

Two Folk-Giants at the Flax-Mill

Colum Sands meets Willie Drennan live on stage!

The 23rd Open Day and Yard fest at the historic Flax-Mill in Derrylane outside Dungiven on Saturday, *Sept. 10th* is going to feature two of the most accomplished musicians and performers from these shores in one concert. Both Colum Sands and Willie Drennan are famous the world over and have toured – solo and with their bands – for many years.

Marion Baur, owner of the Flax - Mill broke the news to the media yesterday: “Willie Drennan and Colum Sands aren’t just going to perform in the one concert; they will join on stage to play for our audience which is going to be from many different parts of the world.”

Two great traditions – two amazing biographies – two ingenious musicians.

***Willie Drennan’s* roots are in the tradition of “Ulster Scots”, the music of Scottish people who immigrated to Ireland in the 18th century. Many years of living in Canada where he worked as a busker and producer of organically grown vegetables and herbs and numerous tours to various corners of the globe have shaped a unique performer who loves to fuse different styles.**

His current band consists of a jazz-multi-instrumentalist with love for Latino music, a bass-player who origins from Rockabilly, a master-piper and recently as a special guest a young harpist who plays traditional Irish style.

With this outfit Willie Drennan went for his Germany-debut in the first days of July. They rocked the 60 000 strong crowd at the “UZ-

Festival” in Dortmund, played and sung their way straight into the hearts of thousands of music-lovers.

A master of many instruments (tin whistle, flute, fiddle, banjo, mandolin), Drennan’s real love is that of rhythm. He plays various unusual drums, the bodhran and the “Lambeg drum”.

In an interview with German weekly “Unsere Zeit” he spoke about the “big lady”: “...as far as I can see the Lambeg drum is the end of the evolution of rhythm-instruments in the world. Louder, richer in sound and more high-energy is simply impossible....”

He brought the drum back as a concert – instrument, a tradition which started in the village of Lambeg in the 19th century, hence the name.

More and more songs in Willie Drennan’s repertoire are from his own pen. His recent “No Whiskey in the Jar” – a dig at the corrupt system of banks and multi-national companies – is rapidly becoming a hit in Europe.

To write a press – release about *Colum Sands* makes for a tall order – to pen even a part of his huge career would inevitably turn into a book.

For over 40 years Colum has been “on the road” and at home on the stages of the world both with his family – band “the Sands Family” and as a solo-artist. More than 50 albums are chronological prove of the County Down man’s endless creativity.

He doesn’t know how many songs he has written, a number of them such as “Getting the loan of a spade”, “Buskers”, “Whatever you say, say nothing”, to mention but few are now Irish- and international folk-classics.

The traditions of Irish music were with Colum from the day he was born in a small cottage in Mayobridge, his father, fiddler Mick Sands being one of the very early teachers.

Despite his “long and winding journeys” to almost everywhere he kept his home in County Down, lives not far from where he was born.

A master at several instruments (fiddle, bodhran, double-bass and guitar), he uses them to accomplish lyrics, and in many songs he uses words and phrases from his home-area and –dialect.

Colum Sands last appeared at the Flax-Mill in 2001. Several attempts to get him back to a Yard-Fest didn’t materialise due to his very busy schedule.

Marion Baur is fascinated that September the 10th will see him back on stage

“We’ve been waiting for 15 years to have him back here. His concerts were wonderful experiences and those who attended in 2001 will remember that we had to turn many people away because of an absolute capacity crowd. To have Colum returning in 2016 is all the more exciting because he will join with another folk-giant, Willie Drennan.

“And one more time again we will feature a young local artist who is just about to hit the big stages. Dearbhla Mc Taggart is one of the most talented harpists we have met, at her recent Germany – debut the 14 year old from Dungiven left thousands of music-lovers stunned. Some of them are actually travelling over to see her again.

“Add to that the fact that popular German singer/songwriter *Reiner Frankl* is returning to the fest after a break and you have the makings of a superb event.”

The organisers are urging people who want to attend the concert on September 10th to get in touch early. Whilst they recommend to book for the Open Day (full programme will be out within the next few days), the evening event is an “invitation only” affair with no exceptions.

For details contact flaxmill@gmx.net or 02877742655.