

## The Rant @ Duff House

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In addition to the regular programme of core events and activities this year Duff House organised a new and unique event - a weekend music festival which provided the focus of the winter 2005/6 season.

"The Rant" was inspired by the fascinating story of one James MacPherson - a local anti-hero and fiddle player, who was hanged in Banff in 1700. His story is retold in the Doric song "MacPhersons Rant" (Doric for tune is rant) a song still familiar to locals. The aim for this new festival was to celebrate and focus on the musical traditions and new musicians of the north east. We also wanted to provide quality entertainment by world-class performers that would attract new visitors to the area. This North East focus reflects one of the core objectives of our new Development Plan and the event was funded by Scottish Enterprise Grampian through Building Buchan.

The weekend opened on the Friday night with an evening performance in a marquee in the grounds of Duff House from the internationally acclaimed Celtic band 'Capercaillie'. They were ably supported by the Festival Band, a group of five professional Scottish musicians led by Duncan Wood, a resident of Cullen and Duff House supporter. The concert was very well attended and attracted over 500 people who had booked tickets through The Booth's ticket agency or from the shop at Duff House.

On Saturday evening two very popular Scottish acts performed: Karine Polwart, Winner of Best Album BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards 2005, who was joined by two musician friends; followed by Dochas, a wonderful and very popular group of young musicians from the Shetland Islands. During the day free instrumental workshops on penny whistle, fiddle and guitar were provided for local children by the Council's Instrumental Service and musicians from the festival band gave some adult workshops.

On the last day the tables were turned and it was the chance for the audience to participate with our first North East Community Showcase, which featured short but exciting performances from members of various local folk and dance groups including Local Vocals, the Portsoy Skippers, the Macduff Strathspey & Reel Society, Banff Academy with MC Ajet and the Fyvie Folk Club, to name but a few. The atmosphere in the marquee was terrific. The weekend was finished off by the Ceilidh on the Coast, an entertaining family ceilidh provided by the Ceilidh Mor Band. This day was meant to appeal to a wider age range of visitors and it was a great success.

Our aim is that the festival is an annual event, helped in the first instance with funding from Scottish Enterprise Grampian, and that it draws attention to the delights of the local area and helps to build on the success of Portsoy's Traditional Scottish Boat Festival. Together with the support of local tourism initiatives, these events are providing a real and sustained economic benefit to local businesses.

Rachel Kennedy