooms for performers, the 60 North tourists’ radio station and a rehearsal room featuring one wall covered in mirrors and a wooden bar – not for narcissistic rockers to preen in, but for practising dance and ballet.

The recording studio and the Mac-equipped media lab, where Shetland College students will start a range of four courses next month, are not quite ready.

Wi-fi is free throughout the building. Eventually studio recordings will be able to be made of concerts, talks, comedy acts and other kinds of performance taking place anywhere in the building. These can even be burnt to CD or made available to download for audience members leaving at the end of the night.

So, that’s a quick tour of Shetland’s fabulous new palace of pleasure. Bairs will absolutely adore it. Grown-ups will be blown away. Many who have given up on going out will find a new lease of social life. Let’s go and enjoy it and make it pay.



The 600-capacity auditorium with its extendable stage.

Photo: Dave Donaldson



Part of the light and airy cafe-bar.

Photo: Dave Donaldson



One of the features of the entrance foyer and stairs in Mareel.

Photo: Dave Donaldson