

FLEADH 2012 TO BE MEMORABLE FINAL FLOURISH FOR CAVAN!

Mickey McDonnell previews another event packed programme.

Clannad



With mouthwatering shows like the Donegal double-bill featuring legendary bands Clannad and Altan, as well as Sharon Shannon and her 40-piece Irish Orchestra, a specially reunited Flook, the Donal Lunny-Andy Irvine-Liam O'Flynn engine room of Planxty joined by Paddy Glackin, The Fureys and Davey Arthur, Eleanor Shanley and De Danann, Four Men and A Dog, The Sands Family and Paddy Keenan, Kan, The High Kings and many other top-flight acts to choose from, Cavan's third-in-a-row Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann promises to see the Breffni county wave goodbye to the world's premier traditional Irish music festival with a last hurrah that will more than equal the groundbreaking all-Irelands it hosted over the last two years.

To the natives of the town, it seems like a long time ago now that the then newly-formed Fleadh Executive Committee tentatively held a public meeting in Cavan's Kilmore Hotel in order to give local people an inkling of the massive undertaking entailed in hosting the All-Ireland Fleadh. But it's not really very long at all since that information evening in February 2010—it's just that the organisers would be forgiven for thinking themselves old hands at it by now!

That said, nothing is being left to chance as Cavan puts the finishing touches to an event-packed Fleadh 2012 that will see the town hand the baton over to Derry with a memorable final flourish.

Adding a wide choice of concerts and shows by world-renowned performers on outdoor stages and indoor venues of all shapes and sizes has been the prime ingredient in making the Fleadh in Cavan stand out from any that went before, and the town will be continuing with that popular recipe again this year, adding even more courses to the menu for discerning punters.

All this will, as ever, be set against a bustling background of non-stop music, song, dance and pageantry in every corner as thousands of musicians and tens of thousands of Fleadh-goers enjoy the 11 days of festivity.

Some of the biggest names will perform at the 2,000-seater Fleadh Dome, which is being sponsored by Liberty Insurance. And there's so much on offer at the Liberty Insurance Dome that

it's hard to know where to start, but for lovers of the living tradition the double-headliner with Altan and Clannad is all but impossible to overlook.

Moya, Ciaran and Pol Brennan and their twin uncles Noel and Padraig Duggan from scenic Gweedore have been captivating audiences for four decades, pioneering a Celtic and New Age sound. To date the Grammy and BAFTA award winners have sold over 15 million albums, after achieving international fame with their song *Theme from Harry's Game*. The band regrouped last year for a series of acclaimed concerts and are now working on their first new studio album in 14 years.

Having recently celebrated their 25th anniversary, Altan have built up an equally impressive award-winning track record, and a worldwide following as true ambassadors of Irish music. Led



by singer and fiddler Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh, they've never lost touch with their deep roots in the Donegal fiddling tradition in particular, and that's probably a key factor in their long running success.

The Altan/Clannad double-show at the Liberty Insurance Dome at 7pm on Thursday 16th August offers a rare chance – indeed, maybe the only chance – to catch these two great Donegal acts live in concert. Well worth the €30 asking price!

Another great night is guaranteed on Friday 17th August when renowned fiddler Paddy Glackin and Planxty legends Donal Lunny, Liam O'Flynn and Andy Irvine take the stage for an 8.30pm show at the Liberty Insurance Dome – where they will also be joined by “The Cavanman” himself, box-player Martin Donohoe, who launches his cheekily entitled new CD, *The Lady's Plaything* with the help a host of friends including Seán Ó Sé and Fintan McManus.

Added to the mix will be the *The Baltimore Salute*, the USA ensemble featuring Billy McComiskey, Laura Byrne, Jim Eagan and Donna Long, with Kiernan Hanrahan of RTÉ's *Céilí House* as MC. This promises to be a great night of music and craic where anything could happen, so put aside the €20 and book early!

Sharon Shannon's early Fleadh show at the Liberty Dome on Saturday 11th August (8.30pm, adm €20) will undoubtedly pack the venue to capacity again as the sparkling queen of the accordion returns, complete on this occasion with a 40-piece Irish Orchestra and a show that's guaranteed to provide a great spectacle and sweeping soundscape.

The Dome will also be reverberating to a mighty show on Tuesday 14th (7.30pm, adm €10) as the Fleadh presents 'An Evening with Eleanor Shanley and Friends' in honour of Cavan Arts Officer Catriona O'Reilly. “Friends” in this case means some of the biggest names in the game, including De Danann with Alec Finn, Johnny Ringo McDonagh, Mick Conneely, Brian McGrath, Derek Hickey and Cian Finn, along with the Folk The Recession Band of Mick Hanly, Seamus Begley, Frankie Lane, and Paul Kelly. With top-rated singer Seane Keane taking to the stage and contributions from inspiring young harpist Kavan Donohoe and local writer Mike Harding, this is another show that will have the audience tapping their toes and forgetting their woes!



Flook

The Liberty Insurance Dome shows begin on Friday 10th (7.30 pm, €20) with a two-hour ‘Celebration Concert of No Musical Demarcation’ promoted by Cavan's Nyah Festival and sponsored by the International Fund for Ireland. Joint MCs Martin Donohoe and Willie Drennan will present music emanating from Catholic and Protestant traditions, in a show that will highlight just how much of the music and culture was indeed common to both sides of the historical divide.

Sunday 12th will see the Liberty Dome host a very special concert (7.30pm, adm €10) with Liam Lawton and Friends, in which all the great supporters of Comhaltas and the tradition who have gone to their eternal reward will be remembered. A specially commissioned Fleadh Candle will be a feature in this performance for families and friends of the deceased, which will open with melodies by acclaimed pianist Marie-Thérèse McCartin.

Some Liberty Dome shows will have a distinct focus on the talents of younger groups. The Launch of the Clár on Wednesday 15th (8pm, adm €10) sees The Full Set in concert with Gleo, the Cavan Youth Group, while on Friday 17th at 2.30pm a Youth Concert



Kavan Donohoe, Sharon Shannon, Joanie Madden, Martin Donohoe at the fleadh

Donal Lunny, Andy Irvine, Liam O'Flynn and Paddy Glackin



with Beoga (adm €10) and the Meitheal Summer School Orchestra will set the tone for the weekend's festivities. Meanwhile, two rapidly-rising young groups with the Lunny seal of approval, Goitse and Ciorras, will ensure a thrilling wind-up to the weekend with their 3pm (also €10) 'Farewell to the Fleadh Concert' in the Liberty Dome.

And wrapping it all up in the same venue later that evening (8pm, adm €10) will The Cavanman again, Martin Donohoe, when he's joined once more by a host of friends along with members of the 'Corofin Trad Fest Co Clare on Tour' with Dessie O'Halloran, Padraic O'Reilly and many more.

The historic Town Hall in Cavan will provide the setting for other great shows, and not to be missed here is the 'Dán Project', which sees cutting edge groups Kan, Guidewires and Breton Quartet link up with Scottish vocalist Alyth McCormac in a show sponsored by the Arts Council Performance and Touring Award.

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Fresh from the National Stadium in Dublin, the Dán Project's 8pm show in Cavan on Saturday 18th August (adm €25) brings together some of the world's most adventurous traditional and jazz musicians – including the likes of Padraig Rynne, Brian Finnegan and Geoffroy Tamisier – in a 14-member ensemble that will push the tradition to the edge of its boundaries.

The top hotels and venues in the town are all hosting great performances too. Button box enthusiasts should tick in their diary the Saturday 18th (5pm, adm €10) show in the Farnham Arms Hotel by champion UK accordionist Damien Mullane with Donogh Hennessy, Éamonn de Barra and special guest Graham Wells, another accordion wizard all the way from Newfoundland.

And later that night (11pm, adm €20), in the hotel's ballroom, the man from Kan reappears, but this time flute and whistles maestro Brian Finnegan will be with his old colleagues Sarah Allen, Ed Boyd and John Joe Kelly as the breathtaking band Flook get together again in a once-off appearance that's a must-see or the fans. In support is the Kavan Donohoe trio, in what should be a true Fleadh highlight.

An afternoon of unique music in the Farnham will be the Harp Celebration Concert in honour of Ann Finnegan and Josie O'Rourke, featuring the Nobber Harp School and Longford Comhaltas

musicians (Monday 13th, 2pm, adm €5), while fans of the old school will want to see Leitrim fiddle stalwart Ben Lennon's Dog Big Dog Little at the Farnham on Thursday 16th (10.30pm, adm €10) with guests Hullion from the Orkney Islands.

Cavan Crystal Hotel's upstairs residents bar is the venue on Wednesday 15th (10.30pm, adm €10) for Raw Bar Collective, where the flute, fiddle and accordion respectively of Conal Ó Gráda, Dave Sheridan and Benny McCarty will be in harmony with TG4 award winning singer Nell Ní Chróinín, in what will be a super show with Maria Matthews and Laura and Liam Doherty in support.

The impressive Imperial Bar will be alive with great music throughout Fleadh 2012, where the venue's Top Floor Theatre hosts a Traditional Singers Arts Council Deis afternoon concert on Saturday 18th (2pm–5pm, adm €10) featuring over 25 flag bearers of the song tradition including Gabriel McArdle, Rosie

Stewart, Josie Shean and Johnny Mháirtín Learaí Mac Donnchadha, Aoife Murray and host Cathal Lynch.

Local singer Aoife Murray will, incidentally, be launching her new CD, *Aoife* at the Farnham's Conference Room at 10.30pm on Sunday 12th with accompanist Fintan McManus and guests including Dr Ciaran Parker. The Farnham's upstairs room will host a Traditional Singing session at 9pm every night from Sunday 12th to Sunday 19th, where enthusiasts of song are welcome to come along and participate.

Meanwhile, back in the Imperial, Fleadh-goers can look forward to a great selection of concerts by world famous acts. The immensely popular High Kings will play two shows at the Imperial's Visions Venue, on Monday 13th and Tuesday 14th (9pm both nights, adm €20).

On Wednesday 15th the Visions Venue hosts old-time favourites Foster & Allen (9pm, adm €25), while on Thursday and Friday Cork's inimitable, spellbinding songster John Spillane will hold court in the Imperial's Top Floor Theatre, in 8pm shows where a modest €15 gains entrance.

Thursday 16th also sees the Imperial's Visions Venue put on a guaranteed sellout show by the legendary Fureys and Davey Arthur, where early booking is advised for another great blast of

nostalgia (9pm, adm €25). The following night's show will attract younger fans when Beoga, supported by the innovative JP Trio from Sligo will be putting on a trademark hi-voltage Nyah show from 10pm onwards (adm €15).

On Sunday 19th it will be the turn of the unsurpassed Four Men and A Dog, with Ciaran Tourish of Altan as special guest (again at 10 bells, adm €15), in another Nyah bash set to raise the rafters in the Imperial's Visions Venue.

Outdoor shows on the Peace III Gig Rig at the Egg Market will have the town hopping from Wednesday 16th onwards, opening with a 6pm Youth Céilí led by Goitse, with special guests the Murphy Roche Irish Music Club from Illinois. The Gig Rig will have great performers right through to Monday 20th, with acts including Gerry 'Fiddle' O'Connor, Seamus Tansey, and the Willie Drennan Lambeg/Fife Ulster Orchestra. RTÉ's flagship *Céilí House* radio show with Kieran Hanrahan will broadcast live from the Gig Rig at 9pm on the Saturday.

Other key events to look out for at Fleadh 2012 include the launch (adm free) of a new CD by fiddler John McEvoy at 12 noon on Sunday 19th in the Farnham Conference room, followed up by a treat of masterful fiddle playing from Brian Conway, Tommy Peoples, Donal McCague and Breege Harper at 2pm (adm €10). The Senior Céilí Band Competition is at 7.30pm on the Sunday in the Liberty Insurance Dome (adm €15), while London's famed Le Cheile band are in the Cavan Crystal Hotel at 10.30pm (adm €20) and joined by Brian Rooney, John and James Carty, Joe and Ann Burke and the Baltimore Salute Ensemble.

The Sands Family and Paddy Keenan are in concert at the Town Hall at 7.30pm on Sunday 19th (adm €20), in what will be a great homecoming for the legendary Paddy, whose mother, the late Mary Bravendar was a native of Cavan town. Colum Sands and Maggie MacInnes will showcase their unique bilingual show, *The Seedboat* in the Farnham Hotel at 3pm on Monday 20th (adm €20).

Sets Céilí and Fíor Céilí dancers will be well catered for in the Cavan Crystal Hotel and Ballyhaise Hall respectively, while the Comhaltas dancing competitions, including Sean-Nós, will be held on Friday 17th and Saturday 18th. The 40th Annual Summer School Scoil Éigse classes will attract lots of students keen to hone their skills, and many of these of these will be putting those skills to the test in the Comhaltas All-Ireland competitions for all categories and age groups in 20 venues around the town on Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th.

A new set of competitions, open to individual and group entrants of all ages, will be hosted by the Nyah FEIS from Friday 10th to



Joe Burke



Beoga

Sunday 12th at various venues (email: cavanfeisceoil@gmail.com for more information).

Another new initiative at Fleadh 2012 is the Arts Council Deis *Instrument Makers & Maintenance* weeklong workshops, where expert instrument makers give advice how and when to upgrade instruments. Among those giving the workshops (at the rear of the Cavan Gifts Shop, Main Street, from 12pm-4pm daily) will be harp aficionado Larry Fisher of Winnipeg, Canada and flute expert Mike Grinter from Australia.

The connections between late, great fiddling genius Sean McGuire and the Maguires of Mullahorn (he later changed the spelling) will be celebrated with the unveiling of a statue to the virtuoso in Kilcogy, Mullahorn at 4.30pm on Monday 13th, followed by a show in Cavan Town Hall at 9pm that night (adm €10), which includes a musical drama *The Titanic* and a fiddle tribute to McGuire led by Antóin Mac Gabhann and including the hail and hearty Josephine Keegan.



John Spillane

Other items of particular interest include the launch of a double CD of piano accordion players, coordinated by Philip Clarke in the Farnham Conference Room (Sunday 19th, 5.30pm, adm free), the launch of a Nyah CD of songs and recitations by Liam Butler (Farnham 9.30pm, Sunday 11th), the special 80th Birthday Party and session for well-loved Cavan lilter Seamus Fay in the Farnham at 9pm on Wednesday 15th, and a concert by the Kilfenora Céilí Band, Clare at 8pm, Sunday 12th (adm €25) in the Kilmore Hotel.

The Kilmore will also be hosting the Ceanródaí Awards at 1pm on Wednesday 15th, while at 9.30pm on Thursday 16th the same venue will provide the setting for the Ard Ollamh Gala Dinner, where fiddler Attracta Brady will be honoured as this year's bearer of the prestigious title.

Visit the website www.fleadhcheoil.ie for information on tickets, accommodation and general enquiries, along with Facebook and Twitter links; also, email: info@fleadhcheoil.ie