

A Nation waits . . .

Martin Newell meets up with singer/songwriter Adrian Nation, who after some hard years of gigging in Suffolk, Essex and just about everywhere else in Britain is finally finding real success

East Anglian singer Adrian Nation is tall and at a guess, is probably regarded by women as rather handsome. If the film industry had got to him before the music industry did, he'd possibly have cornered the market in playing Saxon kings.

"I'm the young curiosity on my street – at 41 years old," Adrian laughs, referring to the demographic of Holland-on-Sea, where he lives.

Clacton born and bred, the singer-songwriter hasn't shifted very far from his

long months on the road have a way of making an artiste sinewy – both as performer and songwriter. Adrian Nation has come of age.

His music, although acoustic-guitar driven, is not traditionally folk as such. There are touches of folk, rock and even country in his blend, it's true, but not so much of any one genre as to make the music easily categorisable. Pushed to make a comparison, to name names, you might find a trace of the Canadian songwriter Gordon Lightfoot in there but still, it's hard to pigeonhole him.

The music is undoubtedly commercial, however, and likely to carry a broad appeal. With such attributes, he's able to play to a number of different galleries. In recent times for instance he's played the Cambridge Folk Festival as well as the Cambridge Rock Festival, where he opened for Wishbone Ash.

Nation is just as likely nowadays, to be found playing in Scotland or Northumbria as he is in Suffolk or Essex. It's the north

east, however, which has become a new stronghold for him. He's just signed a recording and management deal with Newcastle's well-respected Northern Lights Music. This development is likely to be an important move for him.

He gazes steadily at me as he says: "It's a very different feeling, this time. I didn't get jump-up-and-down excited about it but I feel quite confident . . ."

Adrian Nation would know about such things. A former builder, it's been a few years now since he turned professional. Turning pro, in a notoriously capricious music business, may be either brave or

foolhardy. And yet, if an artist doesn't do it at some point – take that first scary step out into what may prove only to be empty air – then no further progress can ever be made. The local pubs and clubs at weekends are full of performers who never dared to take the step. There are others however, who, having taken it, floundered and returned quietly, tails between legs to their day jobs.

For Adrian Nation, his gamble paid off. Many tours and two albums later, he's planning a third album. His new management, meanwhile, are close to securing him a major support on a national tour of O2 Arenas. In addition, there are plans for him to appear at the MIDEM music industry festival in Cannes next February. The following month, the prestigious South by Southwest Festival in Austin, Texas awaits.

There's a certain kismet, however, about the north-eastern connection and the direction which his career has subsequently taken. When he was a young teenager learning the guitar, Adrian's life was changed when he saw the Newcastle-based acoustic guitar legend, Isaac Guillory, at Colchester Arts Centre. A quarter of a century on – over a decade after Guillory's death – he now sometimes performs with Guillory's widow Vicki, when he plays in Newcastle. You sense what this must mean to him, and yet he keeps his balance.

Quietly-spoken, but steady of tone, there's something very grounded about Adrian Nation. You can see why the Geordies would like him. He's still playing locally of course, but you should catch him soon. He's going to get expensive, I reckon.



roots and refreshingly, speaks of the seaside town with some affection.

Recently spotted at an outdoor event by our editor, he made quite an impression.

Next door, here in Essex, we're used to Adrian Nation – possibly to the point of taking him for granted. I remember a much younger Adrian, in early days when he started gigging, taking support spots with practically anyone who'd have him. Time sashays by quicker than we think, however. Suddenly his name's cropping at venues all over the UK and increasingly, in Europe. The truth is, however, that

NORTHBOUND Essex singer songwriter Adrian Nation who has just signed a management and recording deal in Newcastle
Photograph by Andrew Partridge

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