

Brickie hitting right notes at Fringe

Bricklayer Stuart Alexander has been playing a part in this year's Edinburgh Fringe after swapping his spirit level for a guitar.

The West Lothian brickie who used to perform in local venues in the late '80s, turned back the clock to hit the stage as a member of Back In Time For Tea, a classical band which has been wowing the fans in the capital this month.

The band, which plays reimagined house classics, was put together by city entrepreneur Gavin McAdam, who also owns Edinburgh-based construction firm 3MC Property.

Raising money for the My Name's Doddie Foundation, Back In Time For Tea played in front of a live audience for the first time at the Sheraton Hotel earlier this month before performing in front of a sell-out crowd at the Johnnie Walker Experience on Princes Street.

They bring the curtain down on a hugely successful run this Thursday when the Sheraton hosts Pick of the Fringe.

Having worked for the company for years, Stuart's musical background was well known to his boss so when Gavin was looking for a guitarist for his latest venture, he knew exactly where to turn.

"When Gavin explained about what he wanted the band to play, I thought it was a great idea," said 58-year-old Stuart. "Stripping the music back and having classically-trained

musicians reinvent the tracks was genius.

“And the fact it was being done to raise money for charity was great.

“Although he knew I played the guitar, I never thought I would be involved but it’s been brilliant to be part of it all during the Fringe. I practise a lot in the house, if only to keep the fingers nimble, and used to play in bands 30 years ago but nothing serious for a long time.”

It’s been a challenge juggling his day job with rehearsing and performances, but Stuart has loved every minute.

“It’s been really hectic coming off sites to get home to Pumpherston then back again to Edinburgh to rehearse or prepare for gigs but it’s all been worth it as playing with professional musicians has been a blast,” he said.

“The buzz from the whole thing has been great and it has really got my musical juices flowing again. I just need to be careful with my fingers with the last concert coming up on Thursday!

“On a serious note, it’s been brilliant for someone at my age to be involved in something like this and youngsters need to know it’s never too late to try something a bit different.”

House Music Live has produced a set of reimagined house classics with a twist to be performed during live sets with Back In Time For Tea also comprising pianist and composer Gregor Blamey from Polmont, Kirkcaldy vocalist Fiona Mackenzie, Glasgow saxophonist Tom Brogan and bassist Laurie Moore, also from Glasgow.

The band is part of House Music Live, the production company set up by Gavin in a bid to breathe new life into the live music scene in Scotland.

He said: “The response to the band has been great and it

really seems to have captured the imagination. It was a special moment watching them perform for the first time at the Sheraton and then to hear them at the Johnnie Walker Experience was something else. Hopefully we can keep raising plenty of money for the My Name's Doddie Foundation on Thursday night.

“And we don't want to stop there. In addition to Stuart, we have a student from Edinburgh College featuring on tracks with base guitar and a prominent DJ, who released original music in the 90s, warming up and playing during the intermission. The project aims to offer the opportunity for others of varying musical capabilities and backgrounds to get involved and gain experience working with musicians at the highest level.”

