

Gail Davies is a Nashville-based singer-songwriter with more than two dozen American country hits to her credit. A genuine country music trailblazer, Gail was the first female country performer to produce her own records and was also a member of the first wave of intelligent female country-rock singer-songwriters of the 1970s. A gifted, multi-faceted musician with country, bluegrass and blues leanings, she's been cited as a major influence by such diverse acts as Mary-Chapin Carpenter, Beth Nielsen Chapman, Kathy Mattea, Suzy Boggus, Pam Tillis, Lucinda Williams, Gretchen Peters, Rhonda Vincent, Highway 101, Sweethearts of the Rodeo and the Judds. I first became a Gail Davies' fan in 1978 and started working with her some 17 years later and have continued to do so ever since.

The Haley Sisters are Britain's most awarded country music duo. Jo-Ann and Becky Haley are from Yorkshire and have been making music professionally for more than 25 years, along the way recording a series of acclaimed albums. Despite all this success there is no ego with the Haley Sisters. Their down-to-earth, girls-next-door personalities and non-nonsense attitude is an endearing quality they carry off naturally. I first booked the Haley Sisters for a show in 1990 and have continued ever since to promote shows for them on a regular basis.

Brian Golbey is a British treasure. The Sussex-born singer is a multi-instrumentalist (mainly fiddle and guitar), a skilled songwriter and superb song interpreter. His passion has always been old-timey country music, with a special penchant for the legendary Jimmie Rodgers, but he's never been confined by country music and over the years has blended humour, popular standards, bluegrass, folk, western swing and mainstream country into his wide-ranging repertoire. In the early 1970s he was regularly named Britain's Best country vocalist and released a series of classic and diverse albums for a variety of labels.

Jonny Young is a mainstay of the Kentish country scene. But more than that, he is a world-renowned vocalist and acclaimed band leader of initially the Jonny Young 4 and for the past 30 years, the Jonny Young Band. The Jonny Young 4 were the first western act to venture beyond the Iron Curtain when they took their special blend of country music to Poland and Czechoslovakia. They toured extensively with major American country acts including George Hamilton IV, Skeeter Davis, Don Gibson and Red Steagall and were highly regarded by Tompall & the Glaser Brothers for their close harmony work. The Jonny Young 4 were the headline act of my first concert at the Hazlitt Theatre in 1970. Since then I've promoted dozens of concerts and gigs featuring Jonny and his Medway Mafia.

Alan West Trio is Devon's finest when it comes to acoustic country music. Alan first came to prominence more than 25 years as one half of West & Elliott (with Steve Elliott). They picked up numerous awards on the scene before Steve decided to move abroad. For the past dozen years or so Alan has worked closely with East End born Steve Black, one of the UK's finest 'undiscovered' songwriting treasures. They were joined a few years ago by young Adam Sweet, a dynamic guitarist on both electric and acoustic, not to mention a superb bluesy vocalist in his own right. I first connected with Alan when West & Elliott played a Good'n'Country Festival in Maidstone in 1992. We have maintained a working relationship ever since.

Kevin Duffy Band/Ray Duffy –I'm not as familiar with Kevin Duffy and his band as most of the other acts, but they have a tenuous connection with me. Back in the mid-1970s I came across the Duffy Brothers, initially a comedy/bluegrass trio that evolved into an internationally-acclaimed duo comprising Ray & Leo Duffy. Long ago I lost count of the number of times I booked them for shows in Kent, but it all began around 1975. Sadly Leo passed away three years ago from Cancer, but his memory and music lives on. His older brother, steel guitarist Kevin, has been leading his own country band for more than 30 years. Demonstrating the musical talent of this family, his son Melvyn Duffy is an acclaimed steel guitarist (Robbie Williams, Squeeze. First Aid Kit) and with his brothers Adrian and Chris is a member of Adrian Duffy & the Mayo Brothers. Ray Duffy, a great bluegrass vocalist, guitarist and banjo players, has for several years been a member of the Down County Boys, who've been stalwarts on the British music scene for more than 50 years.

Porridge Country Band/Rich Pickin's – the Porridge Band began life in 1975 under a long name I can barely remember that was sensibly shortened to the Ned Porridge Band. They were led by the larger-than-life Ed Pearson, who I first met in 1970. Based in Kent, they were hugely popular in the Home Counties attracting hundreds of dedicated fans to their gigs. Unlike most bands of the time, they were contemporary in style and played the latest country tunes months before any other bands. The current Porridge band features original members John and Ed Paine (drums and pedal steel respectively), along with John's wife Sandie, who joined around 1976-77 plus Ed's wife Bev on bass and Dave Lane (electric lead, vocals) who both joined when the band reformed a couple of years ago. Due to holiday commitments, Dave is not with them tonight. Rich Pickin's is an acoustic country-bluegrass band comprising Sandie Paine (vocals), John Paine (mandolin), Ed Paine (Dobro, banjo) and Bev Paine (bass). They started life some 25 years ago as Pan For Gold evolving then into Struck It Rich and finally into Rich Pickin's, with a wealth of musical experience and great taste.

Alan Cackett

50 Years in Music

September 1966 – September 2016



Alan Cackett with Ricky Skaggs

It was in September 1966 that Alan Cackett edited and produced both *Country Record Exchange* and *Record Collector* magazines. Since then Alan has been actively involved in music in various roles including magazine publishing/editor, freelance journalist, compiling CD track-listings, writing liner notes, writing and compiling two encyclopaedias, concert and gig promoter, festival organiser/promoter, artist manager, radio presenter, tour organiser/agent and in PR. For the first 30 years, it was strictly a part-time vocation as he held down a full-time position at the Kent Messenger, working in the production department. Since 1997 Alan has been involved on a full-time basis and is probably best-known as the former editor of *Maverick* magazine and for promoting live music in the Maidstone area.

Alan Cackett's Timeline

August 1961 – Started work as Apprentice printer at the Ken Messenger and began seriously collecting records and music magazines

January 1962 – Imported first records from America – took 6-8 weeks to arrive by sea

April 1962 – Produced first record sales lists using typewriter and carbon paper

March 1963 – Joined local youth club and began playing records for dancing and listening

October 1963 – Compiled listings of all records released by favourite artists to help in completing the collecting of their records

May 1964 – Had built up relationships with fellow serious record collectors across UK, America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, Poland and Czechoslovakia and traded records and information

September 1966 – Started work on the first issue of Country Record Exchange, a monthly magazine, which was published a little late in early October

October 1966 – also decided to publish Record Collector, a quarterly magazine, devoted to pop and rock'n'roll music

August 1968 – Worked on the page layouts for Opry Magazine (the forerunner of Country Music People) whilst moonlighting at Duncan Litho printers

September 1968 – Inaugural meeting of the British Country Music Association and I was co-opted onto the Committee

March 1969 – In partnership with Goff Greenwood, produced Country Music, a quarterly magazine as the voice of the BCMA, whilst still producing Country Music Monthly and Record Collector

August 1969 – teamed up with Roy Watson & Jim King to promote country music dances at Nettlestead Village Hall

August 1969 – Produced and published Jim Reeves Souvenir Book with Dolfie Griebler

September 1969 – Contributed a feature on country-rock to Sounds magazine

January 1970 – Began writing a fortnightly country music column for the Kent Evening Post – which lasted until 2001 and ran in all Kent Messenger Newspapers

March 1970 – Compiled and designed first BCMA Yearbook (which I instigated)

June 1970 – Closed down Country Music magazine and it was merged with Country Music People and I became a main features writer for the magazine

July 1970 – Promoted first country music concert at the Hazlitt Theatre Maidstone with Roy Watson starring Jonny Young 4 – since promoted over 300 at the Hazlitt

November 1970 – I was offered the editorship of Country Music People, but declined

December 1970 – started promoting weekly country music evenings at Hunting Lodge, Larkfield

January 1971 – Along with Roy Watson and Larry Adams co-hosted Kent Country Scene weekly on BBC Radio Medway (now Radio Kent)

March 1973 – Produced and published Jim Reeves & Friends book

May 1973 – Started writing pop music record reviews weekly for Maidstone, Medway & Ashford Times – continued until 1996


April 1973–end 1978 - contributed odd features to Record Mirror and Girl About Town magazines

September 1973 – Started promoting weekly gigs at the Elizabethan Barn, Tunbridge Wells

January 1974 – Promoted weekly gigs at the Maidstone United Social Club plus dances at Oakwood Park College

January 1975 – Set up Good'n'Country and promoted monthly gigs at Queens Theatre Sittingbourne; also regular country music nights at Staplehurst Village Hall; one-off concerts at Woodville Halls, Gravesend and Central Hall, Chatham plus regular concerts at the Hazlitt in Maidstone

January 1977-1983 – Promoted regular gigs at Greenways, West Malling plus concerts at the Hazlitt



July 1977 – Good'n'Country Records to release Ned Porridge Band albums

September 1979 – Passed my driving test – no more buses and trains!

January 1980 – Continued with regular gigs at the Hazlitt or the Exchange

January 1986 – Updated the Salamander Encyclopaedia of country music

June 1987 – Organised and promoted first Good'n'Country Festival at Linton

July 1988-90 – Organised Good'n'Country Festivals at Whitbread Hop Farm

September 1988 – December 1991 – weekly gigs at Woodlands, Charing, plus concerts at Orchard Theatre, Dartford, Hazlitt Maidstone and Woodville Halls, Gravesend

April 1992 – Good'n'Country Festival, Maidstone Leisure Centre; organised Czech Country Girls UK tour

August 1990-June 1992 – contributed features & reviews to Country Music Round-Up

April 1993 – Songwriters-in-the-round – Medway Arts Centre – the first in the UK

January-June 1993 – Major update of Salamander Encyclopedia of Country Music

July 1994 – Became regular contributor to Country Music International magazine

October 1994 – Wrote all the country music entries for the Penguin Encyclopedia of Popular Music

January 1996 – December 1998 – artist management with the Haley Sisters and Janette Somers

July 1997 – Left the Kent Messenger to work full-time in Music – set up AFC Publicity for PR and Tour promotion

January 1998 – Became main features writer for Country Music International

March 1998 – Wrote liner notes for Castle/Sanctuary Famous Country Music Makers (100 titles)

May 1999 – October 2001 – Manager of Niki Dean

January 2001 – wrote 200 biographies of country acts for the BBC website

November 2001 – Country Music International closed owing me money

March 2002 – In partnership with Gerry Mansfield started promoting regular gigs at the Soul Cafe, Maidstone

June 2002 – Launched Maverick magazine

January 2004 – Started writing liner notes and compiling tracks for HumpHead country releases – more than 100 titles over last 12 years. Have also compiled CDs and written liner notes for Reader's Digest, Sony Music, Hux Records, SPV, Curb Records and Universal Music

September 2007 – Talks with Paul Spencer led to the setting up a year later of the Maverick Festival

April 2008 – The CMA (Nashville) presented me with the Wesley Rose International Media Award

June 2008 – I became co-host with Roger 'Twiggy' Day of the weekly Country programme on BBC South every Wednesday

October 2011 – Maverick Magazine taken over by Hand Media – I remained as editor

November 2013 – I resigned as Maverick editor

December 2013 to present – publish my writing on my website – www.alancackett.com

June 2015 – Organised a country music concert for the Sevenoaks Festival – also the same for 2016

I never got involved in music for fame or fortune, it's always been about the passion for good music that touches me emotionally. I've always endeavoured to make music that I believe in, more popular and widely accepted. It grieves me that country music doesn't have a larger and wider audience in the UK and that we still have to put up with outdated stereotypes, especially from the mass media. Though I've not achieved my aims and objectives in the way that I would have hoped for, I do believe that I've made a difference. Nothing gives me more pleasure than to hear from a music lover that something I've written about an artist has urged them to seek out that particular act's music for themselves.

This evening is mainly about raising money for Macmillan Cancer Support. Please donate generously.

<http://www.justgiving.com/Alan-Cackett>