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IRISH FEST ANNOUNCES 2011 FESTIVAL ENTERTAINERS

In Addition to Festival Favorites, Lineup Pays Tribute to Ireland Counties of Derry & Donegal

MILWAUKEE, WI (June 21, 2011) – Irish Fest, North America’s premier Celtic cultural experience, today announces their 2011 music and entertainment lineup featuring both new and returning musicians along with a special focus on artists from the Ireland counties of Derry and Donegal. Attendees will be exposed to some of the finest Irish music talent from around the world with more than 100 acts on 16 stages over the four-day festival.

“Every year we bring in a diverse lineup of artists that cover Traditional, Celtic rock, folk, singer/songwriter, and contemporary styles,” said Jane Anderson, executive director of Milwaukee Irish Fest. “People may not realize that we even bring in Riverdance-like productions such as 14-member performance band, Kintra. There’s truly something for everybody.”

And for this year’s annual festival, happening August 18 to 21 on Milwaukee’s lakefront, Irish Fest didn’t just book the best Irish music acts – they hand-picked them.

“When we promise to bring you a slice of Ireland, we start by traveling there ourselves,” said Ed Ward, entertainment coordinator for Milwaukee Irish Fest. “Our goal is to find and select the most unique artists and bring them to our festival goers.”

Irish Fest’s quest for “new” and “unique,” took their group on a journey to Ireland late last fall. They found many of this year’s cutting edge artists during their visit to multiple showcases and performances put on by top musicians.

(more)

IRISH FEST 2011 ENTERTAINMENT / ADD ONE

Musicians such as Fiach and Goitse are just two of the most recently discovered talents Irish Fest is bringing this year for those who are looking for something new. Irish Fest will be breaking some of the newest and hottest Irish music talent at this year's festival, such as up-and-comers Fidil, the Henry Girls, Nodlaig Brolly, Goitse, Fiach and Outside Track.

Additional artists making their debut at this year's fest include big names Moya Brennan, Liz Doherty Connection, Brendan Hendry Band, Kathleen Fitzgerald with the Screaming Orphans, the High Kings, Derek Warfield and the Young Wolf Tones, Paul McKenna Band and Qristina and Quinn Bachand.

But, Irish Fest also knows that their audience wants the tried and true.

"That's why we are bringing back the fan favorites and, frankly, friends that have been coming to Irish Fest for the past 30 years," said Ward.

Artists back by popular demand include Altan, Kintra, Different Drums, Tom Sweeney, Gaelic Storm, Scythian, Red Hot Chilli Pipers, the Elders, Seamus Kennedy, Vishten and Clumsy Lovers.

As part of this year's special focus on the Ireland counties of Derry and Donegal, musicians who hail from those regions include Altan, Moya Brennan, Kintra, Different Drums, Liz Doherty Connection, Fidil, Brendan Hendry Band, the Henry Girls, Nodlaig Brolly, Kathleen Fitzgerald with the Screaming Orphans and Tom Sweeney.

On this side of the Atlantic, the festival draws strong Irish music talent throughout the Midwest with acts coming from cities such as Chicago, Kansas City, Minneapolis, and Detroit. Regional bands include Bob Reeder from Kansas City, Two Tap Trio from Minneapolis, Blackthorn of Detroit and the Hatfield Sisters of Chicago. Considered the epicenter of Irish culture and music in the U.S., Milwaukee boasts its own lineup of great Irish artists, including Fiona Molly, Reilly, Blarney, Finbar McCarthy, Theiss & O'Connor, Whiskey of the Damned, the Sandcarvers, and the Gleasons.

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IRISH FEST 2011 ENTERTAINMENT / ADD TWO

About Milwaukee Irish Fest

Milwaukee Irish Fest is North America's largest celebration of Irish music and culture, showcasing more than 100 entertainment acts at the four-day, 16-stage event at the Henry W. Maier Festival Park on Milwaukee's lakefront. The annual festival takes place every third weekend in August with this year's festival taking place August 18 to 21, 2011. The excitement continues next year, August 16 to 19, 2012. Passionately committed to igniting a love of Irish culture in all people, Milwaukee Irish Fest teaches Ireland's music, dance, drama, sports, culture, children's activities, and genealogy through year-round programming. For more information, visit www.IrishFest.com.

About the Artists

Altan. No Irish traditional band in the last dozen years has had a wider impact on audiences and music lovers than Altan. With their exquisitely produced, award-winning recordings, evident is the band's unwavering commitment to bringing the beauty of traditional music, particularly that of the Donegal fiddlers and singers, to contemporary audiences in a way that brings out all its qualities and destroys none.

Brendan Hendry Band. Brendan Hendry, an Irish traditional fiddle player, hails from Bellaghy in South Derry. His work has been called, "real trad played and sung perfectly."

Clumsy Lovers. With a mix of fiddle and banjo fueled "bluegrassification" of Celtic rock, The Clumsy Lovers have been a fan favorite in its native Canada and the U.S. One of the hardest working bands in the world having played over 2,500 shows, The Clumsy Lovers are first and foremost a live band who has honed their musical mayhem to provide some of the most entertaining shows anywhere.

Derek Warfield and the Young Wolf Tones. Derek Warfield has enjoyed a lifetime of success as a founding member and leader for 38 years of the legendary Wolfe Tones. His love of Irish musical heritage is his driving force for passing it on to the next generation. As such, the Young Wolfe Tones have assembled to carry on the tradition.

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IRISH FEST 2011 ENTERTAINMENT / ADD THREE

Different Drums. Different Drums brings the indigenous drums of Ireland – the lambeg and the bodhran together for performances hailed as “celebratory”. The band has played across the world for audiences ranging from Presidents to school children, sharing the message, “Celebrate that which makes us different and that which bonds us together.”

The Elders. Since forming in 1998, the Elders have set the American music scene on its ear, thanks to a skillful mix of amped-up roots rock, augmented with powerful vocals, blazing instrumentals and top-notch song writing. The line-up consists of a group of Kansas City musicians with a passion for Celtic music and a charismatic Irishman with a love of all things American.

Fiach. Until now, Fiach has been one of the Irish music scene’s best kept secrets. Fiach Moriarty is a 27-year-old Dubliner, well respected for his songwriting, exceptional voice, and guitar playing and is fondly known as the “hardest working artist in Ireland.”

Fidil. Described as “stunning” and “mind-blowing,” Fidil are rapidly forging a reputation for exhilarating and challenging music that draws on the rich Irish heritage of their native Donegal. Their music making is marked by an intricate and intelligent approach that maintains the fiery exuberance of traditional fiddle music of their native region.

Gaelic Storm. After a start playing monthly gigs for friends at Santa Monica’s O’Brien’s Tavern in 1995, the bands popularity skyrocketed when it appeared in James Cameron’s Titanic as the Celtic party band in the ship’s steerage. Seven albums later, Gaelic Storm has amassed a large, loyal and ever-growing following and spends more than 200 days a year on the road performing.

Goitse. Up-and-comers Goitse (pronounced gwi-cha), are a five member Irish Traditional band – all of whom are students of Traditional Music and Dance at the University of Limerick. Entering their third year, it’s been said that the band plays with “an easy assurance that should cause those fretting about the future of Irish Traditional music to rest more easily at night.”

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IRISH FEST 2011 ENTERTAINMENT / ADD FOUR

The Henry Girls. The Henry Girls – Joleen, Lorna, and Karen McLaughlin – are three sisters from Inishowen in Co. Donegal, Ireland. The band’s name comes from the local family nickname, Henry. Their music is an eclectic mix of folk, blues, and traditional Irish, with “spine-tingling” three part harmonies.

The High Kings. Irish ballad group and Ireland’s Folk Band of the Year, the High Kings consist of renowned vocalists and musicians Brian Dunphy, Martin Furey, Darren Holden, and Finbarr Clancy. The High Kings showcase their incredible versatility and skills as multi-instrumentalists, playing 13 instruments between them bringing a rousing acoustic flavor to brand new songs as well as some old favorites.

Kathleen Fitzgerald with the Screaming Orphans. Kathleen Fitzgerald is regarded as one of the finest vocalists to emerge out of the Céilí band scene. Her four, close-knit daughters followed in their mother’s musical footsteps and formed a band that stays true to their roots in traditional Irish music with a strong focus on melody-driven songs with pop and rock strains. Together, this mother-daughter group comes together as Kathleen Fitzgerald and the Screaming Orphans.

Kintra. Under the musical direction of renowned fiddle player, Matt McGranahan, Kintra perform Irish and Scottish music, song, and dance in an exciting colorful stage show featuring fiddle, piano, tin whistle, guitar, bass, drums, pipers, and singers. Kintra showcases the talents of musicians, singers and dancers in this fusion of cultures from Ireland and Scotland.

Liz Doherty Connection. Dr. Liz Doherty hails from Donegal and is a well-known fiddle player, earning her PhD. She currently lectures in Traditional Music at the University of Ulster with a focus on Irish and Cape Breton music. Doherty is the director of the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention to be held in Derry and Donegal in 2012 and performs with the Liz Doherty Connection.

Moya Brennan. When you walk the windswept hills and endless beaches of Donegal, the music of Moya Brennan just makes sense. Moya’s voice captures the essence of her homeland in all its cascading beauty, mystery, and contradictions. Timeless, elemental, and carried heavenward in a soulful breath, her music

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IRISH FEST 2011 ENTERTAINMENT / ADD FIVE

refreshes and heals, exciting the senses and bringing a sense of calm to tired hearts. Moya has also performed as a member of Clannad, a folk/folk rock band consisting of siblings and family members that got its start in the 1970s and recently received a Lifetime Achievement Award given by the Meteor Island Music Awards.

Nodlaig Brolly. Nodlaig Brolly brings a mix of Gaelic singing accompanied by her champion harp and flute in songs already famous and new to her collection. The singer songwriter with a beautiful voice and excellent musicianship has played with the San Diego Philharmonic Orchestra as a special guest.

Outside Track. A stunning synthesis of virtuosity and energy, the Outside Track's marriage of Canadian, Scottish, and Irish music and song has been rapturously received around the world. Using fiddle, accordion, harp, guitar, flute, step-dance and vocals, these five virtuosos blend boundless energy with unmistakable joie de vivre.

Paul McKenna Band. Combining their love for traditional and folk music as well as original songs and tunes the Paul McKenna Band have been playing to audiences throughout the UK since 2006. With a contemporary approach to songs, although not straying too far from their roots, their arrangements are both fresh and innovative. Their exciting sound is created through outstanding vocals, driving guitar and bouzouki, intense fiddle playing, a warm pairing of flute and whistles and dynamic bodhrán and percussion.

Qristina and Quinn Bachand. This young brother and sister duo from Victoria, BC, Canada are quickly carving out a name for themselves in the world of Celtic music. Twenty year old Qristina Bachand is an expressive fiddler, with a unique personal style that is bold and edgy. Fourteen year old, Quinn Bachand, is gaining recognition as one of the best Celtic guitar accompanists in the world. Together, Qristina and Quinn Bachand create music that is challenging yet energetic, refreshing and fun.

Red Hot Chilli Pipers. Bagpipes with attitude, a blazing rock band and a show so hot it carries its own health warning, the Red Hot Chilli Pipers have been rocking the world from New York to Beijing with

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IRISH FEST 2011 ENTERTAINMENT / ADD SIX

musicianship of the highest order and a passion for pipes that will leave you breathless. Formed in 2002, the Chillis have fast become a global phenomenon, taking their signature “Bagrock” sound to the masses.

Scythian. Rousing and raucous, Scythian plays kicked-up Celtic and world music with hints of Gypsy and Klezmer, all infused with a touch of punk-rock sensibility. Their high-energy, adrenaline-peddling, interactive brand of music has one goal in mind: to get people on their feet and dancing.

Seamus Kennedy. A native of Belfast, Ireland, Seamus Kennedy has performed throughout the United States for over 30 years, proving he is a master showman with an unmatched repertoire. A maestro among Irish troubadours, his trademark is his ongoing interaction with his audiences. Enjoy the music and mirth of one of Ireland’s most popular exports.

Tom Sweeney. People have been singing ballads since the beginning of time; ballads of the famine, ballads of the Irish Revolution, going back hundreds and hundreds of years. Tom captures the mood and essence of this traditional music while singing and playing from the heart. He has been instrumental in keeping the Makem tradition alive.

Vishten. Consisting of 7th generation Acadians, Emmanuelle and Pastelle from Prince Edward Island on the east coast of Canada, Vishten mixes the rhythms and irresistible dance of Acadian music with climbing notes and voices. The songs are French, sung alone or in harmony, with foot percussion driving the beat. The richness of this musical heritage guarantees a high voltage show performed by native son and daughters.

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