

The Focus

Grateful Dead Songs Inspire Celtic Celebration

Take eight classic Grateful Dead tunes, add seven seasoned musicians who groove to a joyful Celtic rhythm, blend it with a healthy dose of love for both, and you've got one hell of a party! In this case, it comes in the form of a delightful CD, *Wake The Dead*. An Irish wake is a spectacular

cultural expression of love and *Wake The Dead* is nothing short of an Irish wake. From rock grooves and a touch of bluegrass to hot Irish reels and hauntingly beautiful melodies, the combination puts forth a new kind of sound that conjures up memories of the "Old & In The Way" bluegrass sounds and early Grateful Dead vibes, familiar to Dead Heads everywhere. The comfortable adaptations make it sound as if these songs were written to be performed in this manner, proving once again that the music of the Grateful Dead is capable of crossing all social and cultural boundaries, including a vast array of musical genres.

Co-producers/musicians

Danny Carnahan and Paul Kotapish had found Dead tunes making their way into their Celtic/folk sessions for years, and although they both harbored ideas for a Celtic Dead CD, neither had approached the other with what seemed like a "crazy idea." Then, as with so many "crazy ideas," the moment of sanity happened when it was spoken and another creative gift was put into motion.

The blending of traditional Irish jigs and reels together in one song is hardly uncommon in Celtic music; however, the melding of such jigs and reels with Grateful Dead songs is a unique yet natural phenomenon. The melancholy and sincere version of "Black Muddy River" (Garcia/Hunter) flows exquisitely with

"Brigid Cruise" (Turlough O'Carolan, traditional Irish harp air), "Friend Of The Devil" (Garcia/Hunter/Dawson) blends effortlessly with "Banks of Lough Gowna" (traditional Irish jig) and "The Reunion" (jig by Russ Barenberg). The joyful, upbeat "China Cat Sunflower" and "Bertha" (both by Garcia/Hunter) are seamlessly woven among "Christmas Eve," "Bank Of Ireland," "The Bear" (all traditional Irish reels) and "Cliffs of Mostar" (unreel based on traditional Irish reel).

Other Dead songs presented on *Wake The Dead* range from early, greatly-loved favorites like "Sugaree" (Garcia/Hunter), "The Wheel" (Garcia/

Vince Welnick, performing on Valentine's Day 1995 at the Fillmore. Carnahan was also on the 1995 tribute to Garcia CD, "Eternity Blue."

Paul Kotapish plays mandolin, octave mandolin, guitar, and National Steel guitar. He is equally confident and inventive on every fretted instrument and has most recently made a name for himself with his concerts and recordings with Kevin Burke's "Open House," a headlining act in Celtic and international folk festivals. His gifted guitar and mandolin skills help drive "The Hillbillies From Mars," the "Quirks" and other California-based acoustic groups.

Maureen Brennan, an accom-



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Hunter/Kreutzmann), "Bird Song" (Garcia/Hunter) and "Row Jimmy" (Garcia/Hunter) to the more recent "Touch of Grey" (Garcia/Hunter).

Danny Carnahan and Paul Kotapish assembled a stellar cast of musicians. Carnahan provides vocals, guitar, octave mandolin and fiddle. He released his first all-original CD, "Cut and Run," in 1994 on Red House Records in the U. S. and Fledg'ling Records in Britain, making "Ten Best" lists from California to Italy. The CD included "Laughing in the Dark," a collaboration with Grateful Dead lyricist Robert Hunter. Carnahan also performs and records with Henry Kaiser and was part of the band, "The Valentines," which included Henry, Bob Weir and

plished early classical and folk harpist, brings her Celtic Harp to the project. Brennan has toured throughout the U.S. and Canada and has recorded with "Paradise Lost" and "Kingfisher." She has released three solo CDs and participated in the acclaimed "Harpistry" collection.

Vocalist Sylvia Herold has been singing professionally for twenty years. She is a member of the popular swing trio, "Cats & Jammers," who have performed together for over a decade at major festivals throughout the U. S. She recently released her solo debut album, "A Bowl of Crystal Tears," to glowing reviews in the U.S. and Britain and is currently working on her second album with the band "Hot Club".

Kevin Carr, plays uilleann pipes, fiddle, and pennywhistle on *Wake The Dead*. Carr, an Irish piper par excellence, is best known for his work with the cult contradance and concert band, "The Hillbillies From Mars." He is renowned throughout the U. S. and Canada and teaches extensively at music camps and workshops nationwide.