



NoLand for Old Men

Tokin' Whiteboy caught up with Paddy Mulcahy of Clare Collective NoLand Folk before their album launch and upcoming shows this month

NoLand Folks' newest recording, *Ghosts Light the Scene*, is on release from December 10th conveniently coinciding with their upcoming acoustic show at the Belltable Sessions. This album creates a rumbling caterwaul shrouded in lush sweetly palatable and easy to grasp melodies. The vocals exhortations have a slightly demented quality begging and pleading like a whiskey priest plying for forgiveness after a bender, while strings shriek and wail like a congregation of devils.

Chief songwriter Paddy Mulcahy says, "It's more people than place that inspire my writing, the further you travel out of your comfort zone, from the people who love you and look out for you, the more open you become creatively but the lonelier and scarier it gets." Indeed if the last album was a reflection of their travels, this one is local and cuts very close to the bone.

Wonderfully dark lyrics exude an inexplicable longing for something that's gone and cannot be retrieved, a trawl through chaos and obsession, devotion and despair. A map of the human heart in extremis. Elements of Irish and European folk traditions are dredged up from the darkest recesses of a black heart to create a gothic psychosexual apocalypse sounding like the ominous creaking of a rusty medieval torture device. The zest of Cajun spice on the lips combined with the accordion and fiddle, but the meat of the sound is a contemporary zydeco feel. "The music we are making now might go with a spaghetti western...

or something like the Mexican book *Pedro Paramo* which has this kind of scenario. Can books have soundtracks?" Paddy ponders.

Asking about what else he has read lately he mentions *The Amazon Journal* of Roger Casement by Angus Mitchel (who lectures in UL, you can get the book in the library there). "It's interesting to me in the first place to have a gay Anglo-Irish freedom fighter as it contrasts with some of the more nationalist ideas of what an Irish hero might be but the more I read about him the more I was amazed by him."

Getting on to arbitrary subject of influences he says: "We supported Choombawoomba about a year ago and since then I'm a total convert. They are a band with a very definite mission and charisma and a sound that's instantly identifiable and at the same time they are always trying out new types of music and developing. I like Nick Cave, maybe as he in a lot of ways legitimized songwriting as an art form. Pete Seeger is another bit hero, who writes about social issues but in an upbeat positive way."

Although Paddy holds a degree in Ethnomusicology from the University of Limerick his music is far from academic. "It probably was a block creatively, to academically study music I think just kills some of the rock and roll in you. I can imagine an ethnomusicologist at the side of the stage and if a rock star puked on them they'd probably be

happy to have such a noteworthy interaction with the music, they wouldn't stop to wipe off the puke they'd be writing so hard into their notebook! I do see the benefit of studying social things and actually quite enjoy ethnomusicology and anthropology but I think by studying human interaction you can lose the joy in them for yourself. I slag off the academic study but I'd say I'm a better active musician after having studied."

Songs carved from human flesh and pain and written in blood and prophecy. This is an 'album' in the traditional sense, not just a collection of related tracks but an array that plays out like a story, it needs to be listened as a whole, each track leading into the next musically and narratively. This music is frightening, revelatory and disturbing, a rip-roaring metafolk sound that questions not only the need for suffering on Earth, but our own fascination with it.

The Acoustic and Unplugged Belltable Sessions featuring NoLand Folk and the brilliant Last Days of Death Country takes place on Thursday December 17th.

The Limerick Launch of NoLand Folk's album, *Ghosts Light the Scene* takes place in Shannon Rowing Club on Friday December 18th

For more info log onto www.belltable.ie or www.myspace.com/nolandfolk or www.myspace.com/lastdaysofdeathcountry.