**Picnic Area – press pack**

Picnic Area are an alt country band based in Manchester – a melodic, dynamic and entertaining live act who would be an asset to any festival or other musical event.



**Brief biography:**

Wayne McDonald and Andy Callen met on the Manchester acoustic scene in the early noughties, and started working together following the splits of their former bands, Because They Came From The Wrong Side Of Town and The Spinning Fields, in 2005. In 2006 they became Picnic Area, on the basis that they were a British band playing country music, and picnic areas are what you find in the British countryside! As a duo, they released their first album, the confidently-titled "The essential Picnic Area", on the M60 Recordings label. Having expanded their lineup, the band recorded their current, highly-acclaimed album, "You know you want it!", with legendary producer Bill Leader and engineer/ jazz keyboardist John Ellis.
Picnic Area play frequently in the Manchester area, including their own monthly "Picnic Club" showcase at Fuel Bar, Wilmslow Road, Withington. They have hosted events at the Middlewich Festival, Cheshire, for a number of years, and have played support to many leading acts on the British new country scene, such as Quiet Loner, and The Good Intentions. Since 2012 they have co-organised and played at the annual Manchester Americana Festival at The Verge, Stalybridge; and they appeared by invitation at Manchester’s prestigious Grillstock Festival in 2013. The band are currently recording a follow-up album with the Leader/ Ellis production team.
The current lineup of Picnic Area is:

Steve Braithwaite – drums

Andy Callen - guitars, backing vocals
Matt "The Bonsai Whale" Crawford - bass guitar, multi-instrumentalist
Wayne McDonald - lead vocals, acoustic guitar
Paul Manina - harmonica, percussion, keyboards

**What people have said about Picnic Area as a live act:**

“Picnic Area would be an ideal festival band” – Matt Hill, aka Quiet Loner, leading new country songwriter.

“Front man Wayne McDonald is hilarious - I’ll never be able to get the (unlikely!) image of Hank Williams eating syrup pudding and custard out of my head!” – Jeanette, Radio Starlion, Manchester.

"Closing the night in their regular spot, Picnic Area gave off the air of gifted musicians easy in each other’s company. Songs like ‘Silver Train’ and ‘Gold Chain’ sounded like tunes by a lost Sixties band, the sort of minor Beatles album tracks whose hooks and hit-making qualities were obscured by artful understatement. Lead singer Wayne McDonald was a natural master of the rambling, tangential conversation between songs, and the easy charm and humour was summed up with two closing covers – Bruce Springsteen’s ‘I’m On Fire’ chased down with a knowing rendition of ‘Baby One More Time’. Such playfulness, underpinned by classy musicianship, deserves a bigger audience."
- Liam Barnes, *Mancunian Matters*(Apr 20, 2012)

"Picnic Area were next on the bill, crossing the Pennines from South Manchester Wayne and Andy gave the eager Boons crowd a lesson in alt country Manc style! Witty intelligent lyrics that just make you smile, great harmonies and lead guitar from Andy (how does he sing so high?) and Wayne as the perfect front man really put on a great show! I kept hearing the Stones in the wonderful harmonies but these boys are bang up to date! Go see them.”
- Steve Smith (promoter at Henry Boon’s), on Picnic Area’s gig at Henry Boon’s, Wakefield, 27th Sep 2007

"The hosts Picnic Area were on next, to rapturous approval from the crowd. This alt county duo have the cockiness of Oasis combined with the talent of Lambchop – a lethal combination. Every song is a winner, laced with acerbic humour, instant melody and rousing harmonies. Singer Wayne McDonald is already the proud recipient of a stunning 8 out of 10 review from Americana UK for his album “Because they came from the wrong side of town”…Swings and Roundabouts magazine, March 2007 "
- *Swings and Roundabouts magazine, March 2007*

**…and about their album “You know you want it!”:**

"You Know You Want It! is their first studio-produced album, and the magic touches of legendary producer Bill Leader certainly capture the warmth of their live performances. The dry humour of Wayne McDonald’s lyrics, combined with the polished playing of Andy Callen (guitars), Matt Crawford (bass) and Simon Parkin (drums), are faithfully transported from stage to studio.‘Silver Train’, the album opener, sets the tone nicely – featuring jangly guitars with lush production, the lyrics about a late train, that most unromantic of topics, establish a quintessentially British voice to this slice of Americana.This Mancunian country and (north) western vibe follows on ‘Gold Chain’, with top-notch instrumentation shot through with a subversive lyrical wit...Ending on the superbly-titled ‘I’m Not Going to Heaven if Hank Williams Ain’t There’, the mix of country, rock and a hint of rebellious spirit recalls classic Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young album Déjà Vu."
- Liam Barnes, *Mancunian Matters*(May 21, 2012)

"What we have is the sound of four blokes just playing their tunes. This being a Mancunian take on Americana those tunes are a spikey twang, a gothic jangle sung with a peculiarly British drawl which imagines the camp fires of the US mid-west repositioned in Salford. What’s not to like? The songs are about ‘trains’ and ‘chains’ and so forth (always good for a rhyme one imagines) and should we be in any doubt about where their hearts lie there is the superbly titled “I’m Not Going To Heaven If Hank Williams Ain’t There” (note the dual usage of the British ‘I’m Not’ and the American ‘Aint’...clever stuff in this context). Only seven tracks long so unlikely to outstay its welcome this record is well worth a visit if you’re in the area as the phrase has it. 8 out of 10"
- [Paul Villers, *Americana UK website* (Apr 02, 2012)](http://www.americana-uk.com/reviews-cd-live/latest-cd-reviews/item/picnic-area-you-know-you-want-it-m60-recordings-2012)

“Picnic Area You know you want it Americana/Alt-Country Picnic Area is an Alt-Country/Americana band out of Manchester England. They have been playing together since 2006, at this time they were a duo consisting of Andy Callen and Wayne McDonald. Recently they added Simon Parkin, Matt Crawford, and Paul Manina. Their sound can be best described as stripped down rootsy Country reminiscent of Bobby Bare Jr., Uncle Tupelo, and the Le Roi Brothers. Their sound is very much their own. The songs have a haunting style to them, very No Depression in makeup and feeling. The seven song EP is well recorded and shows The Picnic Area’s songwriting ability. Silver Train, Chain Gang, and I’m not going to heaven if Hank Williams ain’t there are the top songs on the EP. This CD is a good showcase of their talent... Picnic Area is a very good band and worth giving a listen. Check them out."
- Andy Ziehli, *Americana Gazette*(Jan 13, 2012)

**To book Picnic Area, contact:**

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