



Above: Malcom rocks out.



Above: Paul goes *North*.



Above: Iain sees the funny side.



Above: Duncan on the fiddle.



Above: Rebecca's haunting vocals on *North*.



Above: Brian goes solo.

only used as a short bridge at the end of *North*. It soon became clear that not all of the ideas and material could be accommodated due to the practicalities of time — so the set-list had to be reined back to a still lengthy 2hrs 45mins.

By this point the project had brought Duncan Chisholm back on board, bringing his fiddle skills to *Dalmore*, *North* and *Proterra*. An integral component of *North* is the operatic, vocal refrain — a wonderful talent was unearthed by Iain, in the form of Rebecca El Ameer from Glasgow, her haunting, soaring vocals making a big impression on the night. News had also come through that the Alabama church singers who had been involved in the television *Psalm* project, via Willy Ruff and Calum Martin, were being booked to perform at the Festival. The next logical step was to invite them to join the band for a song and all were delighted when they agreed and accepted. *Every River* was the song choice — arrangements were passed across the Atlantic, and the singers duly turned up for a rehearsal at the Carling Academy on the Monday evening. Their style was quite different to what is known as 'gospel choir' singing — less structured, more free-form, a more abandoned performance evoking personal interpretation: this perhaps betraying their currently debated Presbyterian/Gaelic roots? On the night of the concert, the singers came on-stage to perform *Every River* with the band during the first encore (they even incorporated a chorus sung in Gaelic) and the effect had the hairs rising on the back of my neck. Afterwards, back-stage, they were high as kites, quite overwhelmed by the warmth of the welcome they were given by the audience. This was even more appreciated as the trip was their first time ever away from America.

There was a great atmosphere after the show amongst all the performers, including the band who ranked the night a special, career highlight. It was a night that I'll always remember. *Celtic Connections* had good reason to be happy also as the night had delivered their only sell-out of the Festival. A huge thanks to all the fans!

Clockwise from middle: All on stage for *A Reiteach*; Bruce and Duncan during *Proterra*; Bruce and choir sing *Every River*; Iain, Paul, Duncan and Brian run over *Dalmore* at soundcheck; *Every River* at soundcheck. Previous pages: Main photograph: View of audience in the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall from back of stage. Inserts: The choir and the audience.



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