

Marc Gunn: 'Best of the Irish and Celtic Music Podcast'

By Chuck Bloom
Ceili editor

One of the best sources for free downloads of Celtic-Irish music is a podcast website operated by a former Texan.

The Irish & Celtic Music Podcast (<http://celticmusicpodcast.com>), from musician Marc Gunn (of Brobdingnagian Bards fame) is one of the best free online music sites of its kind, where, on a monthly basis, the hosts introduces listeners to new recorded material via the latest medium – the podcast.

As a bonus for listeners, Gunn offers selected monthly downloads (all clean and virus-safe) plus a fistful of free MP3s around St. Patrick's Day. After a few years of delivering some of the best new sounds to his listeners, Gunn decided to bundle the very best into a special compilation album – albeit in the non-traditional sense that is the digital music world.

Of the 17 tracks available on "Best of the Irish and Celtic Music Podcast," some will be familiar names to followers of the North Texas Irish Festival. Dallas' Jed Marum is represented with his track, the popular trad song, "The Star of the County Down," while Louisiana's queen of Celtic music, Beth Patterson, is heard on "Ye Jacobites By Name."

As musical ringmaster, Gunn has collected an impressive lineup of the various sounds that encapsulate Celtic music. The offerings he presents highlights all the major instrumental components of Celtic-Irish music, from fiddle to flute to tin whistle to dulcimer to button accordion to harp.



His tracks are mostly traditional in sound and background, but varied as to origins of the performers. The Los Angeles-based Sligo Rags display an amazing resounding four-part harmony throughout the well-known "The Whiskey Never Lies," while Ilana Regina's lead vocals are amazing in the rendition of "Chi Mi Na Morbheanna" by MacTalla Mor, from New York City.

Europe is represented by two groups, Poitin of the Czech Republic, and FIMM, a female quartet from Rome, Italy, while Scottish singer Jesse Ferguson is a Canadian import.

Among the highlight tracks on "Best of the Irish and Celtic Music Podcast" are California's Banshee in the Kitchen with "The Girls Set," the great a capella sound of Patrick's Head, a trio from Philadelphia, and the bluegrass Irish sound of Maidens IV, from Loudonville, Ohio.

Nicknamed "The Celtfather," Gunn is a true advocate for indie Celtic music. Having quit his day job in 2005 to pursue mu-

sic full-time, Gunn soon became involved in podcasting.

The "Irish & Celtic Music Podcast" is one of the top 20 music podcasts on iTunes, voted the number 1 "Best Podcast Music Podcast" in the People's Choice Podcast Awards in 2009-10. His *Celtic Music Magazine* is published monthly and goes out to over 20,000 subscribers, and he has literally given away more than 20,000,000 MP3s since this Celtic music career started.

Each show is an hour long, featuring a variety of independent Celtic music styles – traditional Celtic tunes, Irish drinking songs, Scottish folk songs, bagpipes from Ireland, Scotland, Canada, Australia, the United States, and around the world.

Being a podcast, one can listen, or download, at anytime, any place on any device. It is also syndicated on many Internet and terrestrial radio stations.

When it became very difficult for any performer to be signed by a record label, Gunn initiated *Mage Records* to self-promote his music. The label focuses on indie Celtic and folk music, and has released more than 50 albums since its 1997 inception.

"Best of the Irish and Celtic Music Podcast" is available through the same sites as regular CDs – iTunes, CD Baby and Amazon. If you wish to hear a variety of Celtic music from many of the country's best performers (as well as international performers), it is worth purchasing and the monthly online subscription to the *Irish Music Magazine*.

After all, one can never get enough Celtic music into their life...

Liz Knowles: 'Making Time'

By Chuck Bloom
Ceili editor

In Celtic music, to be a "double threat" on the fiddle means, in my mind, expertise in the Irish style, with its subtlety and ability to blaze like an inferno, and in the classical mode (not as a fiddle, but as a violin), with elements of great depth.

Popular Celtic fiddler Liz Knowles fulfills both requirements on her resume and on her CD, "Making Time" recorded in 2010. This was her latest foray into solo recording after an 11-year absence, and her patience, as well as the listener's, shows good things (in music) come to



those who wait.

The Kentucky-born Knowles brings

forth 13 solid instrumental tunes in this package, and will delight audiences when she comes to Dallas in March for the 2015 North Texas Irish Festival, as part of the group, Open the Door for Three.

The CD is a collection of various traditional, Scottish and Medieval, arranged by Knowles, displaying her terrific awareness of strings and harmony, notably on the track, "Byrns March: Pride of Petravore/Byrns March."

Her superb handling of a difficult solo ballad, "Sir Ulick Burke," shows the classical training and influence she brings to

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