



The Chieftains - *Voice of Ages*

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After 50 remarkable years as the world's most influential and successful traditional Irish folk band, some might expect Paddy Moloney and The Chieftains to rest on well-earned laurels with a weighty box-set career overview, but that's not the way they decided to treat the momentous milestone. Instead they used their tradition-steeped, sparkling musicianship to once again explore new and unusual passageways. The Chieftains' *Voice of Ages* finds the band collaborating with some of modern music's fastest rising artists, reinterpreting for old and new generations alike, what the music means today while hinting where it might lead tomorrow.

"There seems to be a great interest in the fact that we've gone down this road," says Moloney, speaking from his home in Wicklow, Ireland. "It's sort of like when we joined up with people of our own generation -- Sting, Van Morrison, and the Rolling Stones -- who have been on our albums in the past. But this time, it's newer groups. We met up and we had a great time."

Like everyone else involved, producer T Bone Burnett leapt at the chance to work on the album with Moloney and even helped facilitate particular collaborations, which range from indie rock (Bon Iver, The Decemberists, The Low Anthem) to country and Americana (The Civil Wars, Pistol Annies, Carolina Chocolate Drops, Punch Brothers) to Irish and Scottish folk (Imelda May, Lisa Hannigan, Paolo Nutini). Rounding out the 14-song (plus 1 bonus track) album is a reunion with original members Michael Tubridy and Seán Potts. Chieftains fan, astronaut Cady Coleman even contributed a tin whistle tribute from space!

Music is a tradition that is passed down from one generation to the next. No one is more acutely aware of this than founder Paddy Moloney, who plays uilleann pipes and tin whistle. He and bandmates Matt Molloy (flute), Kevin Conneff (bodhrán) and Seán Keane (fiddle) grew up in Ireland hearing the music and learning how to play it at the knees of grandparents and parents, aunts and uncles, not to mention assorted mentors and teachers. Adding to that continuum, these still vibrant elder statesmen now share their music and experience with the younger generation (this is also literally the case because Moloney's grandson appears as part of the Castle Park School Choir).

Moloney has been called "a musician of restless curiosity" by the New York Times thanks to the band's cross-genre collaborations with musicians from all points on the globe – they've played on the Great Wall with Chinese musicians, recorded with country musicians in Nashville, and 2010's *San Patricio* was a brilliant fusion of the Mexican and Irish folk traditions co-produced with Ry Cooder in California and Mexico. They always

find common ground when they invite their guests to come and play, knowing that music is the ultimate Lingua Franca.

Generally regarded as a traditional band, The Chieftains have proved themselves to be anything but. Moloney is as studio savvy as any modern day musician, skillfully fusing together different performances that meld traditional reels and modern tunes into timeless songs. He's capable of working in the most advanced studios or setting up microphones and jamming.

"I offered to travel to Justin Vernon and record in his hotel room," Moloney says of the band's "Down in the Willow Garden" with Bon Iver. "But he had to go home and do it because he has his own way. I respect that and I held out the deadline as long as I could. When he sent his recording to me, I had all the musicians lined up and waiting when it arrived and we went at it immediately."

The band works with fresh Gaelic faces like rock-a-billy singer Imelda May (on opener "Carolina Rua"), indie chanteuse Lisa Hannigan (best known for her work with Damien Rice), and soulful Scotsman Paolo Nutini. The Civil Wars Joy Williams and John Paul White traveled to Ireland to work with Moloney and were inspired enough to write "Lily Love."

"When we were approached by T Bone Burnett about the Chieftains project, we jumped in with both feet," the duo explains. "But it wasn't until meeting Paddy on his native soil that we fully understood the weight of his legacy. Everywhere we went, he was rightfully treated like the rock star he is. He humbly showed us around the beautiful countryside and graciously welcomed us into his home. So it was not only an honor to be a part of the project, but to also write a song specifically for it."

Collaborations include a hard-stomping dance number with the Carolina Chocolate Drops called "Pretty Little Girl" and a powerful new version of Bob Dylan's scathing "When the Ship Comes In" with the Decemberists.

"It's not often you are called to collaborate with one of the world's foremost innovators and influencers in folk music -- or any music for that matter, enthused the band's Colin Meloy. "I mean, The Chieftains have almost single-handedly defined Irish traditional music for the last 50 years. Needless to say, we jumped at the chance; it was incredible to be able to work with Paddy in the studio and track a song which has as much resonance today as it did when it was written."

The Chieftains even went so far as to work with NASA Astronaut Cady Coleman, taking a flute recording of "Fanny Power" Coleman did on St. Patrick's Day (see it on YouTube at <http://bit.ly/zXrOTU>) while onboard the International Space Station. Moloney and Matt Malloy loaned Coleman a tin whistle and flute to play for the occasion.

Moloney has always been more interested in playing in music halls and theaters he felt befitted this great folk art rather than competing with the sound of the cash register and

conversations that punctuate jam sessions in pubs. It was the band's 1975 concert at Royal Albert Hall after the breakout success of its music in Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* that cast the die and allowed the band to transcend its folk music tag, leading it to play the greatest concert halls in the world again and again -- this year's performance at Carnegie Hall will be the band's 20<sup>th</sup> appearance.

"It just keeps on going," Moloney says of the band. "I'm already looking ahead at 2013. Now that I have the recording bug again, I'm mad for it. Retirement is something I should be thinking of, but I think it's going to be a boots on job with me -- I'll go out with my boots on."