

The Irish Rovers

Saturday December 3, 2011

There will be one 20-minute intermission.

"Throughout the years, these international ambassadors of Irish music have maintained their timeless ability to deliver a rollicking, rousing performance of good cheer - one that will soon have you singing and clapping along. Their songs have become anthems of revelry and joy among generation after generation of fans."

~ Belfast Telegraph, 2010

For more than four decades, THE IRISH ROVERS have charmed and entertained audiences around the world. This year, The Irish Rovers celebrate 45 years as recording artists, with a new CD, *Gracehill Fair* (Rover Records), and new DVD, *"Home In Ireland"*, filmed entirely on-location at the most picturesque spots of their homeland. George Millar says, "It's basically The Irish Rovers 'Coming Home' because this is our home, for all of us. We want to show the world what the northwest Irish coast is like. I've traveled the world now for over 40 years and there's nothing like it." The story of the Irish Rovers starts in 1963 in Canada, where the 16-year old George Millar and 23-year old Jim Ferguson, both new emigrants from N. Ireland, met in Toronto at an Irish function. They ended up singing together 'til dawn; and so the Irish Rovers were launched. They performed as a duo until George's cousin, Joe Millar, immigrated to Canada the following year. Joe, who played button-key accordion and harmonica, and also sang traditional ballads, was recruited as he stepped off the plane. After several months of engagements around Ontario, the trio made their way to Calgary, Alberta, where they joined forces with George's brother,



Will Millar. The four Rovers then headed off to "Americay", landing in at San Francisco's famous folk club, "The Purple Onion", where they ended up headlining for an unprecedented 22 sold-out weeks. The folk clubs of California became the learning grounds for the young Rovers, and (through old-fashioned hard work and a wee bit of Irish luck) they were offered a recording contract with Decca Records. Their debut album, appropriately titled, "The First of The Irish Rovers", generated enough excitement to warrant another album, from which came the multi-million selling single "The Unicorn". At this time, the addition of Wilcil McDowell, an old friend from Ireland, enhanced their sound and the legendary lineup was formed.

In 1968, the predecessor of the Juno's named The Irish Rovers Canada's, "Folk Group of the Year", and the following year, they received a Grammy nomination for "Folk Performance of the Year". Through the 1970s and early 80s, the Rovers brought their magic to television guest starring in several American and Canadian television programs, and then starring in three of their own television series; "The Irish Rovers Show" for the CBC, then "Party With The Rovers", and "The Rovers Comedy House". They were also on Global Network in conjunction with Ulster Television in Ireland, which was syndicated around the world. The Irish Rovers brought us the best entertainment of the day. They used their notoriety to increase the popularity of Irish music in Canada. At the start of the 80s, The Rovers' magic worked on another offbeat number, "Grandma Got Run-Over By A Reindeer". The Rovers also soared to the top of the pop and country charts with "Wasn't That A Party", which was written by their friend, Tom Paxton, after he witnessed one of the band's famous post-show parties. It has gone on to become an international anthem of good cheer. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau personally asked the boys if they could "please become Canadian" so that they could officially represent Canada throughout the world. Since then, they have represented Canada at no less than five world Expos, and in recognition for a quarter century of contributions to the International music world, The Irish Rovers won the Performing Rights Organization's (PROCAN) 'Harold Moon Award'. By the 90s, their songwriting was even more prolific and production of albums wasn't about to slow down. Since they desired the freedom that as a younger band, they could not afford, in '93 The Irish Rovers established their own record company, Rover Records. Their songs tell the story of their homeland, whether it's a lost love, a sailor on leave, or the simple good taste of a Guinness. Rover Records has put out their last eleven albums, including *Celtic Collection*, *Come Fill Up Your Glasses*, *Down by the Lagan Side*, *Another Round*, *Still Rovin'*, *Gracehill Fair*, a Christmas album, and their greatest hits, *40 Years A-Rovin'*.

After more than 37 albums released in North America and many more internationally, the Irish Rovers continue to perform in theatres around the world, with original members George Millar, and Wilcil McDowell. Both John Reynolds and Sean O'Driscoll have been playing with the band for nearly 20 years, and drummer, Fred Graham has been touring with the lads since 2007. Will Millar left the group in 1994, and sadly Jimmy Ferguson passed away in 1997. In 2005 Joe Millar also retired from the band, while his son, Ian Millar took up the family ranks. The Irish Rovers are still passionate about performing and will continue to tour and entertain their legions of fans. Like the Unicorn, the Rovers are legendary and magical. See further details on their website "Our Story" page.

www.theirishroversmusic.com

