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The veterans of Limerick music

Tickets sell fast for the much-awaited album launch of one of Limerick's most cherished musical collectives

I WILL still be here. I have no thoughts of leaving." More than 30 years on, and this is the line that resonates through an opus of fresh and freshly-rehearsed tracks that sum up a life of music. A life of music, all physically compacted into a single disk with supplementary sleeve notes and artwork. An evidential and tangible display of authentic creativity after four decades.

And that line, from Sandy Denny's Who Knows Where The Times Goes, is as delicately sung by The O'Malleys as if they had just started their career in Red Door Studios in Limerick yesterday.

But even though it's a 13-track project layered and condensed with mellow nostalgia, the veterans' new album is, in a way, the beginning for the band, who has had a line-up of some of Limerick's most revered musicians through the years.

Can You Hear Me is The O'Malleys' debut full-length album — some-30 years after they formed as a three-piece with a penchant for touring Germany's folk scene.

They were, according to us in 1988, the "Limerick group which the public either love or hate". They were — and



The O'Malleys will release their debut album on June 6 at the Lime Tree Theatre

still are — a band who has had a strong rapport with their fans up and down the country.

In the late 80s, they were that versatile collective that could wax lyrical, strut with their strings and make a joke all at once.

If you search The O'Malleys on YouTube, one of the first search results that strikes out is their 1988 Christmas special for the Suil Thart Gaelige programme, a

20-minute spectacle of absurdist hilarity and talent.

The introductory song is somewhat of a reincarnation of Ian Dury & The Blockheads, bringing funk to a rambling house. Fast-forward 10 minutes, and you're left with an endearing honky-tonk about a chicken, or moonshine or a woman called Alice.

"Everything was always different. You could do a joke song, which I always liked to

do. You could do a joke and then do a very serious song. But the music was always good," says Peter Donnelly (aka Peter O'Malley) who is joined by band member Dave Keary, ahead of their album launch at the Lime Tree Theatre on June 6.

Dave adds that they never took themselves too seriously, but always took the music seriously.

"Pete was always a prolific writer, so there was always original material thrown into the mix of things. And then a bit of madness. It was always peppered!" laughs Dave, owner of Red Door Studios and is also a session musician with Van Morrison in his portfolio.

It was the early 1990s when The O'Malleys became a staple in the Irish music scene, playing all the main venues such as Midnight at the Olympia, Whelan's, Dolan's, Cork Concert Hall and The Waterfront.

Then there were the television appearances; The Late Late Show, Sunday Night at the Olympia, the Brendan Grace Show and Nighthawks. Last, but not least, there was the international touring of the States, England, Russia and Europe, thanks to their trusty red Volkswagen van.

And the verve clearly still remains.

"So, what number album is

LIMERICK LEADER, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1988

Limerick group which the public either love or hate

By MARY HEENAN

LOVE, them or hate them, there seems to be no happy medium but judging from their thousands of fans the rough and smooth of the country, the O'Malleys are becoming a force to be reckoned with on the music scene in Ireland.

The six member band who all hail from Limerick city have been entertaining audiences with their versatile and original repertoire for the past eighteen months.

Founding members of the O'Malleys, Brian Mulcahy and Peter Donnelly played together for many years before bringing up with the band's four new members, Eddie Clancy, Joe Maguire, Ger Costello and Tom Cronin.

"Having all original material, with the occasional reworked or recorded song, the O'Malleys attribute much of their success to their constant rapport with the audience."

Alternative

"People either love us or hate us but we certainly offer an alternative to the approach taken by a lot of bands today who are so worried about their image that they forget that there is an

audience out there who was to listen and be entertained," said Ger Costello, musician and singer with the group.

"It's like to keep in touch with our audience, we're not too worried how we approach a gig. We just get up and get on with it."

Ger, who originally played with The Quiffs claimed that many bands create "the barrier between themselves and their audience."

"They don't intentionally do this but there are so few bands who are willing to get down with their audience."

"Their job is to entertain and to be entertained, it doesn't matter who their music that eventually they should be better off staying at home and playing in their bedrooms."

Boundary

Ger said that there was no boundary in what the O'Malleys do on stage.

"If we feel like doing a song we have never done before then we go ahead and sing it and if someone has like passing on us stage, if that is the mood on the night then it's all right."

With their first E.P., "The Fox", recently recorded and thinking up the album, the O'Malleys are already making plans for the release of their first single early in the New Year.

Band manager, Declan O'Shea, who admits to filling for

the band the first time he heard them said that he wasn't so happy with the lyrics that mean release received.

"Of course, we were happy to get into the charts," said Declan, who predicts a great future for the band.

"They are unique in their style of entertainment. And there is a market out there for this entertainment," the manager claims.

Ensured

A recent Late Late Show appearance after a spot on Night Tracks has now ensured a hectic schedule for the evening months for the band who admit to being influenced by the hard and country music.

When asked if their music was unique, Ger pointed out that there has been no original music since the 60s.

"In the way we present our gigs that is unique," said Ger who attributes their success with the audience to the fact that they have no set format.

"We're responsible for the way we do our gigs," claimed Ger.

Ger described the general music scene in Limerick as very healthy and singled out "Theatre Music", "Up the Downstairs" and "Private World" as bands of the future.

"I've got evening young bands play every Sunday night in McKeligh's. And Ger said people in some areas and villages they're good groups."

A lot of Europe is now on its cards for the O'Malleys. "Because the country is so small, you can only go around and tour so many times."

"It's very difficult to survive in the music business. No matter who you are you have to love the country, Ger claims.



The O'Malleys, from left: Brian Mulcahy, Peter Donnelly, Eddie Clancy, Joe Maguire, Ger Costello and Tom Cronin.

What we wrote in 1988: 'The Limerick group which the public either love or hate'

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this?" I ask, completely ignorant.

"This is number one!" Peter replies, almost delighted that the question was put to him.

It's a cliched question, but I ask if there are any contemporary acts that have inspired them during this project, which started around November 2017.

And quite confidently, they both respond: "No, not really, I don't think so."

"We're at this a long time," Dave adds. "Being in the band is a funny thing when you know the members musically and personally. There might be disparate and varying influences and varying styles, but when you put that group ensemble together, you do get a cohesive sound, a signature."

"So, influence-wise, it is what it is. The songs are what they are. We are not dictated by any trends. You can't be, because then you are in a losing battle."

The band has had quite an impressive repertoire of musicians, and the current make-up is Peter, Dave, Brian Mulcahy, James Hanley, Eddie Clancy and Ger Costelloe.

And through the years, The O'Malleys have lost cherished bandmates. In December, they lost guitarist Tom Cronin who was with the band since their golden era.

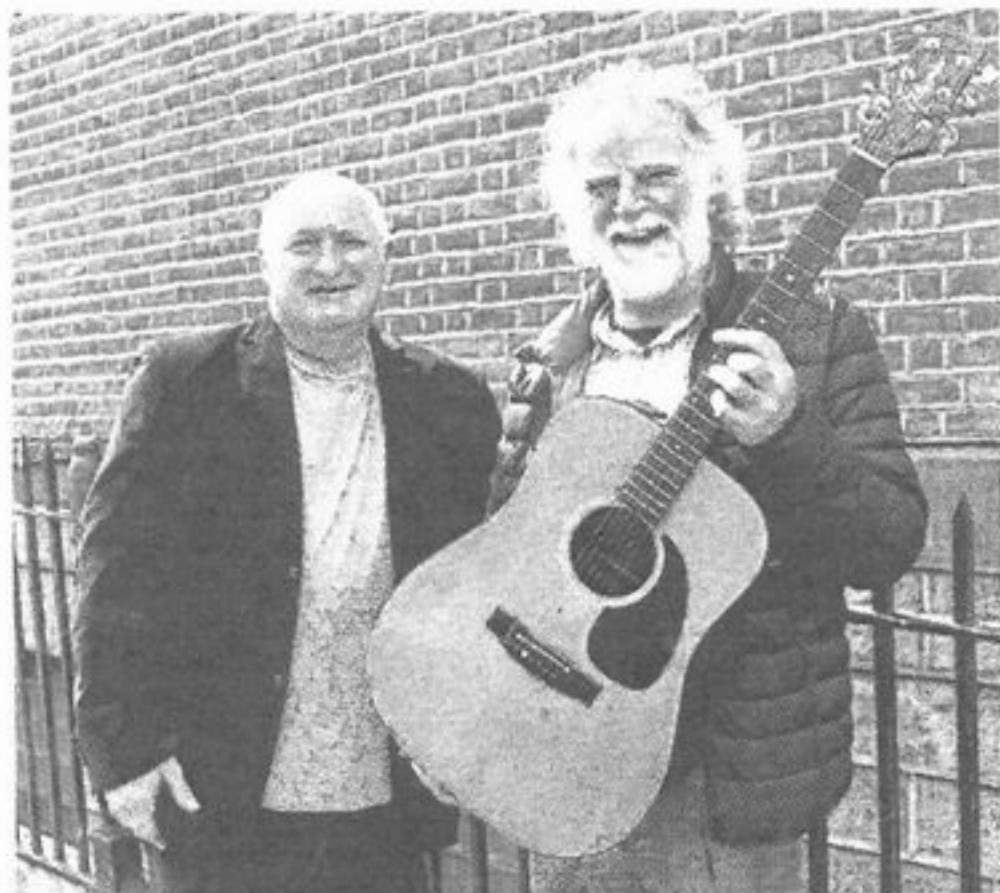
"He was a fabulous player," Peter says.

Other late members of the band include Dessie O'Dwyer, Alan Cheevers and co-founder Dudley Herbert.

The album, the two say, does feature a tribute to the members of The O'Malleys who have passed away.

Can You Hear Me is steeped in sagacity, a kind of catharsis for the seasoned musicians and people who look back on halcyon days, but look forward in eager hope.

Some songs are odes to particular places, such as



Dave Keary and Peter Donnelly PICTURE: ADRIAN BUTLER

So, influence-wise, it is what it is. The songs are what they are. We are not dictated by any trends. You can't be, because then you are in a losing battle

Peter Donnelly's Denmark Street, and others are to unique, drinking-til-dawn memories, such as Brian Mulcahy's Ghosts.

And others simply do not require words to embrace the spirit of tapping into one's own unbridled creativity, as evidenced in Dave Keary's velvety instrumental The Resilient Sun.

Peter admits there is not exactly humour in this release, but not for any particular reason.

"We wanted to do this album and we said might as well do some originals and some covers that we do."

And with every album, there is a promotional drive, and their itinerary is pretty straightforward.

"We're doing June the 6th first!" they laugh before Dave adds: "And we will see what happens after that. This is extremely important to us and our long-term fans and family members. It is a big one for us."

"But I think we have achieved something really, really great, and that is something we are really proud of."

And for those who want to experience this special record live, The O'Malleys will be performing at the Lime Tree Theatre on Thursday, June 6 at 8pm, with tickets on sale at €20. However, it is understood that tickets are selling fast.

Now that The O'Malleys have finally released their debut album, it might be presumptuous to suggest that the band won't be going away anytime soon.

"No, no, no, no." "There's no end date," I say.

"I think we're a best-before," Dave laughs. "Individually, there is probably a best-before but we've probably expired! But collectively, it's going to go on as long as we can go on."

For more, visit www.limetreetheatre.com.



Peter Donnelly and Ger Costelloe gigging in 2012 PICTURE: KEN COLEMAN

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