

Sweet is the melody

Newfoundland favourites return with new CD

When you think of a traditional band, the foursome known as Shanneyganock are one of the province's most identifiable.

The group — Chris Andrews, Mark Hiscock, Bob Pike and Dan Smith — have been a fixture in the local and traditional scene for almost a decade. They've released three successful CDs and with their fourth, *Set You Free*, to be released in early June on Avondale Music, Shanneyganock is branching out.

Their last CD, *Scallywags*, an album which included such popular songs as *Courtin' in the kitchen* and *Our town*, saw the band reach a new high. The group received numerous Music Industry Association nominations (even though they came away empty handed), and even nabbed a showcase gig at February's East Coast Music Awards. Their live gigs are where they thrive. Their energy is infectious. Hiscock, perhaps the modern version of Job's Cove legend Ray Johnson, has remained true to the tunes he grew up with. Andrews, whose husky voice is perfect for ballads, yet can party with the best of them, is Hiscock's alter ego. Together, they're the perfect combination.

The two, who've been together since Day 1, also released successful solo albums, *By The Hush* (Andrews) and *The Music Takes Me Back* (Hiscock), that were warmly received. Andrews even got MIA and ECMA nods for his solo work.

However, don't expect any loud break-ups for solo careers. The band, they say, is top priority.

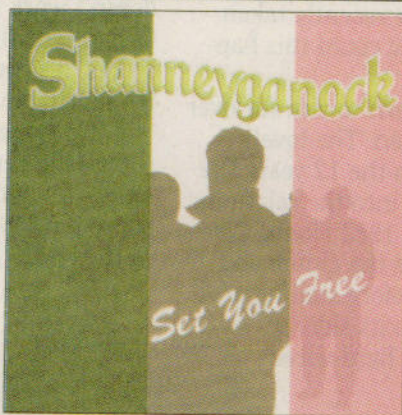
"The solo things were most definitely side projects," Andrews says, admitting, "there were never great aspirations."

As for respect in the traditional



ALBUM PROBE

BY KEVIN KELLY



music fraternity, the group was actually selected as the house band for the Ryan's Fancy reunion party earlier this year. Most traditional bands, including Shanneyganock, grew up listening to the likes of Dermot O'Reilly, Fergus O'Byrne and Denis Ryan, the three expatriate Irish singers who, through Ryan's Fancy, paved a way for a generation of traditionalists.

"That was special," Andrews recalls.

O'Reilly himself appears on two tracks on the new CD.

But don't be fooled. Shanneyganock is more than just a party band, even if their first single off the new disc, *Dublin O'Shea* starts off with *Have another drink, boys, oh have one with me ...*

The Herald recently chatted with Andrews over an ale at one of the Logy Bay native's favourite hideaways — a place known for a few ales — Erin's Pub.

"After the success of *Scallywags*, people began to realize that we were more than just a party band," Andrews says. "It gave us an opportunity to be different on this CD, and do what we want to do."

The challenge for any traditional band is to choose songs that are different from the songs that are played seemingly to death by most traditional groups.

You know 'em, *Sam Hall*, *Whiskey in the Jar*, etc.

Shanneyganock is no stranger to the aforementioned tunes, but you won't hear them on this album.

"This record was inspired by the music, and our buddies," Andrews says. "We came in with



From left: Chris Andrews, Mark Hiscock, Bob Pike and Dan Smith.

over 100 songs in the pre-production, songs that hadn't been released, old songs and songs that were written (just) for us ... we narrowed it down to do some light arrangements on them," says Andrews.

According to the liner notes, the album is a collection of memories preserved in song, and while the album has the usual toe-tappers like *One misty moisty morning* and *Towersey fair* (a particular favourite of Andrews), it also has more secluded moments, like Andrews' heartfelt rendition of the Stan Rogers classic *Make and break harbour*, Dave Cousins' beautiful ballad *Sail away to the sea* or the pretty *Sweet is the melody*, written by Iris DeMent.

There's even a little country feel on Kieran Kane's *In a town this size*.

However, the traditional element is never that far away. Hiscock, who hails from Fort Amherst, is known for his excellent accordion playing, and makes the traditional classics *Red haired Mary* and *The hiring fair* his own, while Andrews' baritone voice has never sounded better.

It's a release that is a good mixture of fun, but also full of great

tunes, sang with a love that is obvious in every song. It's easily noticeable as you listen.

The new disc is produced by Punters fiddler Patrick Moran, who also helmed *Scallywags*. His fiddle is prominent throughout the disc.

"He's our fifth member really," Andrews says, referring to Moran. "He plays a very important role in

"The cover shows that we're Newfoundlanders, not Irishmen."

— Chris Andrews

Shanneyganock. If it wasn't for the special relationship he has with Larry Foley (The Punters), he'd probably be a member of our group. He's a brilliant man, a crazy man and if he wants to produce our next album, we'd love to have him."

The CD's cover, decorated with the Republic of Newfoundland's pink, white and green colours, could be deemed a political statement, but that isn't the statement

Andrews wants the band to convey.

"The cover shows that we're Newfoundlanders, not Irishmen, and we're very proud of that. We're four proud Newfoundland guys who love Newfoundland music."

As for their future plans, is the world ready for Shanneyganock?

"We're looking forward to bringing this to the rest of the world," Andrews states boldly. "We're going back out on the road, which we haven't done in years, but we aren't going to be playing bars as much as we used to. We needed a bit of a break from that."

They will be playing in the province throughout the summer at festivals and halls, but the band will also be playing some "soft-seaters" throughout Atlantic Canada with New Brunswick group Banshee.

They rant and they roar like true Newfoundlanders but Shanneyganock are looking forward with their new CD, *Set You Free*. *Sweet is the melody*, indeed. ▽

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