

***Coming from Bulgaria..... ?  
Lilly of The West....?  
Bluegrass band visit The Capital of UK Bluegrass,  
Helsby!***

Extract from June 1999 issue of "The House of Plank", UK Bluegrass magazine, Helsby.

The one and only Bluegrass band in Bulgaria visited The House of Plank in May and they had a great time and made many new friends here. They played at The Castle Folk club in Runcorn on Weds evening and received a wonderful warm welcome, this was an excellent start to their short but arduous UK tour.

Local bluegrass comedians and musicians extraordinary Johnny Plank & The Planktones joined Lilly of The West on the Thursday day for 3 school workshops in Widnes/Runcorn area. 650 children got to see and hear the charming and very pretty Lilly Drumeva, I don't know who enjoyed Lilly the best the children OR the schoolmasters?? let us just say that our Bulgarian visitors gave a memorable time to many schoolchildren. Lilly even sang (and in perfect English too) a request from one totally smitten 7 year old boy "She'll be coming round the mountain... Hee! Ha!!".

The children wanted to know how Lilly started singing and how the band had started to play Western music. Our Bulgarian friends were at ease with everyone including the teaching staff. The highlight of the day for me was a rendition of a Bulgarian folk tune that Lilly of the West sang at each school. Now being a true Englishman I only speak English and when I am abroad, instead of learning the local language I just shout LOUDER... in English. Ah those foreigners must just love "The Brits" visiting them??? Anyway back to the story!! we didn't understand a word of the tune... but it was simply marvelously DIFFERENT!! we were just spell bound... Bluegrass!! yes sir I love it but I could get really hooked on Bulgarian folk music given the chance.

The band were very competent in all aspects of bluegrass music. The guitarist was a really excellent musician and so was the bass and banjo/dobro player. In fact Rossen Hristov (banjo) has only been playing for 6 yrs and shows great promise. His own rendition of a Bulgarian tune on the banjo was a bit special to say the least. Thursday evening at The

Horse & Jockey was ?rocking? and we asked the band to sing us a Bulgarian Folk song (the same one as for school workshops).... well the atmosphere was "electric" and you could have heard a pin drop!! The crowd cheered and cheered for more and why not??? A bit of "Bulgarian culture" in downtown Cheshire was most welcome. Brisk sales of CD?s ensued and the evening was considered one GIANT success by everyone. This band will come back one day and the sooner the better because our first female singer/visitor beguiled us all. Lilly we love you!! and I might add it was an enormous pleasure for an aging bluegrass fan like me to meet such nice young people from Bulgaria. They were a credit to their country and though I hardly knew where it was before this visit... I do now and I might even one day go there and get some more authentic Bulgarian folk music....perhaps I could learn Bulgarian?? well at least how to say :- "A pint of beer" and where is Lilly of The West, my favorite European Bluegrass band

Bryn Williams (aka Johnny Plank)