

THE O'MALLEYS

The Year of the O'Malley?

Mike Maguire went to visit that well known musical family 'The O'Malley's'. In a rare interview the brothers tell 'Hatch 33' of their plans for world domination in 1988.

When people ask what kind of band are The O'Malleys it's not easy to come up with an answer. As singer **Brian O'Malley** points out, "There's not many bands around who play folk, gospel, country, blues, rock as well as Irish, Spanish and Hungarian music!". The usual answer I give is, "Well, they're a bit crazy!".

Watching The O'Malleys on stage is like watching some surreal, cowboy version of The Sex Pistols. Anarchy and mayhem are words that could best describe "The O'Malley Show". Brian explains, "Well we actually are quite serious about our music but we're not prepared to

Playing Live

The O'Malleys believe that the only way to improve is by playing live. Guitarist **Tom O'Malley** says, "The O'Malleys gain their experience from playing live instead of sitting down wondering what way we should approach this number or that introduction". The O'Malleys will never be accused of over rehearsing. At the rehearsal I attended the band came up with a few new songs, ran through them once or



Pic by Darren and Derek Towell.

sacrifice the humour of it. It's pointless taking yourself too seriously because you'd drive yourself demented doing that. Like, look at the whole U2 vibe - yer man up on the stage gettin' a messiah complex".

Bass-player **Joe O'Malley** continues, "There are people who tell us to get our act together and we'll be great, y'know. But the act IS together and if you can't see that then you just can't see it".

Obviously quite a few people can see it because for nearly two years The O'Malleys have been playing to big crowds at the Savoy every Sunday night. This must make it one of the most successful residencies in Ireland. Asked for the reason for this success the band suggest that talent, skill and genius could be the explanation!

One reason for their popularity is that, despite the seeming craziness going on on stage there is a core of fine musicians holding the show together. Brian again - "The level of musicianship is quite high, we're all very competent musicians". Drummer **Eddie O'Malley** elaborates, "Also, there's almost a telepathy between us. For example, if we're doing a new number that we're not too sure about you can just feel the click between us; just the slightest nod and we all know what's going on".

People go to see The O'Malleys time and time again because the show is never the same from one week to the next. Everything that happens is spontaneous. There is no set repertoire, no set introductions - everything just happens! Sometimes this can go wrong - indeed The O'Malleys are an erratic band. When they're good they are the next best thing to two hours of the Waterboys: when they're bad they might remind you of your uncle singing out-of-tune ballads for half-an-hour at your sister's wedding! **Pete O'Malley** explains his attitude, "Well, I honestly believe in the gamble. Don't be afraid to go for it. If something comes into your head don't even think about it, just do it! Sometimes it won't work but so what?".

twice and then decided to try them in their gigs over the coming weeks. Then they went off for a drink! Joe explains how this differs from the attitude in many other bands, "With some bands you can rehearse a song so much that you just get bored with the song and you've no feeling for it. This is something that doesn't happen with The O'Malleys because a lot of what we do is based on the soul of the song".

Future

The only O'Malley not mentioned so far is **Ger**, singer, song-writer and conga-player extraordinaire. Over the past few months the band have introduced some of Ger's own songs into the set. They are also beginning to introduce some of Pete's original material. Does this indicate a new, more serious approach to their career. "Well we do have ambitions", says Brian. "What we are trying to do at the moment is test our new material. We can practice it during the week and then see how it works on the Sunday night in the Savoy. We get to know if a particular song is good by the crowd's reaction - you've never really tested a song until you've played it in public".

When it is suggested to the band that they do not seem organised enough to really establish themselves outside of Limerick they disagree. "We recently played a very successful series of nine gigs in Dublin", says Eddie, "and a nine-week residency in Dublin is a very long run". They accept that opportunities have been missed but they feel that when they get a new demo-tape recorded next month new opportunities will open up for them. Hopefully, their debut single will be released early in the new year. "1988 will be the Year of The O'Malley", says Joe.

Meanwhile, drop along to the Savoy any Sunday night and see them in action. The O'Malleys are an Experience.

Mike Maguire