

A DOUBLE FOR THE GLORIOUS TENTH

Bill Margeson talks to Jimmy Keane and Pat Broaders of bohola to discuss the release of their new album.



If you live in Chicago and love Irish music, Jimmy Keane and Pat Broaders's bohola is a part of you and, it is 10th anniversary time for bohola! By the way, as we start this, spare the posts to IMM here pointing out that 'bohola' has not been capitalized. It never has been. Now there is Bohola in Mayo but Jimmy, however, sees the name as a larger, expansive and more intangible feeling of the word and the area itself. Anyway, back to growing up musically with bohola.

Jimmy is a native Chicagoan. Many, many Irish music aficionados would consider him the best piano accordion player in the business. Everyone in Chicago would - we love our hometown heroes here. As far back as our memories go Jimmy has been a presence on the scene as well as a huge talent. Magical names 'from the day' in Chicago attach to Jimmy; places like Hanley's House of Happiness, the 6511 and session after session. Jimmy's knowledge of the music is encyclopaedic. Scary, actually. He is still young enough to remember everything he knows. He also runs the business end of things through his music company, Capall Beag Music, Irish for 'small horse'. The name comes from his Dad's nickname, 'The Horse'. His Italian, custom-made accordion also bears the name, Cappal, in honour of his father.

Pat Broaders is a native-born Dubliner. It wasn't long after coming to Chicago that he and Jimmy met. Pat has always sung in his traditional tenor, and when arriving in Chicago was playing guitar. That has certainly expanded! First, as bohola was really getting going, Pat asked Joe Foley in Dublin to make him a dordán. Think of a custom-made bouzouki on steroids. Huge. HUGE! Foley has also made Pat the instrument he now favours in the duo, a bouzar. (Laughingly pronounced 'boozer' by the two.) A guitar with a longer bouzouki, eight-string neck. Great sound and flexibility. We have often thought that Pat's singing, always a main feature of the group, has, like the proverbial fine wine, improved and mellowed over the years.

Over the last decade, they have expanded and contracted the group, as the charter-member duo has remained at the helm. There is the now legendary story of how, as an afterthought, Jimmy put in a couple tracks bohola had recorded along with some other artists his Cappal Beag Music was representing, and sent it off to Shanachie Records. The response was immediate. They wanted to record bohola - Now!! A contract followed, as did the group's overnight success. At that point in the making over years and years, bohola was hot; really hot. Suddenly, everyone in the music knew who they were. Success piled on success. Fiddler, Sean Cleland and singer, Kat Eggleston also spent time as an important part of the mix.

We remember being in Dublin at the time, which was also during the high tide of Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls. We were in the Mercantile Pub and were used to being asked repeatedly about Jordan, such was his fame and popularity at the time. A young gal, hearing we were from Chicago, came over with the, "Now I'm going to ask you all about Michael Jordan" look all over her face. Smiling excitedly, she asked, "You're from Chicago? Do you know bohola? God, they're great!" We figured then that the group had really arrived. A full decade on, everything has changed and, as usual in these things, nothing has changed. Still at the centre of it all is the music.

Now come two (yes, two) new albums from the group. There is the self-titled, *bohola, Jimmy Keane and Pat Broaders*, as well as a Christmas album, *Bo-Ho-Ho-hola*. Why two? Laughs Jimmy, "Well, the bohola album itself was set to be released some months ago and then was to be followed by the Christmas album. With perfect Irish timing, that didn't work out as we planned, so here they are together!" Pat adds, "It has been several years. Making up for lost time, we call it". Of course, the album and downloads are available at www.bohola.com, as well as all the regular sources for CD sales.

The first album to talk about is *Jimmy Keane and Pat Broaders*. Several aspects pop to mind immediately. The first is the longer form tunes Jimmy and Pat have favoured for a few years. Stringing together tunes and songs, some of the selections go on as long as 13 minutes in blazes of song and musicianship showing sure hands at the wheel. States Jimmy, "We both love playing the longer material and we hope the audience does, too. It is real fun. I love to work on how to connect them, and which ones really work together. It is a lot more than you might think. Tempo, songs, melodies. Challenging, and fun".

"We spend a lot of time on the road, and we get some real time to work it all out. The playing of the pieces is almost secondary once the creative bit is completed. I remember reading that Alfred Hitchcock used to say that actually filming the movie was anti-climatic, as he had already made it in his head. Same

comes round again in woollen coat and boots of leather. To take another turn and walk along the icy road he knows so well. The January man is here for starting each and every year. Along the way for ever The Christmas album is a full-on mix of music, song, poetry, storytelling and merry-making in general. Loving memories mix with hilarious recitations and readings, while, of course over all, is the music of the season. Lots of Nollaig spirit here, ranging from Pat's reading of *Is the Frost All Over*, to his singing of the classic, *Miss Fogarty's Christmas Cake*, to Jimmy's lovely playing on *The Snow Waltz*. Each of the selections includes the music, as well as a recitation or reading. The overall effect is a lovely visit to a real Irish Christmas.

What becomes obvious is that bohola has met the real, true challenge of being together a full decade. Many groups (and we all know who we are talking about here) go stale after one or

"Maybe it is all that time on the road. The duo have become so tight, so good to the point where their tunes and songs are almost a matter of instinct"

thing - sort of. But then comes the best part - playing it for the audience", reflects Pat. The emotional highlight of the album has to be the tune, *Gweneen*, in honour of the great fiddler and tragically lost friend of Jimmy and Pat's, Gwen Sales. The Chicago Irish music scene has never fully recovered from her loss. Also on the album is *Down the Doon*, penned by Jimmy in remembrance of the scattering of her ashes in Scotland with her sons and husband, Dennis Cahill. "It is still difficult to talk about and remember", says Jimmy, "I just hope the music somehow reflects, a little, how special she is to all of us".

One of the favourite bohola standards is also included; Pat's singing of Dave Goulder's *January Man*. "We love that song. We never get tired of it, and thankfully, we are often asked for it at our concerts", says Pat. The song was written over the winter of 1965/66 when Goulder was warden of the SYHA hostel at Achnashellach Glen Torridon Scotland. And the January man

two albums. It is as if they are an author with one, maybe two good ideas for a novel. After that, it becomes a treadmill of endless repetition and trying to milk it as long as possible. Clearly this is not the case with bohola. Maybe it is all that time on the road. Both musicians have done nothing but improve and improve to the point where their tunes and songs are almost a matter of instinct. These two are true friends and musical partners. They would have to be to last the 10 years. A decade is a long time. It can be a prison sentence of boredom, or a creative opportunity. It is obvious which road bohola has taken. When you talk to the lads, the sense of fun and easy comradeship is still there.

Years ago, we remember hearing a few tunes from bohola at some venue or other, and sitting next to Chicago icon, Kevin Henry. As they completed a set of jigs, Kevin turned and said, "These are men well about their business". True then. True now. A decade is a long time, but maybe not when you are having this much fun.

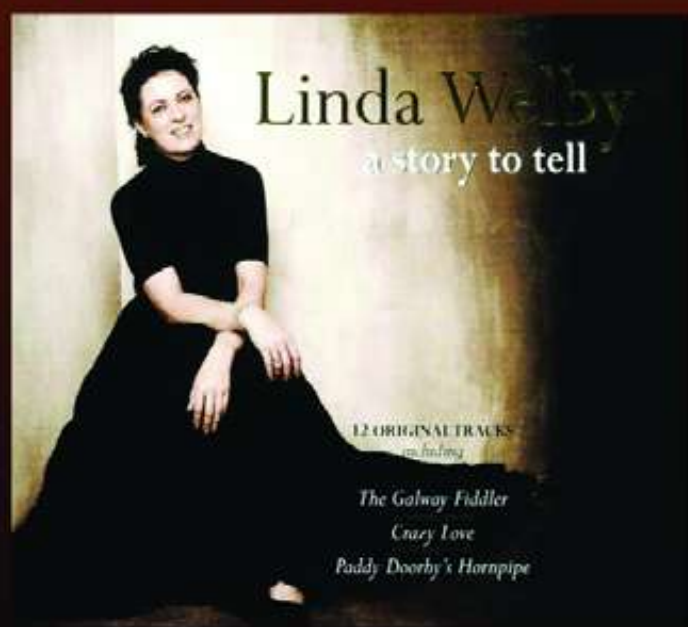
LINDA WELBY A STORY TO TELL

Featuring 12
Original Tunes
Including:

The Galway Fiddler

Crazy Love

Paddy Doorhy's Hornpipe



For further information visit
www.lindawelby.com