

Scottish Television celebrated its fifth birthday in 1962 in a rather unique way, transmitting what American viewers would describe as a Telethon. This consisted of four-and-a-half hours of continuous local output - a sort of marathon presentation of all our home-based productions up to that time.

Looking back at the acts and artists involved in that show is pure nostalgia, and invites one to take a short trip down memory lane.

The evening began at 6.35pm with 'Here and Now' the popular nightly news and features programme. That evening it was introduced by Bill Tennent and featured among others, contemporary cartoonist Emilio Coia.

It was followed by a special edition of Dr John Grierson's network programme 'This Wonderful World' and then came the One O'Clock Gang, making a rare evening appearance. Larry Marshall, of course, was the chief gang-ster. This was followed by magician Max Raskin, and then 'Scotsport' with Arthur Montford, to be succeeded by Highland Air featuring Alasdair Gillies. The Scottish National Orchestra, under the baton of Sir Alexander Gibson, performed a Mussorgsky selection.

After that 'From Studio A' featured Kenneth McKellar and included The Viewer (Scottish cousin of the TV Times) Award of the Year, which went to Bill Tennent.

Music was high on the agenda as the station swept into the 1960's – the decade of love – on a natural high following the success of their first three years. The company continued to air smash-hit traditional Scottish programme Jigtime, which starred the likes of Jimmy Blair and Jimmy Fletcher. The doors of the studio would open and host Jimmy Nairn would welcome the viewing public into his barn for a night of traditional Scottish music and dance. Accordionist, Jimmy Blair, was born in 1920's Glasgow and started playing at the age of nine. He went on to make dozens of appearances on the STV production. Peter Mallan was another well-known name that cut his teeth on the traditional Scottish song and dance show.

In 1958, under the direction of Norman Buchan, Glasgow group The Reivers were singing Scots traditional songs on Jigtime and asked bosses if they could perform 'Black Is the Colour,' but the show's producer refused, saying it wasn't Scottish - so the band quoted the verse 'I go to the Clyde and I mourn and weep'. That convinced the producer and the group finally got their way. They stayed for forty weeks and eventually recorded an EP, The Work of The Reivers in 1959 on the Top Rank label.

The group consisted of Enoch Kent (guitar, vocals), who went on to enjoy solo success, as did John MacRae (guitar, vocals). Rena Swankie (guitar, vocals) completed the line-up.

Jigtime – forerunner of hugely popular 1970's STV production Thingummyjig - lasted until 1962 when it was finally pulled from the programme schedules. Its existence, while maybe not the longest in TV history, had certainly been an important one but its demise opened doors to a more nationally popular type of music, one that the musically aware youth of the 60's demanded to hear.....

.....And in June of 1963, Merseyside giants The Beatles took STV by storm. They appeared on Paul Young's ROUNDUP programme and before they left, made a point of commenting on how everyone involved with the production had been most helpful and courteous. Presenter, Paul, said: "I like the boys, they were a lot of fun."

One of the things mentioned to the Fab Four was their previous 'job,' when they performed backing music to a certain lady called 'Janice the Stripper,' to which they replied: "We were much younger then and used to blush all night!" Former STV manager, Ferdi Coia, remembered: "I worked in lighting the first time The Beatles came to STV and naturally we lit the group as we normally did. This sort of backfired because no one had told us that Paul McCartney played the guitar left-handed and, believe me, it made quite a difference.

“But I remember they walked into the studio and were totally flabbergasted at the sight which greeted them. Our Designer, Peter Alexander, had decorated the set with a myriad of hanging beetles. The lads were quick to point out to those willing to listen that they were ‘Beatles’ with an ‘A’. The clue had been in the type of music they played. However, they took it in good fun and that was the end of it.

“They were a nice bunch of lads and joined the cast and crew in the canteen for a cup of tea. There were no airs and graces about them. They offered to make another appearance on the show and they were true to their word.

“It was a bit different that next time though. They had become the top band in the world and it was utter chaos outside the building. Teenagers had ‘sealed off’ every available exit and entrance and at one point our security staff had to arm themselves with water hoses in case they broke through the cordon. We were literally under siege!

“In fact, if I remember correctly, they had to be smuggled into the main building through a car park! It was bedlam.”