

FEATURE

A monthly section of The Vidette

October 2012



SONS OF MALARKEY



BELTAINE



LADS OF TALLYMORE



WHISKEYDICKS

Irish Music Fest

Featured:

Galway Bay Irish Pub and 8th Street Ale House host 25-band Celtic music festival Oct. 25-28.

Random Reader

Sue Homchick:



HANK CRAMER



ROG HOPPERS



MOLLY'S REVENGE



DEREK WARFIELD & THE
YOUNG WOLFE TONES

Celtic music lives on the coast at festival

The Pacific Northwest was the destination for many Irish immigrants in the late 19th and early 20th century who brought with them, among other things, their music.

"It mattered not whether they came for gold, land, adventure or for a new way of life, one thing is certain they all found opportunities for advancement that was unheard of particularly as England controlled Ireland. For many Irish it was the first time they could express themselves freely on any event or issue. The Irish pioneers, home seekers, volunteers and soldiers all wrote about their experiences, they recorded their feelings in song, which is what makes Irish American song lore a unique source of historical information. I believe that the Irish contributions musically laid the foundations of the popular American song heritage," said Irish balladeer Derek Warfield of Kildare, Ireland. He and The Young Wolfe Tones are among the 25 bands performing at the 9th annual Irish Music Festival Oct. 25-28 in Ocean Shores and Hoquiam.

Warfield and The Young Wolfe Tones are known worldwide for their Irish patriotic songs and traditional music, including performing at all major Irish music festivals in the United States. It was at an Irish Goods Showcase in Chicago that Warfield met Bill Gibbons, owner of Galway Bay Irish Pub in Ocean Shores and 8th Street Ale House in Hoquiam.

"He told me all about the wonderful venue and festival ... and the rest is history," War-

field said. Though many Irish emigrated to the Pacific Northwest, the area is among the least visited by Irish bands, Warfield said, noting that he is looking forward to visiting and performing with other musicians from around the world.

With 25 bands performing at three venues, the festival is the largest Celtic music festival on the West Coast. Gibbons said he expects some 5,000 people to attend. Gibbons opened Galway Bay Irish Pub 19 years ago and had always wanted to host a music festival but the original location was too small. After relocating a decade ago, he started the first festival, and it's grown every year since.

Previously, the festival opened at the 7th Street Theatre, but this year Gibbons is opting for a more intimate crab dinner kick-off 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 25, at the 8th Street Ale House with Western singer Hank Cramer, the Crooked Jacks at 8 p.m. and former Daily World reporter Jacob Jones taking the stage at 9:30 p.m. Tickets for the crab dinner are \$25 per person. The all-venue pass is \$60 for entry to every venue every day. Single-day admission ranges from free (Sunday at the Ale House) to \$20 at Galway Bay and the Ocean Shores Convention Center Saturday.

"The line up is pretty amazing," Gibbons said. It includes a diverse mix of traditional and contemporary Irish music from around the Northwest, the U.S. and Ireland.

Bands include: Derek Warfield and The Young Wolfe Tones, Town Pants of Vancou-

ver, B.C., Oliver Muhlolland of Derry, Ireland, Molly's Revenge of Santa Cruz, Calif., Heavy Hammer of Seattle, Darby O'Gill of Portland, Ore., Lads of Tallymore of Chicago, Whiskeydicks of Vancouver, B.C., Maggie's Fury of Bellingham, Jacob Jones of New York City, Seattle Irish Dancers, Kevin McCormack of Dublin, Ireland, Sons of Malarkey of Portland, Ore., Ockham's Razor of Seattle, Erin McNamee of Seattle, New Shilling of Dublin, Ireland, and Portland, Ore., Hank Cramer and friends of Winthrop, Bowl Band of Seattle, Stout Pounders of Seattle, Grafton Street of Portland, Ore., Ray Carney of County Mayo, Ireland, Beltaine of Portland, Ore., The Bog Hoppers of Seattle, Dan Connolly of Seattle and The Crooked Jacks of Portlaoise, Ireland.

"The local Celtic scene is so rich with great musicianship and energy that it can only be a good time. There are so many local bands in the [Northwest] and each one carries with them a unique blend and interpretation of the Celtic Music. Whether it be a more traditional stance and some infusion with contemporary music from Americana to Punk," said Cormac Pope, guitarist/singer for Seattle Celtic punk band The Bog Hoppers and a Portland, Ore. music reviewer. The Bog Hoppers have performed at the pub, but never the festival and are looking forward to meeting the other musicians.

Festival:

Continued from 3

While their approach to Irish music comes from a different angle, the sentiment of community and artistic sharing was shared by first-time festival band Molly's Revenge of Santa Cruz, Calif., a traditional acoustic Celtic band.

"We look forward to representing the 'trad' elements of the genre on stage, and participating in some Irish sessions as well. The session is the heart and soul of Irish music, a place where musicians go to recharge their batteries," Stuart Mason of Molly's Revenge said. "To learn new tunes and songs. To have a musical conversation with other players and to connect at a deep, primal level."

Portland, Ore.-based Irish folk/rock band Sons of Malarkey are one of the recent regulars. A newer band, they've played at the festival since 2010.

"But we've already made some good friends in some of the other bands and are really looking forward to seeing them again. It's also exciting to see the different musical directions that Celtic music can be taken," said Sons of Malarkey's Jason Hohl. "There will be quite the variety again this year."

Western singer Hank Cramer, who's appeared at the festival many times, said over

the years he's met many fellow musicians at it who have become both lasting friends and recording partners from St. James Gate, Tiller's Folly to Tom May, Darby O'Gill and more.

"What I'm saying is: in one short weekend you can see all the finest Celtic musicians in the Northwest. And they're not just fine musicians, they're good people, too," Cramer said.

The caliber of musicians and venues is also a draw from further afield.

The Lads of Tallymoore are a new band based in Chicago. Founder Sean Ward is the son of the founder of Milwaukee Irish Fest's, the largest Irish music festival in the U.S. Ward and band co-founder Matt Voell grew up inundated in that festival's culture, working at it and other Irish festivals and absorbing their traditions: from the Grand Hooley that kicks things off to the Scattering, in which all bands gather onstage at festival's ends singing old Irish standards. They heard about the Galway Bay festival when asking other bands in the Irish scene of places they should try to play and applied just in the nick of time.

"We are pumped to immerse ourselves in some West Coast traditions now and to share a pint or two with Irish music fans alike," Voell said. "We hope everyone brings their drinking shoes!"

Gibbons said his festival can't compare with Milwaukee's for sheer size but it has as

many bands and a unique character all its own.

"The Galway Bay Celtic Music Festival is the largest Celtic music festival on the West Coast. This is a wonderful opportunity to hear Celtic music from throughout the Northwest and around the world. It is a great time to catch up with friends and other Celtic groups," said John Keys, of Portland, Ore. Celtic fusion band Beltaine. He's been to the festival before, but this is the first year Beltaine is performing at it. "It is also easy to talk with the performers over the four-day festival."

Each of the three venues — Galway Bay, 8th Street Ale House and Ocean Shores Convention Center — have a unique feel.

"The pub just has a really warm feel to it. The tables are up nice and close and the crowd is really into the music. When people are there for the festival ... they are expecting Irish music and pretty excited to hear it," Hohl said. "The Convention Center is amazing. Two huge stages with a giant dance floor between them. The whole production has a larger than life feel to it."

"We like the Galway Bay pub because it feels like you are in a pub in Ireland when you are inside, and the atmosphere is very warm. The acoustic outdoor performance area at the Galway Bay pub is very intimate and the crowd is very attentive," said Pat Ernst, manager and fiddle player with the

Whiskeydicks of Vancouver, B.C. "We love coming to Ocean Shores ... We always get a warm welcome from the festival and we love playing for the people who attend. ... Since the Ocean Shores last year we have played at 'A terrible beauty' pubs in Renton and West Seattle three different times and every time we get people who come out to see us and they say 'we loved you at the Ocean Shores festival,' and 'we're looking forward to this years festival.'"

Cramer noted that the feel of playing on the Convention Center stage for several hundred rowdy fans is completely different than playing in "The Snug," a small room for acoustic sets performed in front of 15-20 people in what can really be "a magical moment."

Cramer complimented Gibbons and his crew for making the festival a long-running success.

"Let's look at some facts here: we're in a long-running recession ... Ocean Shores is a long way from Seattle and Portland ... late October weather can be less than inviting. And up steps this publican and says, 'Let's throw a helluva Celtic music party out here, and I bet people will come.' And they do! Year after year, it's a growing success. You've got to be impressed by the vision and energy that produce a success story like that," Cramer said. "I'm proud just to be a part of it!"