

# Christmas cheer



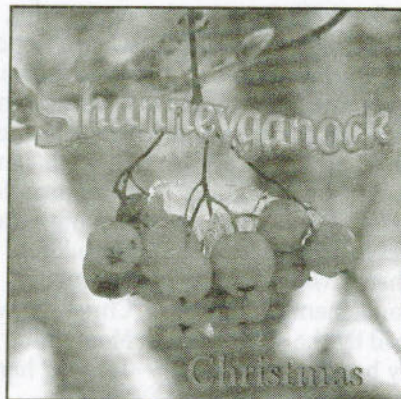
Shanneyganock has a new Christmas CD, and after a successful year, they have every right to be festive

When you look up “jolly” in the dictionary, you could possibly see pictures of Shanneyganock members Chris Andrews and Mark Hiscock grinning back at you. OK, you won’t, but if you met them in person, you’d see two smiles as big as a kid on Christmas morning.

They have every right to be in the holiday spirit.

The traditional band has had a stellar year. They hired a new manager (Bob Hallett of Great Big Sea fame) and released a fourth CD, *Set You Free*, which earned them two Music Industry Association of Newfoundland and Labrador awards. To close 2004, the band has released a Christmas CD of some of their favourite holiday tunes, simply entitled *Christmas* (available on Avondale Music).

The CD was near the top of the local album charts in St. John’s



**ALBUM PROBE**  
BY KEVIN KELLY

a couple of weeks ago (No. 9 to be exact).

Local fans of the band have been suffering a little withdrawal lately. That’s because the band has been showcasing their music to the mainland, places like Charlottetown, Moncton, Ontario, Quebec and even St. Pierre rather than their usual haunts at home.

It seems to be working.

The group recently were picked to showcase at the East Coast Music Awards this February in Cape

Breton and shows up along are becoming hot tickets.

*The Herald* recently sat down with Andrews and Hiscock to chat about the holiday CD and their return St. John’s Christmas show on Dec. 27. The band is joining good buddies Brothers In Stereo and The 8-Track Favourites at the Delta Ballroom that promises to be a holiday highlight.

Anyway, back to the CD.

*Christmas* is an album that’s destined to be a holiday must-have for local music fans. Featuring 13 songs of the season that’s a mix of both traditional and original, the band shows a serious and fun side throughout.

Whether it’s their original song *Christmastime in Newfoundland* or the more familiar *We three kings*, Shanneyganock’s music makes you feel as warm as those chestnuts on the open fire.

From the accordion magic of Hiscock to the hearty vocals of Andrews, it’s the ingredient for a holly jolly Newfoundland Christmas.

Heck, the band has even re-recorded an outport Newfoundland classic, the Wince Coles’ song *Santa’s a bayman like us*. You can’t get more Newfoundland than that.

Hiscock says recording the song made famous by Dave & Aubrey back in the day was a great experience.

“It’s only been recorded a couple of times over the past 20 years or so, so we said we’d give it a go.”

And the original was lost in vinyl oblivion, until now.

So why do a holiday CD?

“Basically, we never had one,” Hiscock says. “We already had songs on *The Christmas Wish* and the *Christmas In The Harbour* compilations, so we only needed eight more songs to complete a Christmas album. The studio time was available, so we went for it.”







Andrews says they picked out a bunch of holiday songs they love to sing. "It's just a compilation of our favourite Christmas songs," Andrews says. That doesn't mean, though, that the songs are the same old tunes that you hear on every Christmas record.

The new disc showcases the time-honoured Shanneyganock tradition of finding diamonds in the rough, songs that may have escaped your consciousness, but when you hear them, they're instantly recognizable. Like *Snowflake*, a traditional tune made famous by Jim Reeves. This version, sung by Shanneyganock producer and good buddy Patrick Moran, is the definition of fun.

Or the hilarious traditional tune *Rusty Chevrolet*, a spoof version of *Jingle bells* that pays tribute to the car that drives like the chariot of adventure. Hiscock makes the rarely-heard song his own.

But there's a spark of originality here too. Andrews bring back the lost art of the traditional Newfoundland recitation in *The star of Logy Bay* (not to be confused with the traditional song of the same name).

"We were doing a Christmas memories show, and the organizers asked myself and Mark to come up with a favourite Christmas memory to share," Andrews recalls.

"After thinking about it, it was a small idea that flowed off the head for 15 minutes and then, it was finished, recorded and on the radio that afternoon," he says. "It's funny how fast it grew."

Speaking of growth, we mentioned earlier that the band has been working on educating non-Newfoundlanders about their music through constant touring.

"We've been through Atlantic Canada twice now since August," Andrews says. "We're hitting lots of areas that we've never been to before and the majority of shows have been great."

Hiscock pipes in.

"The shows usually start with people staring at us wondering 'what are these guys all about' and by the second set, they're up on the dance floor goin' mad."

And having the experience of Great Big Sea's Hallett working for them behind-the-scenes is an advantage.

"It can open doors," Andrews says. "He's a smart, hard-working guy who's been through the business. He's not afraid to speak his mind, and it's making us enjoy our work more."

Shanneyganock will spread the holiday cheer the best way they can, by showcasing the music that is so much a part of us, no matter what the season. ▽

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