Rab Noakes is a force to be reckoned with in the world of music in Scotland and beyond.

2015 has been eventful in unexpected ways and has not quite been the continuation to 2014 that was anticipated. Later in the year Rab's most-recent, '21st Century Skiffle', recordings will be issued as a Double-CD entitled 'I'm walkin' here'. There will be some promotional dates around that which have yet to be arranged.

'I'm walkin' here' which will feature new songs many of which have been cited in reviews and attracted positive comment from audience and journalists alike.

This album was made in John Cavanagh's Muirend studio and features an interesting collection of musicians (mostly selected by John) including Una McGlone, Stu Brown, Harry Hussey and Ula Zoola. Rab is joined by a stellar array of singers including Jill Jackson, Roddy Hart, Emma Pollock, Jimmie Macgregor, Alice Marra and Hilary Brooks.

As far as recordings go 2014 saw the CD release of two albums plus one EP. The 40th anniversary of 'Red Pump Special' was issued, along with 'Demos and Rarities Vol2 – adventures with Gerry Rafferty'. The EP 'Reunited', a performance-based clutch of songs with Barbara Dickson, is also now available.

So, 2014 was busy and productive for Rab. A sold-out January concert at Glasgow's Celtic Connections featured the whole of the 1974 album 'Red Pump Special' in the first half followed by selections from his newer songs in the second. This show was also delivered in a more stripped-down version in June.

2014 contained many Rab solo shows and a couple with harmonica-ace and occasional collaborator Fraser Speirs.

Not to mention the creative collaborations. These include the 'Reunited' tour with Barbara Dickson. He has also been touring with acclaimed Gaelic singer Kathleen MacInnes with a variation on their 'Love, Ballads and Murder' show.

In January 2015 Rab played a significant guest role in the prestigious opening Concert at Celtic Connections, an orchestration of Martyn Bennett's acclaimed 'Grit' album by Greg Lawson.

Rab's first fully-professional engagements were in 1967. Almost 50 years and more than 20 albums later he remains a vital, popular, prolific and acclaimed songwriter and performer.

Constant highlights in his performing life have been a continually well-received series of solo shows plus the production of, and performance in, celebratory commemorative concerts on Gerry Rafferty and Michael Marra.

Rab is hard to pin down in terms of influences. He is an accomplished songwriter whose songs reflect his lifelong interest in the popular song, in folk song and in songwriting. Alongside his acclaimed performance skills as applied to his own compositions his celebrated interpretations feature songs from sources as diverse as Elizabeth Cotten to Beck Hansen.

His professional life embraces such activities as media production. Rab is also elected to the Executive Committee of the Musicians' Union so, at times, he'll be representing the MU membership somewhere in the world.

It's clear Rab Noakes is no ordinary performer as his voice, at age 68, is at least as good as it's ever been and his creativity is clearly flourishing. No leaning back on retreads and crowd-pleasers here. A Rab audience comes expecting to be included in the here-and-now event that his shows are. As he was about to perform in BBC Scotland's 2011/12 Hogmanay TV show someone suggested he had been singing at parties at the festive season for some time now. He thought for a moment then replied, "Yep - 60 years".

Rab's first album 'Do you see the lights?' was released in 1970. Thirty years later in the year 2000 he, along with his wife Stephy, formed their own record label, Neon, and produced a couple of new releases. In the intervening years he has made his presence felt as a creative entity across music and media. From being one of the singer-songwriters of the 1970s to his present activities he has released several acclaimed albums and toured extensively. The once sought-after hit single remained elusive but didn't significantly impede his progress. In the longer that can even be regarded as advantageous. In recent years he has been involved in a rich mixture of production, writing and performance.

Before he and Stephy set up Neon in 1995 he spent an eight-year spell at the BBC where he produced music and entertainment shows radio in Manchester for Network Radio and subsequently headed the entertainment department at Radio Scotland. A formal job in that medium was appropriate as the radio had played a major part in Noakes's creative development from an early age.

Born in 1947 Rab Noakes enjoyed the benefits of growing up as rock’n’roll was born and of being present as new sounds - from Little Richard to Woody Guthrie drifted across the Atlantic. Impressed by the success of Scots Bert Jansch and The Incredible String Band he dusted down an old guitar and began touring in Britain and Denmark with a set embracing pop, country and folk. Prior to the release of his first album in 1970 five Noakes songs appeared on albums by Archie Fisher and Barbara Dickson.
A relationship with Gerry Rafferty continued from the time Rab was a founder member of Stealers Wheel. He played guitar on one of Rafferty’s later albums, ‘Over my Head’. Lindisfarne and Rab met in the North East of England when they were each playing regularly in that part of the world. The group demonstrated its respect for Rab by recording one of his songs on each of their first two albums. They also shared a producer in Bob Johnston who had introduced Bob Dylan to working in Nashville with the Blonde on Blonde record. Rab himself recorded in Nashville in 1973 with acclaimed producer Elliot Mazer. The resulting album, 1974’s Red Pump Special, remains a collectors’ item and is cited as an influence by several young upstarts. Later in the 1970s Noakes worked with Terry Melcher at John Lennon & Yoko Ono’s Tittenhurst Park on an album for Ringo Starr’s record label. In the ‘eighties Noakes teamed up with some young Glaswegian musicians including Brendan Moon, Lorraine McIntosh and Andy Alston to form Gene Pitney’s Birthday. Into the ‘nineties this grew into The Varafames whose members have included harmonica ace Fraser Speirs, Rod Clements of Lindisfarne, guitar hero Jerry Donahue, Pilot’s David Paton, Hilary Brooks, Jim McDermott, James Mackintosh, Kevin McGuire, Colin MacFarlane, Deacon Blue’s Ewen Vernal and Pick Withers, ex-Dire Straits. He has also worked with a selection of interesting singers including Emma Pollock, Jill Jackson, Roddy Hart, Alice Marra and Rab Noakes has also been involved with some high-profile music production activity on shows such as John Byrne’s ‘Your Cheatin’ Heart’ and Elaine C. Smith’s TV series. Neon continues to provide quality TV and radio programmes from its base in Glasgow’s Kinning Park. The unique knowledge and abilities in the Neon team continue to give the programmes an edge.

Throughout the 2000s Neon released a succession of Rab Noakes albums from ‘Throwing Shapes’ by The Varafames in 2000 to the first CD of his debut album ‘Do you see the lights?’ from 1970 in 2008. In 2009 Rab joined forces with Allan Taylor for a number of joint shows based on their similar careers and parallel experiences. They have been seen out across Europe performing this show on a number of occasions since and plan do more when their respective diaries permit.

In 2012/13 CDs were made available of a trio of Rab albums which had been available for a couple of years as download-only. One is ‘Live at The Reid Hall Edinburgh 2005, a guitar/vocal recording of one his Fringe shows that year. In Another is ‘Just in case’ a collection of songs by Boudleaux & Felice Bryant from 2007 and the third, ‘Standing Up Again’ is a new collection from 2009.

2012 was one of his busiest years yet as it began with his prominent participation in three prestigious sold-out Celtic Connections events in Glasgow. The first of these was a two-night commemoration and celebration of the work and life of his friend Gerry Rafferty. The second was his own show, Rab Noakes & Friends. The third was a 40th-anniversary celebration of the UCS Work-in.

2013 started with another commemorative/celebratory Celtic Connections show. This one was dedicated to Michael Marra. 2013/14 saw the CD issue of some back catalogue including a 40th anniversary edition of ‘Red Pump Special’ from 1974.

On to 2014 and it’s yet another Celtic Connections triumph, a tour with Barbara Dickson, a highly-regarded Gerry Rafferty concert in Paisley which featured the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO).

So, further into the 21st century you’ll most likely find Rab on the road, playing in a town near you, either solo or in one of his creative collaborations. It’ll be some time yet until he stops making songs, TV and radio programmes or some other creative noise.