

‘Showbands played all the popular records, sometimes better than the original, as showbands had more brass.’

In the mid 1950s there were 264 showbands based in Ireland, and over 80 ballrooms across the island. In those years ballrooms had a resident showband. With increased competition between local venues, different bands were booked for each night, and more rock and roll was featured. Instead of being seated wearing black dinner suits, bands wore more colourful outfits, and moved around the stage.

Bobby selected showbands for Saturday nights at the Boathouse from 1956 until 1961, so he knew which bands drew the biggest crowds. The Royal Showband from Waterford were one of the biggest bands during the 1960s, with their cover of *The Hucklebuck* staying at number 1 in the Irish charts for 7 weeks in 1965.

‘I’ve never known a band to have the drawing power of the Royal. They have broken attendance records everywhere – including the Strand in Portstewart. I think I can safely say that they’ll draw Limavady’s biggest ever crowd.’ Bobby Platt (*Coleraine Chronicle*, 5 December 1964).

‘Everywhere they play they are drawing capacity crowds. Indeed they are Ireland’s answer to the Beatles.’ (*Northern Constitution*, 4 January 1964).



Dancers queueing at the Strand Ballroom to see the Royal Showband in February 1963. Courtesy Bobby Platt collection.



Promotional poster of the Miami Showband with Dickie Rock on the far right. Courtesy Bobby Platt collection.

Another crowd pulling showband playing regularly at the Strand Ballroom and Limavady were the Miami Showband. Singer Dickie Rock was very popular with teenage girls, who would scream **‘Spit on me, Dickie!’** when he was on stage.



Dancers at the Strand Ballroom to see the Royal Showband. Courtesy *Coleraine Chronicle*, 4 May 1963.



Promotional flyer for Strand Ballroom with five showbands, including the Royal, appearing in May 1964. Courtesy Bobby Platt collection.

“...the 60s was a great time to grow up and there was a wealth of music in this area...I mean, even the local bands were very, very good, music was pretty good.”

Helena Alcorn

“Everywhere you went there was a showband ...but it was the best of craic you know best of fun...”

Victor McCullough

“All those showband men were all great musicians, and nearly all of them sang.”

Barbara McIntyre

Dancers at the Strand Ballroom to see The Cadets Showband. Courtesy *Coleraine Chronicle* 23 March 1963. The Cadets reached Number 1 in Ireland with their version of Jim Reeves’ ‘Falling Star’.

