



CLANNAD
THE DAILY CALIFORniAN
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The folk music of Ireland often is a blend of beauty and pathos. An essentially rural music, what comes through strongest is the power which the land holds for its people - strength, nostalgia, magic. The mix of instruments and voice is passionate and inspirational, but always with a touch of sorrow. When music comes from a deep sense of community, it must express a spectrum of emotions.

In recent years, the Chieftains have attracted quite a following in the U.S. for their rousing Irish romps of fiddle and whistle. Now another group is seeking to match the Chieftain's success with a quieter, but no less authentic, approach to the Gaelic tradition.

Clannad, a group of relations from the County Donegal, opened its first U.S. tour last week before a packed, brogue-wielding crowd at the United Irish Cultural Center in San Francisco.

Their music is a rich mosaic of ancient Irish tunes including ballads, instrumentals, novelty pieces, and drinking songs. The instrumentation - harp, guitars, mandola, whistle, flute and bass- brings out the beauty of each piece, while the four -or five- part harmony adds further force to the

music. With only two exceptions, Clannad sang each song in the original Gaelic, a poetic, musical language. Even the musicians names evoke the oldest traditions - Pól, Máire and Ciarán O'Braonain and Noel & Pádraig O'Dúgáin.

Much of their concert matched their American debut album, Clannad in Concert (Ogham), recorded in Switzerland. The record contains several different styles of Irish folk music, from "Planxty Burke", a tune by the legendary blind Turlough O'Carolan, to a medley of hornpipes, one of which is appropriately titled "Off to California". In addition to love and drinking songs, there is a "slagging match" number, whose American equivalent would be a dozens song, a trading of insults.

Clannad has become well-known in Ireland and on the continent as one of the foremost exponents of Irish songs and music. Their clean, full sound - instruments and voices joined to express the moods of a people- should win them many converts here as well.

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