



The Buddy Beat



Scottish Epic Awards Winner 2011

The Buddy Beat Two-

Let Loose in London

Engagement **P**articipation **I**nnovation **C**reativity

As you all know, The Buddy Beat film "Keep the Beat....Our Journey in Rhythm" has sort of taken on a life of its own. From the start we knew we had created something special- the first showing was solely for the group and it was an emotionally charged viewing for everyone involved. Next step in the film's path was in April 2011 when Buddy Beat took over Paisley Arts Centre for a film premiere event that was attended by 100 people, including health care workers, councillors, family and friends. We then added our film to YouTube and it has had over 1200 views, from as far as Australia, Argentina and Lithuania. We have also used the film in conference settings and during the 2011 Renfrewshire Mental Health Arts & Film Festival.

So how did the film find its way to The Epic Awards? Well, our Dr Jane Bentley, or perhaps we should rename her Dr Beat after the Gloria Estefan hit of the same, secretly submitted the film. At the start of the year Jane heard back from the people at the Epic Awards that we had been shortlisted and when she told the group there was a stunned silence followed by gasps of amazement, and we celebrated that news with a mighty rumble on the drums. And then on Tuesday January 17th, Jane called me, Tom, to say that we had won the Scottish Epic Award 2011! Well, that was news of astronomical proportions and when this was fanned out to the group, the response was electric.

What exactly is the background to Epic Awards then? Taken from www.epicawards.co.uk-

"Excellence and quality of art forms is at the heart of the sector. It is therefore important to recognize the value of the sector as a core part of the broader arts ecology which is driven by creative practice, both in relation to keeping traditional art forms alive and developing new and innovative creative products. The Epic Awards 2011 are an initiative of Voluntary Arts, the national development agency for arts participation. Voluntary Arts offers information, advice, and training and development opportunities to those in the voluntary arts sector, from small local groups to large national organisations.

We work with national and regional arts and media organisations, voluntary and community organisations and through them we reach thousands of groups of local voluntary arts practitioners, all playing a vital role in promoting community cohesion, health and wellbeing. We also work with policy-makers, funders and politicians to make the voice of the voluntary arts heard and to improve the environment for everyone participating in the arts."

The jungle drums began beating.....

News of our award quickly spread around the community and Buddy Beat received many wonderful comments from the following friends-

"Congratulations to you all on your deserved Scottish Epic Award. It seems like Buddy Beat continue to do excellent work"- Richard Leckerman, Breathing Spaces Scotland

"Well done on your award - congratulations to all at Buddy Beat - well deserved. Enjoy the awards ceremony!"

Alison Cairns Chief Executive Bipolar Scotland

"That's brilliant, well done! Have a wonderful time in London and enjoy your celebrity"
-Anne Ross, former Buddy Beat member and local artist

*"That is absolutely fabulous! I am so proud that all your efforts, personal and as a group, are being recognised"- Maggi Boyd Health Improvement Practitioner - Adults Services
Renfrewshire Community Health Partnership*

"Great news about the award and no more than you deserve!"- Shena Milroy, ACUMEN

"Just a quick note to say "congratulations" to you and all involved in making the film for the award - excellent news"-Dr Trevor Lakey, Health Improvement & Inequalities Manager - Mental Health, Alcohol & Drugs, Greater Glasgow & Clyde NHS

"Many congrats to all of Buddy Beat- for all rewards well deserved!"- Greg Usrey, Health Improvement Lead (Mental Health), NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde

"Fantastic news regarding Buddy Beat and so well deserved. A huge congratulations to all the group!"- Christine Martin, Performance Programmer, Renfrewshire Arts and Museums

"A well deserved accolade and many congratulations to everyone involved. I know it is a huge team effort and awards like these cement these efforts and we look forward to welcoming Buddy Beat back to Inverclyde. I cannot wait to announce you as the award-winning Buddy Beat"- Brian Young- Lead-Mental Health Improvement/Choose Life Co-ordinator, Inverclyde CHCP, Greenock

The Epic Awards were first held last year and celebrated voluntary arts groups in England. This was such a success that it was rolled out to the rest of the UK. It is estimated that there are around 67,400 voluntary or amateur arts and crafts groups in the UK. Each country had its own winner and also a Peoples' Choice Winner, which saw people vote on Twitter, on blogs and in newspapers. A staggering 53,807 votes were cast!



And so, we received word that The Epic Awards 2011 presentation was to be held on January 30th 2012 in London at a special event. Jane and I went to represent The Buddy Beat and as the day approached, the excitement started to build up.

Jane was actually in Manchester on the big day, on the start of a two week stint in her hospital “musician in residence” project that she is a part of, and arranged to arrive in London by train. On the other hand, I nabbed an early flight and arrived at the hotel just before noon and dumped my luggage before taking off on foot, pounding the famous streets lined with gold for three hours, soaking up the sights and sounds.

I was disappointed that Her Majesty was not at home when I called with a haggis and some Tunnock’s Tea-Cakes



Met Aslan In Trafalgar Square!

Buddy Beat has been booked to perform at Westminster Abbey for the next Royal Wedding.



It was time for the big night to start, so Jane and I decided to walk to the venue, The Royal Overseas League in Park Place. We strolled by Buckingham Palace and then through Green Park. Jane thought she spied a short-cut and we could see a policeman talking to someone a few feet ahead. We plunged on only to be stopped by the policeman. When he saw us he turned and stopped us. "Excuse me, where are you going?" he asked. Jane replied that we wanted to get to the Royal Overseas League. He nodded and chuckled before saying "You can't come through here. This is St James Palace!" He must have sensed we were not evil doers and gave us directions. That episode could have made a very different newspaper headline!



The Royal Over-Seas League (ROSL) is a non-profit Commonwealth private members organisation, committed to supporting international understanding and friendship through its own social, music, arts and welfare activities and its President is The Right Honorable Lord Luce. Lord Luce is also President of Voluntary Arts and in his distinguished political career he has held the positions of Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Minister for The Arts, & Governor of Gibraltar. Knighted in 1991, he was made a Life Peer in 2000 and ordained in 2008 as Knight Companion of the Order of The Garter. Lord Luce is also the uncle to TV comedy golden girl Miranda Hart. Yes, really.

As we arrived at the steps so too did two lovely ladies- Fiona Campbell, Executive Officer, Voluntary Arts Scotland and Gillian Harrison, Support Networks Development Officer, Voluntary Arts Scotland and they seemed to realise by magic that we were Jane & Tom. We all proceeded upstairs and were met by two more Voluntary Arts ladies, one who immediately said "We totally loved your film!" while the

other shouted into another room "It's Jane and Tom from The Buddy Beat!" I was mystified for a few seconds until I realised that they all knew us from watching our film!

Once inside the main room, we were presented with a glass of wine or fresh orange and we mingled, chatting away with Fiona Campbell and Gillian Harrison. Gillian told me that she had been on the panel that chose Buddy Beat as winners. She said "*Your film just ticked so many boxes- for Engagement, for Participation, for Innovation and for Creativity. In fact I could not help but add a row of exclamation marks to the side of your group name!*" We were then introduced to the Irish runner-up, Ballymena Arts Partnership, which was represented by Councillor John Carson and Lisa Kirkwood. The Ballymena Arts Partnership is responsible for a series of showcase clubs in film, music and comedy and performance for young people, many of whom had never been to an arts event before.

Next we met the Irish winners, Phizzfest and representing that organisation was Tina Robinson and Marion Fitzpatrick. Phizzfest is a multi-artform festival run by volunteers who aim to bring together diverse communities in a spirit of friendship and cooperation.

We also met the winners from Wales, The Third Floor Gallery, represented by Joni Karanka and Bartosz Nowicki. The Third Floor Gallery won for their innovative photographic exhibitions where they contact world famous artists who send their work digitally for in-house printing and display. This means an artist can have his work exhibited for a fraction of a normal exhibition, allowing their work to reach an audience that they may not have necessarily reached before.

Lastly, the English winners were Peterborough Male Voice Choir, represented by Andy Coles and Will Prideaux. This choir was actually formed in 1935, but had seen its numbers dwindle to just 24 by 2010. The choir decided to adopt their "New Direction Project" and has seen their numbers swell to a massive 220 which includes a new female choir and a new youth choir. The choirs have gone from strength to strength, raising funds for charities such as Help for Heroes and Cancer Research.

Lord Luce then approached Jane and me and he chatted to us for five minutes. Lord Luce was utterly charming and very engaging. He asked Jane to tell him about The

Buddy Beat and then asked me what I got from being part of it. He told us that our film was “totally inspiring” and that he understood the connectivity and therapeutic values of music. He surprised both of us by saying that he too played the drums when he was younger but that “Politics got in the way!” Lord Luce added that he likes nothing better than to sit down and play the piano, letting all the worries and stresses flow away while he gets lost in the music.

The buffet was announced and we chomped away on some particularly lovely spinach samosas and tasty sausages. Just before seven we were all ushered together for the presentation to begin.

Robin Simpson, CEO of Voluntary Arts took to the floor with Lord Luce sitting to his left. Robin welcomed everyone and spoke about the quality and quantity of the entries received and the diversity of the voluntary or amateur projects. He then spoke about the real need to show recognition to the 67,000 plus voluntary or arts groups around the country. He said that last year’s Epic Awards in England had been a great success and that Voluntary Arts were delighted to roll the scheme to the rest of the country. Then Robin introduced Lord Luce.



Lord Luce took to the floor and addressed the room. He spoke with real passion of his love for the arts and how delighted he was with the quality and vast range of good

work achieved by voluntary arts groups around the country. He said that he found each of the winners inspiring before handing the floor back to Robin Simpson.

First up was the Irish winners and they gave great speeches. We knew the order of the presentations and new that we were up next. When Robin announced that it was now time for the 1st ever Scottish winners, he surprised us by reading out a quote from Fiona Hyslop, Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (each winning country had a similar message from their equivalent minister and this was something Robin joked about, saying he was amazed that they had succeeded in getting messages from each government, and all different parties!). What a wonderful touch that was for all the winners. Fiona Hyslop's statement read-

"Congratulations to Buddy Beat on winning the first Epic Award for groups in Scotland. This is a truly amazing group which demonstrates the power of the arts to change people's lives for the better. Scotland is a creative nation with a thriving cultural community and our voluntary groups play an important part in that. This project is a worthy winner of an Epic Award in the Year of Creative Scotland 2012."

Jane and I took to the floor amid loud applause. Lord Luce presented us with our award- a beautiful framed certificate, a cheque for £125.00, a GreatArt gift voucher worth £250.00 and annual membership of Arts Development UK.



Tom & Jane with Lord Luce- © Voluntary Arts / Jacky Chapman

Jane spoke first and we must have connected telepathically, for we both made certain that everyone knew who Jeanette Allan was. *“Everyone at The Buddy Beat is truly delighted to have been given this accolade, and how great it is for a mental health group to win a voluntary arts award. The Buddy Beat began in Dykebar Hospital as a social inclusion project some years ago and this was very successful. We realised that patients were feeling the benefit but there was a need for The Buddy Beat to move into the community, to allow those patients that had benefited in a hospital setting to continue with the music once they had been discharged and back in their own surroundings. And so in September 2007 The Buddy Beat opened in Paisley Arts Centre, initially for a six week trial period, and here we are in our fifth year! In those early days the group was small but it has now bloomed, and that there is a real sense of community and caring amongst the members. We never turn anyone away, saying they are too young or too old or that they could only stay for six months. A by-product of The Buddy Beat is the performance side which is not something that is compulsory, but most of the members are keen to be involved in our gigs, workshops, conferences etc. This allows the group the chance to give back to our community. When we got the chance to make the film that it seemed the right thing to do. It was a lot of hard work & no one ever complained and it was brave of some of the members to publicly “out” their mental health problems. More importantly the film was made by the group with no external guidance.”* Jane then handed over to me.

I thanked everyone at Epic Awards, saying that to be the Scottish winner was a great honour. *“When Jeanette Allan met a film-maker called James Cairns by chance, that sparked an idea and Jeanette then approached me as the groups’ storyteller to see if I*



would meet up with James. I did just that and so began a five month odyssey where I learned a great deal. I was interviewer, interviewee, script writer, lighting, boom handler, wardrobe, location manager- you name it, I did it! It was one of the most amazing experiences I have ever had and it opened creative doors I didn't know I had. The group members were more than up for the challenge and their input was what made the film possible. Once the film had been edited and completed, I thought that we had created something rather special, but then again I am biased- I wouldn't say otherwise! The real test was when the film was first shown to the group and it was an emotionally charged event with hardly a dry eye in the house. I wasn't sure quite where we were going with the film after that and Jeanette Allan suggested that we have a film premiere event.

And so, I and two of my fellow drummers, Hazel and Eileen, planned an hour's event in Paisley Arts Centre to which 100 people attended made up of councilors, health care workers and family and friends. That was a great success and the film then went onto YouTube and has been seen all across the globe.

On a personal note, having mental health problems for many years had left me wondering if I mattered any more, if anyone cared or if indeed anyone would remember me when I was gone. Now I can point to our film and say that I do matter and people will remember me- the film is my footprint. In years to come one of my great-great grandchildren will ask 'What was old granddad Tom like?' and someone can say 'Well actually, let's have a look at this old film!' Only last week I remarked to Jeanette Allan that I had only made one film, and I had won an award! How lucky is that? With the film we want to inspire people to get out there and get involved and if anybody's got a mental health condition they should never let that hold them back because there's so much out there that they can participate in - it helps you improve your mental health and your self-worth. Finally, I just want to say how proud and honored I am to be here today receiving this amazing award on behalf of *The Buddy Beat*."

Then the winners from wales Third Floor Gallery were presented and they gave a humorous speech and lastly The English winners, The Peterborough Male Voice Choir were presented. Robin Simpson closed, saying that Epic Awards would like to use the winning groups for promotional purposes during this year.



© Voluntary Arts / Jacky Chapman

When all the awards had been presented and the speeches delivered we had half an hour of mingling and chatting and Jane and I were awash with good wishes and compliments. Phil Cave, Lead Officer Engagement and Participation with the Arts Council England, had spoken to us earlier and sought me out. He said- "That was so moving, Tom. I came here expecting a few laughs, but not to cry." Gillian Harrison of Voluntary Arts Scotland echoed that kind sentiment. Hamish Fyfe, Chair of Voluntary Arts Wales said that he too had found it moving and wanted to know more about The Buddy Beat. He told me that he was an academic and he was writing a paper on the connectivity and healing power of music and how he would like to talk to the group about their experiences. One lady told Jane that our speeches were the best of the night, simply because we hadn't written them and just read them out- we had spoken from the heart and with real passion. What wonderful comments to receive!

And that seemed to be the end of a truly excellent evening. We had both met so many great people. Gillian Harrison was a delight to meet and talk with and she spoke of perhaps linking up with Buddy Beat later in the year. Fiona Campbell too was lovely and she was invaluable to me, ably standing in as photographer. I tried to get her to sign a Buddy Beat contract to secure her services whenever we go out on the road, but she declined, saying she should really check with her agent first. Kate Lowe is Coordinator at Voluntary Arts England and she made a brilliant job of bringing it all together. Kate must have a very large and very special wand to perform her tricks. Thanks to all the help that Anne Witton gave to us and for sending terrific photographs that Jacky Chapman took. In fact, everyone we met was so warm and friendly. The night was not over,

for some of the winners and Voluntary Arts people wanted to go on to somewhere else and so a group of us went into Piccadilly to a Lebanese restaurant, for food, drink and a wee blether. Jane and I celebrated with a fruit cocktail, courtesy of Fiona Campbell. Thanks, Fiona!



Well, that was a truly wonderful day for both of us. We were delighted with our award and glad to meet and make so many new friends. It is a day we shall forever cherish.

Lastly, everyone at The Buddy Beat would like to thank our film-maker James Cairns of Draven Productions for his enthusiasm, patience and sheer brilliance. We couldn't have done it without you, James!

It was truly **EPIC** in every sense!



www.epicawards.co.uk;

www.voluntaryarts.org;

www.buddybeat.co.uk & www.art-beat.inf





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