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ICONS

IRISH CONNECTIONS




music

kid's activities



sports



literature



genealogy



dance



AN GHAELTACHT



gaelic language



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CENTRE

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Tommy Fleming



WELCOME TO ICONS FESTIVAL

Looking for Irish Connections in America? You'll find enough of them at this year's ICONS Festival to fill almost 50 acres - and then some, writes Sean Smith.

ICONS, or Irish Connections (the name by which the 17-year-old festival has more recently been known), represents a bold and ambitious new course for the event, celebrating the cultural directions of Ireland in its emergence as one of the most prosperous and influential countries in the world. So, once you walk through the gate at the festival site, the Irish Cultural Center of New England in Canton, Mass, just South of Boston., and you'll experience Ireland on a global scale.

Start with the music, long at the heart of the festival since its inception: Performers in this year's line-up run the gamut from rock to country to all matter of traditional influences, and can be enjoyed on a newly built, 8,000-capacity space inside the multi-tented festival grounds. There are rock and folk heavyweights such as The Black Crowes, the Saw Doctors, Nanci Griffith and the post-punk emerging superstars (most recently featured on the soundtrack to *The Departed*) Dropkick Murphy's, as well as genuine Irish stars like Dervish, and Mick Moloney. How about Altan, Cara Dillon, and the Prodigals, the all-female, Appalachian revivalists Uncle Earl, and German-American Antje Duvekot, whose acclaimed breakthrough album was produced by Seamus Egan of Solas?

ICONS also features a spectacular array of vocalists, representing a variety of genres from contemporary to traditional and all stops in between: Danny Doyle, Cara Dillon, Jimmy Crowley, Tommy Fleming, Eddi Reader, The Roches, Dennis Brennan, Heidi Talbot, John Spillane and Niamh Parsons.

Then, in keeping with the connections theme, there are the performers who take Irish and other Celtic-influenced traditions to their acoustic roots, and to exciting, innovative directions. Liz Carroll and John Doyle, Kevin Burke, Matt and Shannon Heaton, Bruce Molsky, Cherish the Ladies, Paddy Keenan and Peter Molloy, The Maeve Gilchrist Trio, Nightingale, the Marie and Martin Reilly Quartet, Johnny B. Connolly and Beoga.

One of Irish music's greatest "ambassadors," Tommy Makem, will be honoured with a special tribute hosted by Mick Moloney and Danny Doyle. Black 47, The Tossers, Enter the Haggis, The Guggenheim Grotto, Mr North, Baby Jenks and Tempest add

their own, very individual brands of rock and roll energy to the festivities. And don't forget "Harpalooza," ICONS' salute to the Celtic harp.

Sitting and listening to music is all very well, but at this gathering you are encouraged to get up and dance to it? You'll have the opportunity to sample Irish and other Celtic social dancing in two different fashions: with Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann, Boston's branch of the venerable worldwide organisation that for more than five decades has preserved Irish music in Ireland, America

Cara Dillon





Nanci Griffith

and throughout the world; and at the Boston Urban Ceilidh, which offers a modern-day, rocking twist to the dance tradition.

The world of traditional dance, of course, has been an intrinsic part of the Irish culture for literally thousands of years. In recent times, the more straight-laced, stylised dancing of the past has been invigorated by the crossover creativity of Broadway productions like Riverdance and Lord of the

Dance. The ICONS Festival will celebrate Irish Connections in dance in all its diverse glory.

For example, there will be presentations on American women in sean-nós ("old style") dancing, hosted and coordinated by Boston resident Kieran Jordan, a groundbreaking dancer, instructor and choreographer, who will be joined by Maldon Meehan, Alicia Guinn and Shannon Dunne. Kieran and each of these special guests will teach and perform, accompanied by live music, with a panel discussion and even opportunities for informal performances by other sean-nós dancers and students.

Ireland has always had a one of the richest literary traditions in the world. Names like Yeats, Kavanagh, Joyce, O'Casey, Synge, Heaney, and Friel have become ICONS in the literary world. The ICONS Festival will celebrate this rich and diverse literary tradition with several presentations by authors themselves and reading programs at the festival.

Among those appearing will be Peter Quinn, discussing his newly published collection of essays, *Looking for Jimmy: A Search for Irish America*, which traces the life and times of New York's Irish; and Boston Globe columnist Dan Shaughnessy, whose recent book *Senior Season: A Father, A Son and High School Baseball* is a fond look at family, sports and growing up. An amazing growth of interest in the area of genealogy has

prompted the ICONS Festival to expand its commitment to exploring the roots of one's heritage. While a particular emphasis is placed on Irish genealogy at this festival, the resources and wonderful volunteer staff of organizations like Tiara who are dedicated to assisting in genealogical research will include more generalized guidance to such efforts – irrespective of national origin.

The Irish language is one of the oldest and richest in the world and will receive particular attention at ICONS. Having survived centuries of persecution and neglect it is now generating new levels of interest in the US. Still the vernacular of significant areas of Ireland, the language is in a distinct state of renewal. At ICONS, Gaelic will be celebrated in many forms, spoken word, sean-nos singing and dancing. This will all occur in and around an authentic replica of an Irish thatched cottage on the festival site.

Since pre-Christian times, sports have been a feature of Irish life. The native games of hurling and Gaelic football have been symbols of a proud heritage of Ireland for generations. Today, these games are played extensively in the United States and weekly seen at the Irish Cultural Center of New England. The American branch of the GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) will stage highly competitive games of hurling and football played by both men and women through the weekend. Explanations and exhibitions of the origins and currency of the games will also be on display.

Tír na nÓg literally means "land of the young," and comes from a wonderful Irish mythology about such a place. This part of ICONS Festival activities will emphasise our younger visitors with story-telling, musical performances, educational activities, puppets, and special characters.

Rock-and-rollers, die-hard trad music buffs, festival veterans, first-timers, young, old, Irish, non-Irish, ICONS 2007 makes all the connections.

Sean Smith is an editor and writer at Boston College, a part-time musician, singer and morris dancer, and works with several folk music and dance organisations in Greater Boston, including the Boston Celtic Music Festival. His e-mail address is seansmithmusic@yahoo.com.



Altan

Uncle Earle



COUNTDOWN TO ICONS 07

The philosophy behind the new ICONS Festival is simple. The goal is to merge history and modernism to make this a unique event based in Irish culture but extending to a much wider world, writes Steve Morse.

"This is a gathering, almost in an ancient sense, like a gathering of the clans," says ICONS producer, Brian O'Donovan. "But it's a gathering of artists and also musicians with the same level of respect paid to a singer from Minnesota as to one from Galway. The same respect will be given to Nanci Griffith as to Altan and everyone else."

And more respect is being paid to ICONS itself, which has earned it with a quantum leap in talent this year. Lured to its 50-acre site at the Irish Cultural Centre of New England in Canton, Massachusetts just south of Boston, for a three-day celebration Aug. 10-12 are not just Griffith and Altan, but contemporary giants like the Black Crowes, Saw Doctors, and Dropkick Murphys, plus traditional legends from Tommy Makem to Mick Moloney.

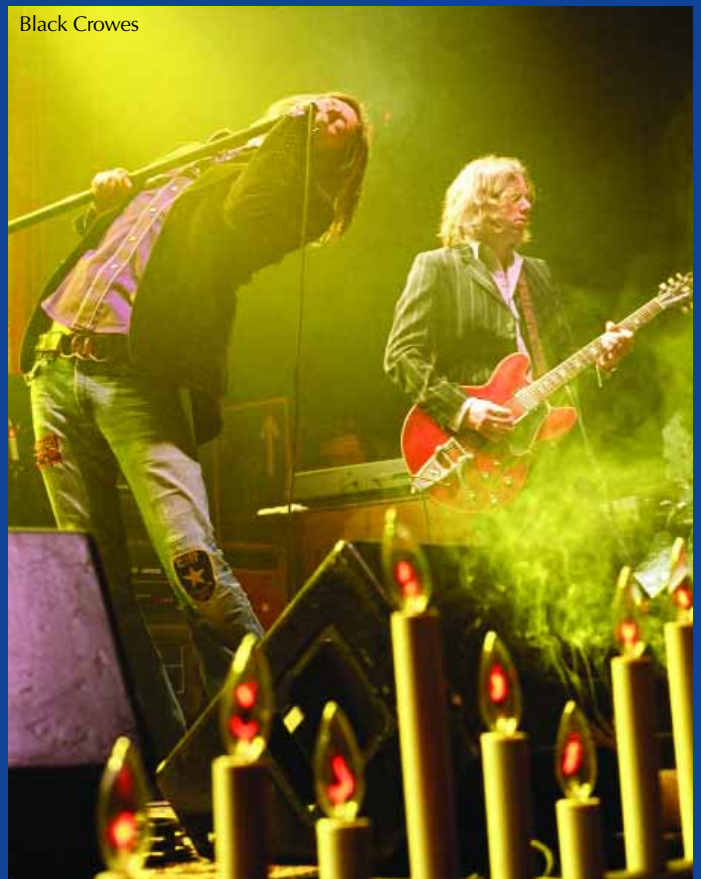
"The line-up sounds great to me. It should be great fun!" says Dervish singer Cathy Jordan, whose group recently represented Ireland in the Eurovision song contest.

The ICONS fest, an outgrowth of the Irish Connections Festival is embracing modern times with a relish this season. A big coup is the booking of Dropkick Murphys, the Boston-based, world-renowned, punk-rock 'n' folk band that can't wait to play for the various clans. It may be the first time that moshing comes to the event, but that's a rite of passage that many festivals, Irish-based or not, have dealt with.

"We've done Irish festivals in other parts of the country, in Chicago and New York and this is a great opportunity for us to play to a different crowd that might not always come see us in a nightclub," says Ken Casey, bassist with the Dropkicks. "We're talking about the fathers of some of our fans, but also much younger teens and probably down to eight-year-olds, too. "There will be a wider variety of people than we're used to, but if Irish festivals are going to continue to strive to succeed, they need to bring in a younger crowd, with new blood. So that's what we hope to do," says Casey. "It's good to see Boston step up with this event. Boston probably has the largest concentration of Irish

outside of Ireland, so it's great to see them take this to another level." Fresh momentum has come from a new partnership between O'Donovan (who also hosts a Celtic radio show on WGBH-FM), the Irish Cultural Centre, and national concert promoters Live Nation, which has helped enlist the Dropkicks, Black Crowes, and Griffith.

Black Crowes



"We see this festival as having some legs," says Bob Duteau, vice-president of Live Nation's New England division. "It takes place on a fabulous site – a nice green surrounded by woods – and there's not much land like this around Boston. I think this could grow into a big thing. I just got back from (mega-festival) Bonnaroo in Tennessee. I don't know if this will grow that big, but it definitely has room to expand."

There will still be ample space for sporting events at the festival (football and hurling) and stages for such carryovers as traditional dancing, storytellers, authors, Cape Breton musicians (notably the Boston Kiltics), and harp players. The harp stage is called "Harpalooza" and is being run by Regina Delaney of the New England Harp Orchestra. "I have an 80-year-old who just started," she says. "You're never too old to play."

For the first time, though, there will be a new, 8,000 capacity space for the headlining acts. The evolution of ICONS is apparent in the hiring of new operations manager Steve Andriakos, who has worked on festivals in Austin, Tx. and for 12 years supervised the second stage at Ozzfest, a heavy metal/hard rock event headed by Ozzy Osbourne. He recently moved to Maine and his crew will erect the same 40-by-40-foot stage that he used at the nearby Tweeter Center for Ozzfest. "Really, we'll be playing on the same Ozzfest stage? That's wild," says Casey of the Dropkicks. There will be five or six music stages overall, says Andriakos, who met recently with O'Donovan and 25 other organizers to address all of their stage needs. And while he hopes that audiences will be standing and dancing, he's not afraid of moshing if that happens. "We've learned to deal with it," he says, speaking like a true industry pro.

The line-up was solidified during the spring ("It's all set unless Christy Moore wants to come, we've invited him," says O'Donovan), but many musicians still want to come and perform on a purely voluntary basis around the 50-acre grounds. "The more musicians we have, the better. We want spontaneous activity," says O'Donovan. "We're emphasising volunteers this year as an intrinsic part of the festival. What we are selling is the commitment of people to the Irish culture on display. It's as crucial as what's going on stage. "We're really creating a town here that people can come to," says O'Donovan. "Everyone is a

mayor or an ambassador. We want to be pro-active." And, indeed, a street called O'Connell Street will be formed with the vendors selling their wares on either side of it and pipe bands marching around. And there will even be Irish setters and Irish wolfhounds also on display. Nothing with the roots in the Emerald Isle will be lacking.

ICONS Festival has also joined 21st century technology explosion by pouring energy into its Iconfestival.com website, created with the youthful Lumen Eclipse web design group from Boston. All of the nearly 40 performing acts have biographical links on the site, and many have three songs up on it so people can get a cyberspace sample before seeing them in person. "It's been an enormous undertaking," says ICONS assistant director Jeannie Smith. "But the more you can drive traffic there and spread the word, it all helps." And ICONS also has a large Myspace.com presence with videos included on that site.

One of the more interesting dilemmas that O'Donovan has faced is there are so many acts to see that fans will have to make some hard choices. "People say, 'How can you make us choose between Nanci Griffith and Tommy Makem?' But, really, that's a great conflict to have."

Steve Morse was a music critic at the Boston Globe for 30 years and now is Critic At Large for WBOS-FM and a web columnist for Iconfestival.com
He can be reached at spmorse@gmail.com



Kieran Jordan Dancers



Dropkick Murphys

ICONS 2007

THE LINE-UP

ALTAN

www.altan.ie

No Irish traditional band in the last dozen years has had a wider impact on audiences and music lovers throughout the world than Altan. With their exquisitely produced award-winning recordings, ranging dynamically from the most sensitive and touching old Irish songs all the way to hard hitting reels and jigs, and with their heartwarming, dynamic live performances, Altan have moved audiences from Donegal to Tokyo to Seattle.

Throughout, the band (Mairead Ní Mhaonaigh, Ciaran Tourish, Dermot Byrne, Daithí Sproule and Ciaran Curran) has shown an unwavering commitment to bring the beauty of traditional music, particularly that of the Donegal fiddlers and singers, to the contemporary audiences in a way that brings out all its qualities and destroys none.



BABY JENKS

www.myspace.com/babyjenksmusic

Named after a character in Anne Rice's Vampire Chronicles, Baby Jenks has been together since late 2003. Influenced by the big stadium sounds of U2, Coldplay and Radiohead, but with their own musical aesthetic firmly to the fore, they played their debut gig in legendary Dublin venue Mother Redcaps in spring of 2004. Over the following months, Baby Jenks honed their live skills with a multitude of gigs. Their sparkling shows at the Irish IMRO showcase, Boston's NEMO Music Festival and also Castlepalooza earned them rave reviews. Baby Jenks have just recently spent time in the studio working on their debut album, scheduled for release this summer.

BEOGA

www.beogamusical.com

Beoga is a five-piece traditional band based in County Antrim. The band was drawn together after jamming in a ferocious music session at the All-Ireland Fleadh in August 2002. Their unique sound features the twin dueling accordions of Seán Óg Graham and Damian McKee, along with four-time All-Ireland bodhrán

champion, Eamon Murray and pianist, Liam Bradley, as well as one of Ireland's premier young singers in Niamh Dunne. The bedrock of Beoga's music lies firmly within the Irish tradition, but they are not afraid to incorporate other genres' nuances into their music. From bluesy riffs to Astor Piazzola-style jazz, to a raunchy New Orleans jamboree vibe, their music always returns to a wonderfully bouncy traditional sound.



BLACK 47

www.black47.com

Black 47 espouses an unblinkingly political and thoroughly Irish form of rock 'n' roll, with songs covering topics from the Northern Ireland conflict to civil rights and urban unrest in contemporary New York. Black 47 earned their chops playing the pub scene in Manhattan and self-producing their first indie record, "Black 47," before converting The Cars' Ric Ocasek to the cause and gaining mainstream attention with their second album. The band likes to play their music loud, and as Rolling Stone puts it, "with upraised fists and chunky guitar riffs... declarations of gnashing street poetry punctuated with wailing uilleann pipes, Joe Strummer-style chord chops and Bourbon Street sax sojourns."

THE BLACK CROWES

www.blackcrowes.com

From the beginning, when they roared out of the gate with their multi-platinum debut album "Shake Your Money Maker" in 1990, The Black Crowes have played by their own rules. They've gone against the grain and formed an intimate connection with their audience, while maintaining their independence and creative freedom from standard industry practices. Brothers Chris and Rich Robinson, the band's founders and guiding spirits, have never veered from their mission of creating rock and roll that is fierce and genuine, with a sound that doesn't conform to easy

categorisation. You can hear it in the band's six studio albums, which have racked up worldwide album sales exceeding 19 million and in their panoramic, legendary live shows. The Black Crowes have shared the stage with Jimmy Page, Bob Dylan, The Rolling Stones, Aerosmith, AC/DC, The Who, Neil Young, The Grateful Dead and many other legendary artists.

DENNIS BRENNAN

www.dennisbrennan.com

Boston has a music legacy that needs no introduction, and at the heart of the scene is Dennis Brennan. He's a cagey veteran who electrifies audiences with his ability to cross brilliantly from rock to soul, blues, country, and jazz, while breathing fresh life into each. On several nights a week, Brennan bops around New England clubs with a passion that is all too rare in today's homogenised music climate.

KEVIN BURKE TRIO

www.kevinburke.com

Kevin Burke is one of the most influential musicians to emerge from the Irish traditional music revival of the last 30 years. His inimitably silky, lyrical style was a cornerstone of the legendary Bothy Band, and he remains an active member of such Celtic supergroups as Patrick Street and Celtic Fiddle Festival. Raised in London by parents from County Sligo, Burke has come to be associated with the elegant, ornamented Sligo style of playing. He has recorded with artists as diverse as Kate Bush, Arlo Guthrie, Paul Brady and Doug Dillard, and released a string of solo recordings now considered classics.

CARA

www.cara-music.com

Formed in 2003, Cara is a band rooted in Irish and Scottish traditional music, but with a twist. It's founding members are from Germany. United in an ambition to create a new and unique sound, Cara's musicians have all made a name for themselves at home and abroad through their involvement in various projects. But it's not just their music that makes Cara so successful. There's the charming and witty performance of the two front women, Gudrun Walther and Sandra Steinort, singing songs and telling tales of jealous lovers, daring young women, water-spirits and other curiosities, and playing rousing jigs and reels with their talent bandmates Claus Steinort (flutes, whistles, concertina), Jürgen Treyz (guitars) and Rolf Wagels (bodhran).

DANNY DOYLE

www.celticnationsworld.com

In an impressive concert career spanning almost four decades, Danny Doyle has been bringing the ballads, history and stories of Ireland to audiences around the world. He has a way of conjuring up the Irish island with songs and vivid tales. Somehow, after you've heard this quintessential Irishman, you can nearly taste the salt aroma of a West Clare gale and almost feel the mist falling on Dublin's Ha'penny Bridge. If Danny (in the words of the 19th century Belfast poet, Samuel Ferguson) is a folksinger who aspires "to link his present with his country's past and live anew in knowledge of his sires," then his songs and deep affection for Ireland's dramatic history offer profound evidence that he indeed sings with "the spirit of his homeland flowing through his veins."

LIZ CARROLL AND JOHN DOYLE

www.lizcarroll.com

Springing from the new traditionalist movement in Irish music, the partnership between fiddler, Liz Carroll and guitarist and singer John Doyle has proven to be one of the most exciting developments in the folk and Celtic worlds. Since she was 18,



when she astounded the Celtic music world by winning the Senior All-Ireland Championship, Liz and her fiddle have been amazing audiences around the globe. Her recordings and also appearances on concert stages, television and radio, have established Liz as one of traditional music's most sought after performers. John first rose to prominence as a member of the group Chanting House and then as co-founder of Solas, before pursuing a career as a soloist. The two discovered a dynamism and sympathy in their creative work together that now moves from the studio to stages across the world.

JOHNNY B. CONNOLLY

www.myspace.com/thejohnnyconnollyband

Johnny Connolly has generated a reputation as an exciting and accomplished button accordionist of the highest order. Born and raised in Dublin, Johnny has made his home in Portland, Oregon, for the last 10 years. He has toured extensively in the U.S., Japan and Europe and has performed and recorded with artists including the Chieftains and Kevin Burke. In 2001 Johnny recorded his debut CD "Bridgetown" which was released on the Green Linnet label. The Irish Herald called it "the most exciting solo debut from an Irish artist in years. A must-have CD for all true lovers of Irish box playing."



JIMMY CROWLEY

www.jimmycrowley.com

Jimmy Crowley is a living legend in Irish folk music. He comes from Cork, a city whose musical richness mirrors the city's diversity, and a great traditional music and song heritage, as well as a legacy from music-hall vaudeville and high art. Jimmy draws on all of these traditions to fashion his own unique performance style and repertoire. He is a consummate stage performer as well as a song writer, adding color to his songs by weaving stories about Cork characters, maritime exploits and daily life into his act, accompanying himself on bouzouki, mandola and mouth organ. His singing style is truly unique nobody hearing Jimmy could possibly mistake him for anyone else.

CHERISH THE LADIES

www.cherishtheladies.com

They have grown from a one-time concert concept to an Irish traditional music sensation, literally the most successful and sought-after Irish-American group in Celtic music. Organised by folklorist/musician, Mick Moloney, Cherish the Ladies began as a concert series featuring the brightest lights in Irish traditional music. Two decades later, the band (Joanie Madden, Mary Coogan, Heidi Talbot, Mirella Murray and Roisin Dillon) has proven themselves worthy of the many accolades they have received and in doing so have become one of the most engaging ensembles in the history of Irish music, offering their unique spectacular blend of virtuosi instrumental talents, beautiful vocals, captivating arrangements and stunning step dancing.

COMHALTAS CEOLTOIRÍ ÉIREANN

www.cceboston.org

An international organisation founded in Ireland in 1951 to preserve traditional Irish music and culture and to make it available for people everywhere to enjoy its distinctive character, CCE has grown to have more than 400 branches worldwide. In Boston, the Hanafin-Cooley branch of CCE was formed in 1975 and has evolved to become one of the largest branches with an enthusiastic and supportive membership of musicians, dancers, teachers and patrons who enjoy playing, dancing and listening to Ireland's music. CCE Boston is accomplishing its mission through weekly classes in eight traditional musical instruments and in set/ceili dancing, the efforts of which are demonstrated and enjoyed at monthly ceili seisiuns. All are welcome at weekly classes and monthly seisiuns, which feature Larry Reynolds and the Boston Comhaltas Ceilí Band.



DERVISH

www.dervish.ie

From the Great Wall of China to packed auditoriums in the Holy Land, and more recently as the first Irish band to perform at "Rock in Rio," in front of an estimated audience of 240,000 people, Dervish has come a long way in its 17 years. Their colourful career has taken them to every corner of the globe and has seen them share centre stage with such names as James Brown, The Buena Vista Social Club, Oasis, Sting, REM, Beck and many more. Concert performances by Dervish (Brian Mc Donagh, Liam Kelly, Tom Morrow, Shane Mitchell, Cathy Jordan and Michael Holmes) are a myriad of tones and moods ranging from high energy tunes, played with fluidity and intuitiveness, to beautifully measured songs, from charming lyrics of life and also love, to inspiring melodies that lift audiences from their seats.



CARA DILLON

www.caradillon.co.uk

Born in Dungiven, Co. Derry, Cara demonstrated her striking vocal ability early on by winning the All-Ireland Traditional Singing Trophy at the tender age of 14. She went on to perform with the groups De Dannan and Equation, the latter resulting in a partnership with fellow bandmember Sam Lakeman. Since the release of her self-titled debut album in 2001, she has earned a bevy of honours and accolades, including two BBC Radio 2 Folk awards and the Irish Meteor Award for Best Female Singer. Her most recent release, "After the Morning," has been voted the best Celtic CD of 2006 by the Indie Acoustic Project in the US.

DROPKICK MURPHYS

www.dropkickmurphys.com

Formed in 1996, the Dropkick Murphys was originally just a bunch of Boston area buddies looking to play music for fun. They started playing in the basement of a friend's barbershop with the goal of blending the musical influences they had grown up with, punk rock, Irish folk, rock and hardcore, into one loud, raucous, chaotic, and often out of tune mix that they could call their own. When they found people liked it, the Dropkicks began to record and tour, not only in the US but Canada, Europe, Ireland, the UK, Scandinavia and Australia, and have become a Boston hallmark in the process. They aim to play music that creates "an all for one, one for all environment where everyone is encouraged to participate, sing along, and hopefully have a good time." For the Dropkick Murphys, band and audience are one and the same: "Our stage and our microphone are yours."

ANTJE DUVEKOT

www.antjeduvekot.com

Fans of the Irish supergroup Solas have long been well aware of the talents of singer/songwriter, Antje Duvokot; the band has recorded three of her compositions, notably "Black Annis." But the German-born Antje, now a Boston resident, has impressed plenty of listeners on her own, with a vocal style that is well-suited to her songs universal yet personal, often dark, always honest. Her recent CD, "Big Dream Boulevard" (produced by Solas' Seamus Egan), has drawn rave reviews from around the world, and is helping introduce her to an ever-wider audience; folk-pop star and fellow Bostonian Ellis Paul, who sings on the album, calls her "the next great American singer-songwriter."

ENTER THE HAGGIS

www.enterthehaggis.com

There aren't many groups in North America who could lay claim to possibly 18 different genres of music, but Toronto's Enter The Haggis is one of them. To engage this quintet is to indulge rock, fusion, bluegrass, traditional Celtic fare, agitpop, folk, even Latin flavors, as evidenced by their recent CD "Soapbox Heroes," which seems to channel everything from the Waterboys,

Pogues, Midnight Oil and the Eagles, and on one track even throws in a Caexico-flavored horn section. The band's Celtic influence remains palpably intact, which is likely the reason why core fans have stayed so loyal over the past decade. Still, Enter The Haggis continues to break new ground with every offering, and the power of the music is only made more significant by their socio-political conviction.

TOMMY FLEMING

www.tommyfleming.net

Blessed with a voice that soars in every song, Tommy Fleming has proven to be one of the finest and most popular vocalists to emerge out of Ireland in many years. A native of County Sligo, Tommy burst into prominence with the popular group De Dannan, going on to record his first solo album in 1996. He has been equally adept singing both traditional and contemporary material, from "Danny Boy," "Hard Times" and "Black is the Colour" to songs by Tom Waits and Dan Fogelberg, among others.

A highlight of his career was his 2004 "Voice of Hope" concert in the Knock Basilica, released as both a CD and DVD and was broadcast on PBS in 2005. Tommy was selected as the best Irish Male Singer in 2005 by Irish Music Magazine.



NANCI GRIFFITH

www.nancigriffith.com

Whether performing her own poetically evocative material or the compositions of her influences, friends, and peers, Nanci Griffith possesses a powerful gift for inhabiting the songs she sings, for communicating unspoken intimacy and heartache through her tender voice and lilting, delicate phrasing. At the outset of a career that has now spanned nearly three decades, Griffith first emerged as a writer of startling depth and subtlety, crafting sparse uncluttered vignettes that revealed a wealth of emotion in even the most humble of characters and settings. With her gifts as a songwriter lending invaluable insight, Griffith has also grown into a formidable interpreter of other people's songs, as demonstrated on such albums as the Grammy Award-winning "Other Voices, Other Rooms."

THE GUGGENHEIM GROTTA

www.guggenheimgrotto.com

The Guggenheim Grotto is a Dublin-based three-piece band whose heady mix of pop, folk and soaring melodies is both moving and intelligent. In 2005, the trio (Kevin May, Mick Lynch and Shane Power) released their debut CD, "Waltzing Alone" a love album, but one full of tragedy, wistful, earnest, heart-on-your-sleeve. It speaks to the collective human soul through themes to which all can relate, and treasures the most unassuming moments, painting them as some of the most beautiful in life.

MATT AND SHANNON HEATON

www.mattandshannonheaton.com

Matt and Shannon Heaton pair original songs with traditional Irish flute and guitar numbers. An unusual blend of material? Sure. But a natural one for this Boston-based husband-and-wife pair, who has retained trad music chops while becoming involved in the rich Boston acoustic music scene. Call it Irish Americana, or modern Celtic music, Matt and Shannon's shows feature stunning musicianship, an easy rapport with audiences, and a selection of music you won't hear anywhere else.

HEIDI TALBOT

www.heiditalbot.com

Heidi Talbot has a voice that people are always trying to pin down. Alison Krauss, Kirsty MacColl, Norah Jones, Eddi Reader and Mary Black are just some of the names that often come up in comparison. But in truth, this Irish singer has a sound all her own. Developed first in her Co. Kildare church choir and through busking stints in Ireland, her unique vocals now front one of the world's premier Celtic ensembles, the all-star Cherish the Ladies (also performing at this year's festival). On her solo CD, "Distant Future," weds her Irish roots to subtle elements of contemporary folk and Appalachian balladry.



PADDY KEENAN AND PETER MOLLOY

www.paddykeenan.com

Paddy Keenan was born into a travelling family steeped in traditional music. His flowing, open-fingered style of playing can be traced directly from the style of such great traveling pipers as Johnny Doran, as well as that of his own father and grandfather, both of whom played in the same style. A founding member of the legendary Bothy Band, Paddy has cultivated a highly successful solo career, playing festivals and concerts all over the world and composing and arranging music for several film projects. In 2002 Paddy was awarded Ireland's TG4 Traditional Music Award (Gradam Cheoil) as Traditional Musician of the Year. As the son of Paddy's Bothy Band colleague Matt Molloy, Peter Molloy has his own familial connection to traditional music, but has more than established himself as a top-flight performer, appearing on recordings with the Chieftans and Oisín McAuley.

MAEVE GILCHRIST TRIO

www.maevegilchristmusic.com

Born in Edinburgh to an Irish mother and Scottish father, Maeve grew up surrounded by traditional music, and began playing piano at age 7 before taking up the clarsach (Celtic harp) a few years later. During her teens, she became heavily involved in the Scottish traditional music scene, but her interests also expanded to include jazz and world music, and she eventually came to Boston's Berklee College of Music. While at Berklee, she continued to add to her portfolio, working and recording with

the likes of Matt Glaser, Kathy Mattea and Martyn Bennet, among others, and performing in the US, Canada, Europe and the British Isles. Her trio blends her Scottish roots and jazz influence with Latin American rhythms to create a unique and multicultural sound.

TOMMY MAKEM

www.makem.com

Tommy Makem, son and heir of the legendary source singer Sarah Makem, has been known for many years as the modern day Bard of Armagh and is regarded around the world as "The Godfather" of Irish music. Armed with his banjo, tin whistle, poetry, stagecraft and his magnificent baritone voice, Tommy has been mesmerizing audiences for more than four decades. He has expanded and reshaped the boundaries of Irish culture, and infused a pride in that culture in the Irish, and a quest for knowledge of that culture in countless others. Tommy has delighted thousands of audiences with his talents as singer, storyteller and actor, but it is as a songwriter that he will live forever: "The Rambles of Spring," "Farewell to Carlingford," "Gentle Annie," "The Winds Are Singing Freedom" and, of course, "Four Green Fields" have all become much-loved standards in the repertoire of folksingers around the world.

MARIE AND MARTIN REILLY QUARTET

www.onqueueartists.com

Fiddler Marie Reilly and her younger brother, accordionist Martin Reilly, have been highly regarded players in New York City's Irish session scene for quite some time. Both have also recorded and toured with a number of different acts, including several incarnations of Riverdance. In addition, Marie has been part of Cherish the Ladies for several years now, and Martin just recently broke the gender barrier for the musicians in that band when he joined as well. This past year, the two siblings recorded their first album as a duo. Self-titled, self-produced, and issued on Marie and Martin's own label, this collection of 13 instrumental tunes has a warm, homemade feel to it, which, for Irish traditional music, is a very good thing, especially when the quality of the playing is as high as it is here.



MICK MOLONEY

www.mickmoloney.com

A highly respected musician who has recorded and produced more than 40 albums, Mick Moloney also has an impressive track record as a folklorist and author. The author of *Far From the Shamrock Shore: The Story of Irish American History Through Song*, Mick holds a Ph.D. in folklore and folklife from the University of Pennsylvania and currently teaches in New York University's Irish Studies program. Additionally, Mick has been involved in several television projects, including the Irish TV special "Bringing It All Back Home" and the PBS programs

"Out of Ireland" and "The Irish in America: The Long Journey Home." Through his various academic and research experiences, Mick is able to infuse his performances with a keen sense of history, humor and insight, as well as superb musical talent.

BRUCE MOLSKY

www.brucemolsky.com

Alone or with fellow musicians, with guitar, fiddle, or banjo in hand, Bruce Molsky has been exploring traditional music from an astonishingly broad range of cultures over the past two decades, synthesizing them and refracting them through his own evolving sensibilities to the point where the sources of his inspiration transform themselves into a sound that is uniquely his. While most identified with traditional American old-time music, Molsky's influences range from the Appalachian soul of Tommy Jarrell to Delta blues; from the haunting modal strains of Irish music to the rhythmically nimble music of Eastern Europe.

MRNORTH

www.mrnorthmusic.com

Formed in Dublin in the late 1990s, mrnorth is made up of two brothers (Emmett and Oisín O'Malley), a first cousin (Colin Smith) and a next-door neighbor (Adrian Mordaunt), who started playing together when they were young teens. After making some noise on the Dublin scene with their brand of melodic, passionate rock, the band toured constantly and ended up in New York City. The band has released three CDs, most recently "Fear and Desire."

NIGHTINGALE

www.nightingalevt.org

Formed in 1993 by New England contra dance scene veterans Jeremiah McLane (accordion, piano), Keith Murphy (voice, guitar, mandolin, piano, foot percussion), and Becky Tracy (fiddle), Nightingale took its name from the poetic figure that appears in traditional songs from many parts of the world, an appropriate emblem for a band committed to drawing inspiration from a wide musical territory that includes Ireland, France, Scandinavia, Newfoundland and Quebec. From its inception, Nightingale explored music outside the bounds of New England contra dance and has broken new ground in its arrangement of traditional music and songs.

NIAMH PARSONS

www.niamhparsons.com

As a young girl growing up in Dublin, Niamh was often taken by her music-loving parents to a local folk club, where she was exposed to the songs and singing of The Johnstons, Emmet Spiceland, Sweeney's Men, Dolly McMahon and Danny Doyle and other celebrated performers. Now, she herself has come to be known as one of the most distinctive voices in Irish music, drawing comparisons to such venerated singers as Dolores Keane, June Tabor and Sandy Denny. With six studio albums and one live album to her credit, Niamh has drawn praise for a singing style described as emotionally haunting and with a tone as clear as crystal. For the last seven years, Niamh has been playing in a duet with Ennis-based Graham Dunne, their spiritual bond helping to draw out the essence of the songs.

THE PRODIGALS

www.prodigals.com

The Prodigals are one of the most successful bands to emerge from the East Coast Irish scene. The band members (Gregory Grene, Eamon O'Tuama, Ed Kollar and Dustin Rohrer) grew up largely in Ireland; their original songs blend a funky and anarchic energy that is pure New York with a genuine passion for the traditional music of Ireland. They have played throughout the

United States, from Los Angeles and Las Vegas to Chicago, Boston and Maine, as well as abroad in Canada, Germany and Ireland, but they remain firmly rooted in Manhattan.

EDDI READER

www.eddiereader.co.uk

Scots native Eddi Reader's rare blend of meltingly true vocals and towering romanticism combine with an astute and pragmatic nature to make her a unique and powerful figure in contemporary British music. She has effortlessly developed into one of popular music's most thrilling and affecting performers. Eddi will be performing songs from her highly acclaimed 2007 release "Peacetime", with her band Alan Kelly, John McCusker, and longstanding collaborator Boo Hewerdine.

THE ROCHEs

www.roches.com

The Roches are Maggie, Terre and Suzy, three sisters who live in New York City. Together they have created 15 recordings in various configurations. Whether as a trio, duo or solo, each recording is as distinct as a snowflake. They have defied definition, and most accurately their music can be called "Roche" music, as demonstrated in their distinctive arrangement of "The Hallelujah Chorus," which they performed on "Saturday Night Live." They've appeared in venues ranging from their own sold-out show at Carnegie Hall to the concert halls of Europe and the street corners of New York City and have on "The Tonight Show" and "The David Letterman Show."

THE SAW DOCTORS

www.sawdoctors.com

During the past 12 months, The Saw Doctors have toured non-stop in Europe, USA, the UK and Ireland, promoting their new CD "The Cure" while adding to their reputation as a great live band. Now in their 19th year, the Galway-based group revolve around the writing partnership of vocalist Davy Carton and guitarist Leo Moran, whose songs often draw upon youthful memories some painful, some wistful, some pleasant and also depict ordinary lives in difficult times; it's music born of "cynical optimists," as Davy himself once described it.

JOHN SPILLANE

www.johnspillane.com

John Spillane is a native of Cork, which he lovingly describes "as the center of the universe", and it has been a huge influence on this singer-songwriter. Among his many accomplishments, John won the Irish Meteor award for "Best Folk/Trad Act" twice. His music has been recorded by many legendary artists, including Christy Moore, Karan Casey, Pauline Scanlon, Méav, Cathie Ryan and Sharon Shannon. John also wrote and recorded the soundtrack for "The Boy Who Had No Story." Whether performing around the world, completing commissions for music for national dance companies, or broadcasting as the deejay of his own radio show in Ireland, it can safely be said that John has done just about a little bit of this and that.

TEMPEST

www.tempestmusic.com

Since forming in 1988, Tempest has delivered a globally renowned hybrid of high-energy folk rock fusing Irish reels, Scottish ballads, Norwegian influences and other world music elements. Hailing from Oslo, Norway, founding member and lead singer/electric mandolinist Lief Sorbye is recognised as a driving force in the modern folk-rock movement, while fiddler, Michael Mullen is a constant fan favourite. Bassist, Damien Gonzalez, a native Californian, is also an accomplished drummer and didgeridoo player who may occasionally breathe fire, and English native and guitarist James Crocker combines a deep-

rooted British folk sensibility with a life-long rock experience. Cuban-born drummer Adolfo Lazo, an original Tempest member, colors the band's sound with inventive percussion.

THE TOSSERS

www.myspace.com/thetossers

Chicago's precursor to LA's Flogging Molly and Boston's Dropkick Murphys, The Tossers are the perfect Irish hybrid. Influenced by Shane Macgowan and the Pogues in more than a few ways, The Tossers play their own brand of Irish music loaded with attitude and alcohol. Celtic-punk, traditional in nature but steeped in politics and punk rock, The Tossers run the gamut from croon to crass.

TROUZ BRAS

www.trouzbras.com

Trouz Bras (pronounced "True Brazz") means "great sound" in the Celtic language of Brittany, the ancient country that now finds itself in the northwestern region of France. It also translates as "big noise," a reference to the loud Breton bagpipes that fuel the band's driving sound. Catapulting traditional Breton dance tunes into the 21st century, Trouz Bras combines swirling bagpipes and soaring fiddle with a rocking rhythm section. The band is led by bagpiper and vocalist Ray Price; Mance Grady plays percussion; Barry Hall plays fiddle, vielle and bouzouki; Brian Rost plays bass; Eric Peterson plays Middle Eastern-influenced percussion; and Sharynne plays woodwind and stringed instruments.

UNCLE EARL

www.unclearl.net

Call it old-time for our times: With their infectious energy, undeniable charisma, sharp musicianship, and unique repertoire of original and traditional songs, Uncle Earl (Kristin Andreassen, Rayna Gellert, KC Groves and Abigail Washburn) is bringing the string band legacy proudly into the modern era. The band's national debut album, "She Waits for Night," is that rare project that is enriched by tradition but never enslaved by it, at once defiantly old-fashioned and defiantly contemporary. Theirs is a sound that bridges gaps, and steady touring over the past two years has found the band appealing equally to folk, old-time, alt-country, bluegrass, jam band, and pop audiences.



BOSTON URBAN CEILIDH

www.myspace.com/bostonurbanceilidh

It's difficult to keep still when you listen to Celtic music and at the Boston Urban Ceilidh, where the music is set to a solid rock-n-roll beat, trying to stay in your seat is nearly impossible. The "BUC," which features some of Boston's premier Celtic musicians, spearheaded by fiddler Laura Cortese, playing high-energy dance music of Ireland, Scotland and Cape Breton (Canada), is built on audience participation. "Ceilidh" (pronounced "kay-lee") is an old Gaelic word that refers to a user-friendly social dance party, with emphasis on "user-friendly." Think "contra dance meets mosh pit", centuries-old dance traditions in a contemporary style, where the idea is just to get out there on the floor and move with the music.



MUSIC AND ARTS FESTIVAL

Friday, AUGUST 10

The Black Crowes,
The Saw Doctors, Black 47

Saturday, AUGUST 11

Nanci Griffith,
Altan, Dervish, The Roches, Antje Duvekot,
Tommy Fleming, Beoga, Uncle Earl

Sunday, AUGUST 12

Dropkick Murphys,
MRNORTH, The Tossers, Enter the Haggis,
Dervish, Dennis Brennan

PLUS

Tommy Makem • Cherish the Ladies • Liz Carroll and John Doyle • Tommy Fleming
• Mick Moloney • Heidi Talbot • Kevin Burke and Johnny Connolly • Niamh Parsons
• Eddi Reader • Jimmy Crowley • Bruce Molsky • Danny Doyle • The Guggenheim
Grotto • Marie and Martin Reilly Quartet • Paddy Keenan and Peter Molloy • Matt
and Shannon Heaton • Cara Dillon • Harpapalooza • The Prodigals • Nightingale •
Cara • Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann • Urban Ceil • Trouz Bras • John Spillane •
Maeve Gjlchrist Trio • Tempest • Kieran Jordan • Bridget Fitzgerald • Baby Jenks •
The Boston Kiltics • AND MORE TO BE ADDED



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