

# arts and lifestyle



Star Trek into Darkness is one of the films being shown by Screen Machine.

## Movie magic set to thrill far north film fans

SCREEN Machine will be bringing an exciting range of films when it visits Bettyhill, Durness, Kinlochervie, Lochinver and Lairg over the next few days.

As well as a couple of blockbusters, they have a few surprises too.

The Great Gatsby stars Leonardo DiCaprio and Carey Mulligan, was directed by Baz Luhrmann and is a cocktail of greed, love and decadence.

Prepare to be stunned by Star Trek Into Darkness. It's thrilling, funny, exhilarating and spectacular, with Benedict Cumberbatch and Simon Pegg putting in great performances alongside Chris Pine as Captain James T. Kirk.

For younger film fans, there is Epic, a thrilling battle of good against evil set in a fantastical forest.

As they are celebrating their 15th anniversary this year, they are able to bring an extra film and, for the first time in their history, show short films.

Film fans in Bettyhill, Lochinver and Lairg, will have a chance to see one-off screenings of We Are Northern Lights, a documentary film for Scotland made by Scottish residents and featuring various aspects of life around the country.

They'll also be showing a couple of short films ahead of their screenings of Epic and The Great Gatsby in Durness, Kinlochervie, Lochinver and Lairg. Children will love The Tannery, which was nominated for a Scottish BAFTA in 2011.

In Search of Wallaby tells the story of an incredible mystery on Islay featuring, yes, you've guessed it, a wallaby.

See the Screen Machine advert on the back page of this paper for details, or visit their website for full details of screenings and information on how to book at [www.screenmachine.co.uk](http://www.screenmachine.co.uk)

# Two leading traditional bands head for Lochinver

TWO of the Highlands' best known bands will be performing at Lochinver Village Hall over the next week — Cruinn tonight (Friday) and Skerryvore next Friday (June 29th).

Highland based quartet Cruinn bring together four of Scotland's premier Gaelic singers, James Graham, Fiona Mackenzie, Brian O hEadhra and Rachel Walker.

Each of these artists is highly regarded in their own right and together they perform traditional and contemporary Gaelic songs with beautiful harmonies and arrangements.

The group have strong local links with Lochinver. James was born and raised in the village while Fiona is the niece of Kenny MacKenzie, a well-known singer and former Lochinver primary school headteacher.



The band released their first album at the start of the year, launching it at the celebrated festival, Celtic Connections in Glasgow and have since performed at various festivals and concerts throughout the country.

Cruinn also boast some of Gaeldom's foremost contemporary songwriters who perform their own material inspired by various styles and cultures.

The members of Cruinn are not only accomplished singers but are also adept at accompanying songs with an array of instruments, including piano, guitar, pipes, bodhran, whistle, shruti

box, harmonica, percussion, and accordion.

SKERRYVORE first formed on the Isle of Tiree in 2005.

Back then, the band consisted of Tiree-born brothers Daniel Gillespie (accordion) and Martin Gillespie (bagpipes, whistles and accordion) who bonded with holidaymaker Fraser West (drums and vocals) and friend Alex Dalgligh (lead vocals and guitar) over a shared love of music: everything from traditional to rock and jazz.

It was this mix of musical styles and sounds that set the path for the band's 2005 debut album, "West Coast Life." The more the fledgling band experimented with fusing together this mix of musical styles, the more their signature sound evolved, aided by the arrival of Barry Caulfield (bass and vocals) and Craig Espie

(fiddle) in time for their second album, "On The Road", in 2007.

But it was with release of self-titled third album, "Skerryvore", that the band found themselves catapulted into the musical limelight winning a string of prestigious awards, including SNMA Record of the Year 2011 and STMA Live Act of the Year 2011, garnering much critical acclaim. "Skerryvore are the most promising young band in Scotland today," said Mick MacNeil of Simple Minds.

Both bands have been brought to Lochinver by Assynt Entertainment, a new body formed early this year — made up of seven volunteers — to try and off-set the financial difficulties facing the hall, which may have resulted in closure.

All proceeds will go to Assynt Entertainment.

Cruinn — in Lochinver tonight (Friday).

## Diver and winchman still carries the mark of a jealous husband

### Book Review

Chris Murray QGM

Winchman  
Published in paperback by the Fledgling Press. 183pp @ £11.99

IT was a lovely afternoon in the parish of Lairg over 40 years ago and a boatload of "toffs", complete with their ghillie, was exploring beautiful Loch Beannach in quest of some peaceful fishing.

The angling party cruised in to one of the many small bays after which the loch is named and were on the point of casting in to the tranquil waters when a great black monster emerged spluttering from the deep with a long, slithery tongue sticking out of its mouth and over the top of its head.

This entirely unexpected apparition caused immense consternation among the visitors, not to mention ruining the fishing and upsetting the ghillie.

But it wasn't anything very dangerous, just the author of this book snorkelling

in his wet suit, unaware of the chaos his sudden appearance might cause.

Much later in Chris's life people in larger boats, and on far less tranquil waters, were much more pleased to see him appear though, by then, he was usually dangling on the end of a wire as winchman on a variety of Coastguard helicopters based at Stornoway and providing rescue cover for a huge swathe of ocean including the treacherous inland waters of the Minches and out to the wild expanses beyond Rockall.

The sterling efforts of the elite team to which he belonged were not, of course, confined to rescue work over water but also extended to the mountainous terrain of the north-west Highlands and included hospital transfers from low ground at times when the weather was unfit for normal flying operations.

The search and rescue phase of Chris's life began in 1988 and lasted for a remarkable 22 years but, before that, this enterprising youth from Gilbert Street in Dornoch had already led a very

interesting life in a dangerous and high adrenalin environment.

Though he trained as a joiner, he found his forte in the Royal Navy where, after signing up in 1971, he discovered an irresistible attraction to diving and, after extensive training, became part of a team of divers whose job it was to check the hulls of naval vessels, carry out routine maintenance tasks underwater, and facilitate a variety of operations in co-operation with naval engineers working above the waterline.

Best of all, though, was becoming part of the mine disposal team which travelled all over Scotland and the north of England to detonate suspicious objects, usually WW2 ordnance, largely mines, which kept, and still keep, turning up from time to time.

There he discovered the joy of Cordtex, a wonderful explosive in rope form which burns at 21,000 feet per second and has all sorts of potential uses either on its own or in combination with plastic explosive. As any blaster's mate will

tell you, there are few things more satisfying, at least in peacetime, than blowing up items from a safe distance and, as people who do this sort of thing usually also relish a post-explosion pint or two in the nearest pub, Chris found this a most satisfying occupation.

However, though the greater part of his life has been spent on a knife edge, his closest encounter with extinction took place not deep underwater, not high in the sky, not balanced on the edge of a precipice, but outside a pub in Boulogne.

The trouble was that, inside the pub, was the most beautiful barmaid who, as tends to be the case with barmaids, looked ever more beautiful as his shore leave drink with two Naval mates went on. Just as she and he were about to renew Scotland's Auld Alliance with France, her husband returned and, somewhat un-amused, produced a large and very dangerous looking gun.

In the resulting fracas a shot was discharged in to the ceiling and, as the

three sailors legged it down the street, a second round caught Chris in the rear. Patched up in casualty in Boulogne, he was transported across the Channel and eventually to Canterbury where the decision was made to leave the ironmongery where it was as removing it might permanently damage his leg muscles.

His assailant was eventually apprehended but, France being France, was merely admonished on the grounds that this had been a crime passionelle.

Fortunately for the numerous victims of weather, injury, accident and error whom he has plucked to safety as a long-serving winchman, the fact that his projectile infested bottom regularly sets off airport scanners never held up his progress towards the helicopter when the alarm was sounded and this life threatening injury did not stop his life-long career in the service of the distressed.

All this and more in *Winchman* — *A Life on the Wire*. Very good reading all the way through — **Jim A Johnston**.

## Scaled down Mahler a big it

THE well attended concert given by the Inverness Mahler Players under their conductor and founder Tomas Leakey in Dornoch Cathedral recently was something of a "tour de force".

The main work in the programme — the Symphony No 4 by Mahler — is certainly not on the scale of some of his other orchestral works, being scored for relatively smaller forces than most.

It was nevertheless envisaged for an orchestra of something in the order of 70 to 80 players, yet here we had a group of 14 players plus a solo soprano performing a scaled-down version by German composer Klaus Simon, originally intended for a private performance.

It is a tribute to the superb playing of the Highland based players and the excellent soprano soloist, Emily Mitchell, that the large

orchestra sound was barely missed.

The last movement with Ms Mitchell's beautiful singing was particularly lovely and the smaller forces enhanced the simple, reflective side of Mahler's settings of a poem from Das Knaben Wunderhorn (The boy's magic horn).

Earlier in the programme the Inverness Mahler Players gave a first class performance of Czech composer, Bohuslav Martinu's somewhat esoteric Nonet written during 1959, not long before his death, and went on to give a thoroughly convincing rendition of an arrangement of Debussy's well known "Prelude a l'apres-midi d'un faune" with some exquisite flute playing from flautist Ruth Binks.

Tomas Leakey is to be congratulated on putting together such an excellent ensemble and conducting such beautifully idiomatic performances — **Donald Gaskirk**.

## Red Cross benefits from ceilidh

A ceilidh in Lairg Community Centre last week raised £347 for the Red Cross.

The event was held to entertain a large party of Dutch and Belgian caravanners staying at the Durnoamin Caravan Park in Lairg.

MC was Heather Macrae of the Strathair Cellidh Band who played for the dancing.

Other artistes were Tay Irving on guitar and his brother Jem on accordion, also Helen and Kerry Cameron on their accordions.



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