
MOHAWK VALLEY IRISH CULTURAL EVENTS NEWSLETTER

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Dougie MacLean to Perform at Homer's Center for the Arts

Dougie MacLean holds a place in his native Scotland that can only be compared with artists like Bob Dylan or Christie Moore, but here in the States he remains for many an undiscovered pleasure. While audiences might have a passing familiarity with his early work with the seminal Scottish folk bands the Tannahill Weavers and Silly Wizard, or with cover versions of his songs by performers like Kathy Mattea, Mary Black or Dorothy Keane, American fans have not had many opportunities to experience MacLean as a live performer. That can all change on September 13th when Dougie MacLean makes a very rare 2008 U.S. tour appearance at the Center for the Arts' Whiting Theatre in Homer, NY.



Although he has composed orchestral works and film scores, Dougie MacLean is best known for his songs, including "Ready for the Storm" -- the song that introduced him to American audiences when it was covered by Kathy Mattea -- and "Caledonia," an unofficial Scottish anthem that hit No. 1 on the charts. MacLean's melodies retain echoes of the ancient music of Scotland, but his emotionally intimate lyrics touch people of all cultures. His beautifully understated guitar work and infectious voice are as instantly comforting as an old friend, whether his masterful compositions are introducing you to something altogether new or reminding you of something long forgotten. Tickets for the 8 PM show are \$25, with seniors paying \$20, and there is no charge for children under 14 or students with I.D. Tickets can be purchased at center4art.org, by calling (607) 749-4900, or Linani's in Homer, Jodi's Hallmark and Sheridan's Jewelers in Cortland, Ithaca Guitar Works in Ithaca, or at the door. Beer, wine and desserts will be offered at 7 PM. The Center for the Arts is located at 72 South Main Street, Homer; just 30 minutes south of Syracuse, and 80 miles southwest of Utica.

Solas Lights up The Egg

On Thursday, September 18 at 8:00 PM, the Egg in Albany welcomes "the first truly great Irish band to arise from America," **Solas**. Solas (Gaelic for "light") showcases Seamus Egan's skills on a variety of instruments. He is an All-Ireland champion on flute, tin whistle, mandolin, and tenor banjo and also demonstrates his virtuosity on low whistle, guitar, bodhrán, and uilleann pipes. Solas also features All-Ireland fiddler Winifred Horan, who, in addition to being a former member of Cherish the Ladies, is a nine-time Irish step-dancing champion. Button accordionist Mick McAuley, multi-instrumentalist Eamon McElholm and newly-signed vocalist Máiréad Phelan round out the all-star Solas line-up. Tickets for the 8 PM show are \$24. The Egg is located in the Empire State Plaza in Albany. For more information, contact the box office at (518) 473-1845.



Earlville Opera House Welcomes Slide

If you can't get enough of "...traditional musicians with attitude," you're gonna want to be at the Earlville Opera House on Saturday, **September 13**. That's when the Irish band **Slide** settles in as part of its summer US tour. Recently featured on the cover of Irish Music magazine, this five-piece band keeps traditional fans happy while appealing to younger audiences with their contemporary, hard driving tunes. The band includes Éamonn de Barra on flute, whistles, bodhrán, piano and harmonium, Aogán Lynch on concertina and whistle, Daire Bracken on fiddle, strings and guitar, Mick Broderick on bouzouki and mandolin, and singer Andrew Murray. Described by one critic as "...living proof of how innovation need not compromise tradition," and by another with the earthy "...they can sing, they can write, they can dance across fingerboards and piano keys, buttons and bows, and by crikey can they play," Slide is one band you don't want to miss. Tickets for the 8 PM show range from \$13-\$23.



It's Veterans and Newbies at the "Old Songs Concert Series"

The "Old Songs Concert Series" is alive and well in the town of Voorheesville, NY. Located a mere 10 miles west of Albany at 37 South Main Street in a building known as... "37 South Main Street"... Old Songs, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to preserving traditional music and dance. To that end, this month they are bringing back two exciting acts on the Celtic music scene.



Jez Lowe and The Bad Pennies have been playing their songs and music of Northern England for a decade and a half around the folk festivals, clubs and concert stages of the world. In 2006 alone they played in America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Holland, Belgium and of course all over the UK and Ireland (not to mention right here in Voorheesville). Strong vocals with outstanding instrumental back-up on guitar, cittern, fiddle, fretless bass, keyboards and Northumbrian Pipes, have made them one of Britain's top attractions on the folk/acoustic/Celtic circuit. And on Friday, Sept. 12, the Old Songs Concert Series hosts Jez Lowe & the Bad Pennies at 8:00 pm. Tickets are \$20; \$5 for kids 12 and under.

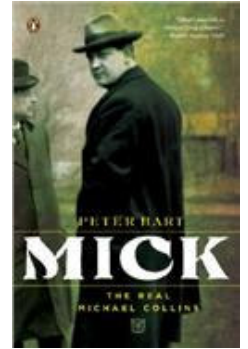
Bodega is not – as the first 15,000 hits of a Google search would have you believe – a convenience store or town in California. What it is is a young group of musicians who met while attending The (Scottish) National Centre of Excellence in Traditional Music; namely Gillian Chalmers (bagpipe, fiddle, whistle), Ross Couper (fiddle), Tia Files (acoustic and bass guitars), Norrie MacIver (vocals, accordion, guitar and djembe) and June Naylor (clarsach and piano). Since then – way back in 2005 -- the band has played at major festivals in the U.K., toured France in 2006, and enjoyed its first American tour last summer with a first stop at the Old Songs Festival. So well received were they that they were asked to come back... and on Thursday, Sept 25th, they'll be doing just that. Tickets for this special 8 PM show are \$20; and \$5 for those 12 and under.



Book Review:
“Mick: The Real Michael Collins”

by Mark Sisti

In all of Irish history, there are few figures who dominate the landscape more than Michael Collins. Part George Washington, part Che Guevara, and part James Bond, this is the image history would have us accept of this seminal figure. But did the myth grow because the real figure was so much larger than life, or do the exaggerated stories bestow legendary stature on one who was undeserving of such treatment?



Peter Hart, in his flawed but impressive biography “Mick: The Real Michael Collins,” would clearly have us believe the latter explanation. In this monumental tome, Hart seeks to separate the facts from the legends surrounding Michael Collins. Unfortunately his efforts to do so only partially succeed. Hart becomes like the doctor who takes apart a patient to see what makes the body work: he may gain a better understanding, but the patient dies.

Certainly no one can question Hart’s research skills. Utilizing all available archives, including newspapers, correspondence and reports from both the Irish Republicans and the British authorities, Hart (who teaches Irish studies at the Memorial University of Newfoundland) quotes from these documents extensively, but would probably be better served to allow the papers to speak for themselves rather than to add his intrusive editorializing.

Hart manages to piece together much of Collins’ early life which has been previously unexplored by his many other biographers, and this makes for interesting reading, but provides little insight into what made Collins the man he became. Hart’s take on all of Collins’ early successes and his rise through the ranks of every organization he joined is that Collins was simply the beneficiary of opportunities that presented themselves and that his advancement through the ranks – whether it be as a football player, worker or politician – had little to do with any abilities or personality traits he might have possessed. Hart would have us believe that Collins’ successes were simply the result of the fact that he slept less and worked harder than everyone else, and not through any inherent intelligence or leadership qualities. Ironically, the quotes he uses to kick off each chapter, each of which contains an opinion held of Collins by various historical figures and reporters, tell us clearly that this is not the case. The speakers of these quotes are vastly more impressed with Collins than Hart, who makes a concerted effort to insert some snide remark every time he gives Collins grudging credit for some achievement.

Hart manages to hit his stride in the chapters dealing with the peace talks and the negotiation of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in late 1921. While Hart’s self-appointed role as apologist for Eamon De Valera and his constant sniping at Collins could lead one to question the reliability of the reporting – for example, Collins’ oft-quoted and prophetic line “I tell you, I have signed my death warrant” is never mentioned by Hart, probably because it would be at odds with his skewed view of Collins as a self-concerned opportunist – the portrait of the peace conference in London which led to the infamous Articles of Agreement makes for riveting reading, with the reports of the maneuvering being conducted in backrooms standing out as particularly fascinating.

We also get excruciating details about how good an administrator Collins was, as Hart goes to great lengths to suggest that Collins succeeded because he was a good bookkeeper, as if efficient bureaucratic skills would engender the hero-worship that Collins enjoyed. On the other hand, crucial moments in Collins’ life and career – the 1916 Easter rising, his exploits as an intelligence agent, his narrow escapes from British authorities, and his assassination – are treated as afterthoughts, and an exploration of Collins that fails to deal extensively with these events would necessarily be doomed to failure. As a result, we never do grow to know “The Real Michael Collins;” all we get is “Peter Hart’s Real Opinion of Michael Collins.” It’s hardly the same thing.

Comholtas is Seeking Irish Dancers

Comholtas traditional Irish dancers meet at 7 PM on Fridays, beginning Sept 26th at the Seaton Center, behind the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, 2222 Genesee St. Adult members are needed. For information, call Mary DeRosia at 724-6493 or Jim O'Rourke at 336-5966.

September – Marking The End of Summer or... the Beginning of Fun??

Being a born-again eternal optimist, I had to ask myself: Why should I be depressed because September marks the end of summer? Shouldn't I be elated that summer is over; and that since I've shipped my kids off to school, I now have the freedom to do what I want, when I want? Or... should I just be depressed again because now you're going to go tell my kids what I just said? Well I don't care! It's festival season!! Life is good, and no matter what end of the emotional spectrum you call home, you've got to be impressed with the number of festivals and get-togethers being held throughout the area this month. Check these out:

- 🍷 **Syracuse Irish Festival** (*Sep 5-6*) On Sept 5-6, downtown Syracuse will be touched with a tint of green as the Syracuse Irish Festival once again takes to the streets. In total, performances will take place on two separate stages in Clinton Square, by such Celtic and Irish bands as Enter The Haggis, The Elders, Celi Rain, Scythian, Rathkeltaír, Flyin Column, The Causeway Giants and much more! Once again there will be a Gaelic Language Mass, slated for 10 AM on Saturday. The festival, which runs from 5-11 PM on Friday and 10 AM to 11 PM on Saturday, is free. For more info, check <http://www.syracuseirishfestival.com/>.
- 🍷 **14th Rochester Irish Festival** (*Sep 5-7*) Started in 1994, the Rochester Irish Festival is committed to the ideal of staging an event in an atmosphere conducive to families and children, with entertainment that is dynamic, vibrant and energetic. This year's lineup includes the Prodigals, Rathkeltaír, the Dustmen, the Dady Brothers, Seanache, The TownPants, Emish, The Wild Geese, Cliudan and others. For more information, check <http://www.rochesteririshfestival.org>.
- 🍷 **Irish 2000** (*Sep 19-20*) The Irish 2000 Music and Arts Festival, long a mainstay in New York's Celtic Cultural Corridor, has expanded to a two-day celebration, at the Altamont Fairgrounds. Last year, the Irish 2000 Music and Arts Festival added an all-new Celtic punk rock festival on Friday night. On Saturday, the festival rocks on with more than 20 performances on three stages, with a fourth stage dedicated entirely to Celtic dance and pipe bands – another festival first. “Expanding to two days gives us the opportunity to devote Friday night to great Celtic rock. Then, on Saturday, we return with 12 hours of non-stop music-- with more rock and traditional music,” said Matt Nelligan, president of Irish 2000. Performers at this year's festival include Great Big Sea, Gaelic Storm, Barrage, Seven Nations, Enter the Haggis, Carbon Leaf, Lunasa, The Tossers, Rathkeltaír, Greenwich Meantime, and many more. Tickets for the festival are: Friday, \$20 at the gate (\$15 in advance), Saturday, \$20 at the gate (\$15 in advance), with a special 2-Day Pass available for \$30. For more information, visit their web site at <http://www.irish2000fest.com/welcome.asp>.
- 🍷 **Elmira Irish Festival** (*Sep 20*) The Elmira Hibernian-sponsored 8th Annual Halfway to St Patrick's Day Irish Festival will be held this year from 2:00 PM to 11:00 PM on September 20th, at the Hibernian Center grounds at 701 Kinyon St on Elmira's Southside. Admission is free. This year's Festival looks to be one of the best ever with many of the top name Irish Entertainers, including The TownPants, Pat Kane, the Stoutmen, the Ring of Kerry Dancers and more. A complete menu of food and beverages will be offered. Those attending should bring lawn chairs as limited seating is available.

We here at the Mohawk Valley Irish Cultural Events newsletter were faced with a bit of a conundrum this month. It has been our custom to occasionally review local Irish CDs. A new CD "Buy My Soul" has recently been released by the Blarney Rebel Band. Unfortunately, two of the three editors of this newsletter are members of the Blarney Rebel Band and the third has to work with the other two. Consequently, an awkward situation arose wherein we would have felt uncomfortable reviewing this CD. With that in mind, we called upon one of the area's foremost Irish entertainers to review it, Donal O'Shaughnessy. We asked Donal, partly because of his encyclopedic knowledge of Irish music, partly for his musical acumen, partly for his brutal honesty and partly because he can be bribed for the price of a pint of stout. Unfortunately, none of us had the price of a pint of stout, so the album had to stand or fall on its own. The following is his review:



CD Review:

The Blarney Rebel Band - "BUY MY SOUL"

Submitted by Donal O'Shaughnessy

I have the unenviable task of reviewing another band's album, The Blarney Rebel Band's new release Buy My Soul. It's commonly thought that one musician's comments about another can never be believed. If the comments are complimentary they can be construed as patronizing and if they are less than positive it can be seen as jealousy. I can't win here but I'm forging ahead!

My first run through of the album gave me a general sense of the musical ability, arrangements and material presented in Buy My Soul. The traditional numbers, tracks 1, 3, 9 and 10 seemed a little out of place with the theme of an album of original songs. Beginning with a recognizable tune may have been a strategy to get the listener involved but I would have preferred an all original compilation.

I was pleasantly surprised with the tunes written by Mark Sisti and found he has a knack for alliteration and incorporating music to fit the lyric. As a song writer myself it feels like a magical moment when the two come together to drive the message home. Track 4, Banshee is the best example of this with Stingy Jack a close second. The knowledge that songs were written about true events added to the enjoyment. Very Jim Croce-esque.

I enjoyed the trad tunes which complemented the original material. It's a technique used often by song writers of Celtic music and found the choices fit nicely. The Drowsy Maggie addition to Are You Sleeping Maggie track did seem a bit out of place since it was not up to speed. I would have suggested completing the lyric and then breaking out into a fiery reel to complete the track.

The originals lent a folk flavor with Celtic overtones which worked for me. The instrumentation choices added to the message of the lyrics which will help the listener enjoy the words. I also felt the decision to add harmonies in tasteful spots did not overwhelm the overall song presentation.

Subsequent listenings allowed me to enjoy a wide range of instruments which kept the forthcoming tracks fresh.

It's been said that there's nothing like a songwriter singing his own material to get the message of the work across. Mark sings his songs with feelings and inflections and I appreciated that.



Overall, I have been enjoying the album's original songs, instrumentation and arrangements. I wish the entire work was original however. Perhaps we'll hear more on the next album when we find out who bought the Soul.

....And You Can Review “Buy My Soul” Too!

Yes, you too have a chance to hear and rate the new Blarney Rebel Band CD, “Buy My Soul.” The album, the second by the local Irish band, has been added to the play rotation of one of the largest Celtic internet radio stations in the world, Highlander Radio, which can be accessed at www.celticradio.net.

“At Highlander Radio, we just don't play any music on our internet broadcast.” said Paul MacArthur of Celtic Radio Music Network. “Each and every musician, song and album is personally reviewed for acceptance. We will certainly be willing to help promote such fine musicians based on our review of the material.”

Listeners who sign up for Highlander radio (it's free) can request any of the 11 tracks on the CD, which features seven original compositions and four time-honored traditional classics. Highlander Radio, (www.celticradio.net) out of Boston, is an award winning internet radio station broadcasting a wide range of Celtic Music 24 hours a day. Once you sign up, you can take advantage of any of the excellent membership benefits, including requesting any song in their 10,000 song database, seeing a list of upcoming songs, filing your own review of any of the albums in their collection, or rating whatever song is playing.

You can also hear clips and order “Buy My Soul” at www.cdbaby.com/cd/blarneyrebelband and the CD can be purchased at Accents of Ireland in the New Hartford Shopping Center, the Plaide Palette in Cherry Valley, and at Barnes and Noble in New Hartford.

Whither Art Thou, Thistle and Shamrock?

If you're a regular reader of this newsletter, that headline educes two obvious questions: a) Why haven't we been providing the monthly programming schedule for the Thistle and Shamrock radio program, and b) Why didn't more people get punched out for saying things like “wither art thou”? I mean really.

Thistle & Shamrock can be heard Sundays at 11 to noon on WAER, 88.3 on the FM dial, and the same show is repeated on Sunday evening, from 7 to 8 PM, on WRUN-AM; 1150 on your dial. For more information, visit the Thistle & Shamrock home page at <http://thistleradio.com/>. Anyway, here is the programming schedule for the Thistle and Shamrock radio program for this month, and a very special month it is:

September 7 - Thistleradio Poll Winner: Appalachian Connection

Through an online poll at thistleradio.com, listeners chose this encore program as the one they most wanted to hear again. The musical linkage between Scotland, Ireland and Appalachia is evident in these traditional songs and tunes.

September 14 - Thistleradio Poll Runner-up: New Gaelic Voices

This encore program was the runner-up in our online poll asking listeners to choose what show they'd most like to hear again. It explores the branches of contemporary song sprouting from the roots of ancient vocal traditions.

September 21 - Thistleradio Poll 3rd Place: Fiddle Styles

This encore program was the third most requested in an online poll asking listeners to choose the show they'd most like to hear again. It features the tasty fiddle flavors of music from Celtic roots.

September 28 - The Silver Collection

From timeless vinyl to pioneering mp3s, enjoy an hour of musical masterpieces from Thistle and Shamrock's 25 years.

RANDOM RAMBLINGS

- ✚ **Halfway to St. Patrick's Party at the Utica Zoo** On Saturday, Sept 27th, there will be a "Halfway to St. Patrick's Day" celebration at the Utica Zoo, from 6 to 10 PM. Entertainment will be provided by Albany's Hair of the Dog and the Blarney Rebel Band. Stay tuned for more details.
- ✚ **Prayer Breakfast** The Genesis Group is sponsoring the 7th Annual Regional Prayer Breakfast at 7:30 AM, on September 11, 2008 at Harts Hill Inn. Genesis will honor living and remember deceased members of Law Enforcement, Firefighters, Military and Emergency Responders. As our nation remembers the awful tragedies of September 11, 2001, we too, will come together as a community to recognize the sacrifice and bravery of many. The cost for the breakfast is \$15 per person.
- ✚ **If a Picture is Worth a Thousand Words, what are a Thousand Pictures worth?** I don't know... but it's not just a rhetorical question. Even by the most conservative estimates, literally tens of thousands, maybe *hundreds* of thousands, of pictures and videos were taken at this summer's Great American Irish Festival. Heck, there were well over a thousand taken by the GAIF staff photographers alone! You can see the great shots from Sharon Kane Zohne, Charles Thomas and John Carl, by clicking on <http://www.gaif.us/photogallery.php>, or you can check out Charley's site at <http://www.charleyt.com/gaif>, or you can go to YouTube and search on "GAIF" and get tons of videos; including the now infamous "mudslide" videos. And what about you? Did you take some shots you'd like to share with the world? Whether you've got them set up on your own web site, or would care to make them available to the GAIF site, we'd like to hear from you.

Celtic Club Calendar Finally, here's the Irish Musical and Cultural calendar for September.

Sept 5	The Prodigals	The Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	9:30 PM	\$5 cover
Sept 5	Pat Kane	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	8 PM	Free
Sept 5-6	Syracuse Irish Festival	Clinton Square	Syracuse	5-11 PM Fri 10 AM - 11 PM Sat	Free
Sept 5-7	Rochester Irish Festival	Camp Eastman	Irondequoit, NY	3- 11 PM Fri 12 - 11 PM - Sat 12 - 6 PM Sun	\$10/day (\$8 adv); \$20 Weekend
Sept 6	The McKrells	The Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	8 PM	\$8 cover
Sept 6	Old Friends	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	8 PM	Free
Sept 7	Syracuse Irish Session	Nibsy's Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Sept 7	Pat Kane	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Sept 12	The Blarney Rebel Band	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Sept 12	TBD	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Sept 12	Jez Lowe & the Bad Pennies	Old Songs Concert Series	Voorheesville, NY	8 PM	\$20; 12 under \$5
Sept 13	Slide	Earlville Opera House	Earlville, NY	8 PM	\$13-23
Sept 13	Traditional Irish Session	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	2:30-5 PM	Free
Sept 13	The McKrells	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Sept 13	Hair of the Dog	The Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	8 PM	\$13; resv. req.
Sept 14	Cliudan	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Sept 16	Two Feet Short	Blarney Stone Restaurant	Auburn NY	8 PM	Free
Sept 17	The Blarney Rebel Band	Blarney Stone Restaurant	Auburn NY	8 PM	Free
Sept 18	Solas	The Egg	Albany	8 PM	\$24

Sept 18	Cliudan	Blarney Stone Restaurant	Auburn NY	8 PM	Free
Sept 19	The Hylands	Blarney Stone Restaurant	Auburn NY	8 PM	Free
Sept 20	Pat Kane	Blarney Stone Restaurant	Auburn NY	8 PM	Free
Sept 19-20	Irish 2000	Altamont Fairgrounds	Altamont NY	Fri 4:30-11 PM Sat 10 AM-11 PM	Fri-\$20;\$15 adv Sat-\$20;\$15 adv 2-Day Pass \$30
Sept 19-20	Neil Emberg	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Sept 20	Elmira AOH Irish Festival	Hibernian Center	Elmira NY	2-11 PM	Free
Sept 21	Donal O'Shaughnessy	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Sept 21	Syracuse Irish Session	Johnston's Bally Bay Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free
Sept 25	Bodega	Old Songs Concert Series	Voorheesville, NY	8 PM	\$20; 12/under \$5
Sept 26	The Blarney Rebel Band	Piggy Pat's Pickled Pig Pub	Washington Mills	6-9 PM	Free
Sept 26	Donal O'Shaughnessy	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Sept 27	Traditional Irish Session	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	2:30-5 PM	Free
Sept 27	Hair of the Dog	The Parting Glass	Saratoga Springs	8 PM	\$13; resv. req.
Sept 27	Searson - CD Release Party	Kitty Hoynes	Syracuse	9 PM	Free
Sept 27	Halfway to St. Patrick's Day Hooley - Hair of the Dog w/Blarney Rebel Band	The Utica Zoo	Utica	6-10 PM	TBD
Sept 28	Flyin' Column	Coleman's Irish Pub	Syracuse	4-7 PM	Free

That wraps it up for this month. If you have anything you want to add to this newsletter, feel free to contact us at sistia@adelphia.net, bloftis@verizon.net or marksisti@adelphia.net. And as always, while we try to get things - prices, places, times, etc., -- as accurate as we can, sometimes we make mistakes (well okay, but someday we might). After all, we're only... most of us are only human. It always makes sense to call ahead to confirm some of these further-out trips.