

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

Early in 2015 Rab was diagnosed with tonsillar cancer. The treatment that followed was, to say the least, rigorous. At the earliest opportunity he was playing the guitar and singing. New songs began to emerge, songs that were based on the experience of the treatment and formed a significant role in the recovery process. Six of them are gathered on Rab's new release – The Treatment Tapes. There's no self-pity though, here you'll find defiance, resilience, love, support and wit.

In May of 2017 Rab turns 70 and celebrates the 50th anniversary of his first properly-billed, paid gig. These landmarks will be celebrated throughout next year, across the country and beyond.

Rab's previous release was the acclaimed double-CD 'I'm walkin' here'. During 2016 he has been found on tour, mainly solo, promoting that album. He has also been found in collaboration with others and in his part as a singer and guitar-player in the 'Grit' orchestra which played at both WOMAD and Edinburgh International Festivals. The year has also seen collaboration with a long-time colleague Barbara Dickson as well as a part in the Neil Young tribute night in Glasgow 'Long may you run'.

The 'I'm walkin' here' album, which features many new Rab new songs alongside some characteristically interestingly wide-ranging interpretations, was received with high praise in reviews and has attracted positive comment from audience and journalists alike.

These recordings were made in John Cavanagh's Muirend studio and feature 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.

2015 was a bumpy year as Rab as mentioned to deal with but the end of the year saw him on tour, on telly and radio as well being honoured by Nordoff-Robbins with a Tartan Clef award for Contribution to Music.

As far as other 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 that year.

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.

In previous Celtic Connections festivals Rab played a pivotal role in the production of a commemorative concert for Gerry Rafferty in 2012 and one for Michael Marra in 2013.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.