

# the Sunday MUSIC

Band on success, fans and wanting Sheeran support

## SKIP TO IT



**FOLK band Skippinish have built up such a loyal following that they sold out EVERY gig they played in 2017 – and now they are gearing up for their biggest show yet.**

The quirky traditional outfit – who have had a string of download hits – are getting ready to play Edinburgh's Usher Hall on May 18.

And 2,500 devoted fans will lap it up.

Former fisherman and band founder Angus MacPhail says: "The prospect of playing in front of so many people is incredibly exciting for us."

"Glasgow and the West Coast has been our main stomping ground, but there is a growing appetite for our music in the nation's capital. There has

**ON A ROLL... band, above, main pic, and superstar Ed Sheeran**

never been a better time to be involved in trad music and the whole scene has grown exponentially recently.

"We are lucky to be riding on that wave of popularity."

"It is like a dream, playing to thousands of people."

"We would never have predicted playing such large venues when we started the band almost 20 years ago."

The group was formed in 1999 by Angus and Lochaber-born Andrew Stevenson, who were both studying at the time at the Royal Conservatoire in Glasgow.

They are now on their seventh self-released album – and were named Live Act of the Year for the second time at the 2017 Trad Music Awards.

And Three-born Angus reckons they are turning mainstream music lovers into trad fans. He says: "In

the last few years we started performing our own songs and suddenly people started going wild for our gigs and recordings."

"I'm always asked why we're suddenly so popular but I've no idea. The Celtic music scene has never been as popular as it is now, so many before us made it what it is today and we're very lucky."

"A lot of people who are not usually Celtic music fans come to our gigs and they end up feeling a part of that scene."

"People are leaving our gigs on a euphoric music-fuelled high which is exhilarating."

But it's the Usher Hall which has the band – which along with Angus and Andrew has a changing line-up of traditional musicians – buzzing at the moment.

He said: "Our recent two nights at Eden Court in Inverness were incredible – the atmosphere was electric."

"We have played some big crowds and festivals over the years, but we haven't played our

own headline show in such a massive venue.

"It'll be a very special night for us and to celebrate we'll be playing some new, unheard songs as well the favourites from our back-catalogue."

"We love playing live gigs and can't wait to play the Usher Hall for the first time."

Angus, who is also playing with Skippinish at Gig At The Gail at the Drimsynie Estate, Lochgoilhead, Argyll, later this month, has a dream vision of where he'd like to be in a decade.

He said: "People ask where I think the band will be in ten years and I have a wee fantasy about doing Hampden Park supported by Ed Sheeran."

"On the other hand I might be back hauling lobster and crabs."

"There's no way of knowing but we'll certainly enjoy it in the moment until it's up."

● **Skippinish play the Gig At The Gail on May 12 and the Usher Hall on May 18**



### CRYSTAL

**WHO:** Anna Shields (vocals/guitar), Blair Crichton (guitar/vocals), Lizzie Reid (bass/vocals), Aidan McAllister (drums)

**WHERE:** Glasgow

**FOR FANS OF:** The Breeders, Wolf Alice, Nirvana  
**JIM SAYS:** Crystal's fabulous new single Heaven marks a change of direction for the band, as they move towards a grungier sound. So much so they've removed their previous EPs from streaming services to mark the fresh start.

Formed as a duo by songwriters Anna Shields and Blair Crichton in the summer of 2016, Lizzie Reid and Aidan McAllister came on board in February to complete the current line-up.

Anna told me: "Blair and I started by doing acoustic covers, but we soon realised that we couldn't express our true artistry through that."

"We progressed to a 70s pop/rock sound then bluesy rock. We have now found our sound as a grunge band. Blair and I have always been the main songwriters but working with Aidan and Lizzie we're looking forward to collaborating more with them."

Along the way Crystal have caught the eye of some big names. They opened for Paolo Nutini as



### NEW MUSIC

By Jim Gellatly

part of Edinburgh's 2016 Hogmanay celebrations, after winning a public vote organised by the Paisley singer's management. Anna said: "We never thought we'd win as we were the band with the smallest fan base. It's the biggest crowd we've ever played to and performing on a stage that size and at a gig of that scale was incredible!"

Last year the producers of legendary David Bowie collaborator Tony Visconti's Unsigned Heroes series on Sky Arts encouraged them to apply for the show. Anna explained: "Tony was creating a sort of supergroup to perform with him in London. We weren't chosen to go down to London but he really liked our submission. He came up to Glasgow for one of our gigs in Nice N

Sleazy. We got to chat with him about our style and sound. He gave us a lot of great feedback."

In March the band secured a slot at Jerry's Open House, Sailor Jerry Spiced Rum's pop-up venue in Glasgow and last month the band were chosen to showcase at the Wide Days music industry convention in Edinburgh.

Anna said: "La Belle Angele was completely packed out for our set. The crowd was mostly full of people who hadn't heard us before and music industry delegates who had been at the conference. There was a lot of pressure but we just played as good as we could and the feedback was amazing and very constructive."

New Crystal single Molly is coming soon and they play Broadcast in Glasgow on Friday. They'll also be special guests at fellow Glasgow band Delphi's Mind Games single launch at Nice N Sleazy on Saturday and will appear at Kelburn Garden Party in Ayrshire on June 29. On September 1 they are in Dumfries & Galloway for the closing day of the fifth annual Electric Fields festival, headlined by Leftfield.

**MORE:** facebook.com/CRYSTALbandx  
Jim presents a weekly showcase of New Music on Amazing Radio Sundays 2-4pm.  
[amazingradio.com](http://amazingradio.com) [jimgellatly.com](http://jimgellatly.com)

▶ Watch a video of the band playing at: [www.thescottishsun.co.uk](http://www.thescottishsun.co.uk)