

Reynardine Live! at the Black Nun Folk Club, Ballycastle, Co. Antrim.
Monday 21st July 2003.

What a refreshing change, last Monday night at the Black Nun folk club, Ballycastle, saw 'Reynardine' - an Irish group with four fine singers, who dare to be different. All other young trad bands in Ireland these days, seem to crawl out of the woodwork with the same tired old format, blistering sets of tunes, from super-sonic, All Ireland Champions, throwing in the occasional song in their repertoire, just for good measure - yawn! All very nice I'm sure, and nobody enjoys good Irish music played well, better than meself, but oh, how I just yearn for something a wee bit different every now and then. Come on, the Bothy Band did all that nearly thirty years ago, and it has to be said, no group has ever been able to do it better, in all those years, so please give it up, and for goodness sake, try to be different. Well, thankfully 'Reynardine' at last Monday night's Black Nun, were just what the doctor ordered, and more, with their line up of four fine singers, who also play fiddle, guitars and cello. We have waited five years to see our first cello at the club, and Aideen certainly didn't disappoint us, for not only is she a lovely singer, with a fine repertoire of Scottish songs, (what! - me biased, in this wonderful land of equality!), but she also provided a lovely mellow undercurrent of mystery and suspense to the wonderfully varied potpourri of songs we enjoyed, all night long, from the group.

The ballad scene in Ireland is oh, so tired these days, with the same old tosh being churned out for the tourists - once again, the Dubliners and the Clanceys did it all, nearly forty years ago!!

Reynardine then, provided us with a singer's idea of heaven, and perhaps a glimpse of the future ballad scene in Ireland, with almost two hours of songs that were fresh, unusual, uncommon, unexpected, rare, curious, imaginative and always very interesting.

These guys, and gal, have certainly done their homework in a big way, (other singers take note) with songs from the Scottish & English traditions sitting very comfortably indeed with Irish songs, including many from this locality, courtesy of that invaluable tome, 'The Songs of the People', which is a wonderful collection of songs, over 700 in all, which were collected locally by Sam Henry, and published over the years in the 'Northern Constitution'.

I hope this band are heard far and wide, and that all singers in their audiences, take a leaf out of their book, and get their proverbial fingers out, and start researching and learning new songs, before we all die of boredom.

As always, Brian Boyle, the club's soundman received much praise and gratitude from the band, and in fact, they maintained that Brian produced the best sound they had ever achieved! Well done Brian, we always knew you were the best around!! Others, who helped make the night a very memorable one indeed, were

all the singers and musicians who entertained us all so well during the first half's 'Open Mic' session. First up were 'Connor Bones', five young Ballycastle musicians who played some lively sets of well arranged Irish tunes. Patsy Hill, Ballycastle's singing butcher, then sang two fine unaccompanied songs, before the next group, 'Tir na Nóg', appeared and entertained us with a lovely mix of songs and tunes. Last up before the break were two 'Triangle' men, Riley Piddington and Dessie Hasson on guitar/vocals and percussion respectively, who sang three beautiful songs, the last of which had us all talking about it through the break, it being an 'ear worm', a song you hear once, then you just can't seem to get it out of your head - great stuff from the lads, and lass.

The large audience included lots of tourists, many from Italy and America, and at one point the band announced that they were going to play a tune from Sweden, and jokingly dedicated it to all the Swedes in the audience, and yes, there was one!

Thanks to all concerned for a great night, and to all those who have been asking, yes, Reynardine, like Arnie - will be back!

* * * * *