



Tradfest is capital gain for Dublin

The **Temple Bar** festival's rousing mix of events reflects on the city's proud history of Irish music, says **Gerry Quinn**

THERE'S a rich history of traditional music in Dublin, says **Temple Bar TradFest** programmer, Kieran Hanrahan. The acclaimed broadcaster, musician, and archivist came on board last February, and since then has toiled to create an eclectic programme of events to celebrate the festival's fifth year. This year's **TradFest** begins in the city's cultural quarter, on Wednesday, January 27, and continues until Sunday 31.

The host of the RTÉ Radio programme, *Céilí House*, Hanrahan came to prominence in the 1970s as the banjo and mandolin player with trad/folk group Stockton's Wing, and has since become a celebrated record producer of quality Irish music. Eager to point out that traditional music has always been strong in the capital city, Hanrahan reflects on his youth in Co Clare. "When we were kids or teenagers, the *Fleadh Nua*, in Ennis, welcomed hoards of musicians from Dublin, like the Glackins, the O'Briens and the McNevins, and all those families that came to Clare, back then. It was a great gathering point, at that time, back in the mid-70s," he says. "Also, *Comhaltas Ceolteoirí Éireann* came out of Dublin. It began with a

meeting of pipers there, so there was always a strong tradition and the musicians spread the word across the country."

This year's **TradFest** features a host of mouth-watering concerts, involving cutting-edge, new sounds, plus legendary musicians, who placed the music on the international map in the first place. The festival also boasts a number of film screenings, culture workshops, exhibitions, céilís, street theatre and markets, a singer's club and a 15-venue pub trail, where the best of trad music can be enjoyed in an informal setting.

One of the more interesting experiences over the five days has to be the exhibition, *Traditional Music in Dublin*, that opens the festival at the **Temple Bar** Gallery and Studios. This photography display is the work of Dublin flute player, Mick O'Connor, and presents a history of Irish music in Dublin in the 20th century. "It's one of our main focuses over the weekend," says Hanrahan. "We want people to see that there is a very strong tradition of culture here in the town."

With regard to the concert series, the Ennis native is excited about all the gigs, but he's looking forward to one performance in particular.

"The one I'm probably most pleased with is Noel Hill and Tony Linnane, with Alec Finn, at the Button Factory, on Friday night. Noel has had his own difficulties over the last 12 months or so, and he hasn't played in Dublin for a long, long time. He was a pioneer of concertina playing through the 1970s and '80s, and himself and fiddler, Tony Linnane, are a wonderful musical combination.

"They made a seminal album together in 1979, and it still hasn't been beaten for its purity. Joining

them on the night will be Alec Finn, on bouzouki, who also featured on that record," says Hanrahan.

It certainly takes me back to my youth, because I played with Noel and Tony in that 'fa-

mous' group, *Inchiquin*," he says with a laugh. "We only lasted about a year or 15 months, but we did make one LP."

Another must at the **TradFest** is the screening at the Irish Film Institute of *The Irish*, or *The Memory Of A People*, directed by Robert Manthoulis. "I think it's like a snap-shot of Ireland in 1971," says Hanrahan. "The film is a 57-minute piece that I'm very impressed with. There's a great piece of footage in it from O'Connor's pub, in Doolin, and it also features Seán Ó Riada's funeral. In fact, there's even an interview in it that Ó Riada gave in Sweden. There's also a couple of scenes from the *Piper's Club*, here in Dublin, in 1971, full of familiar faces, and a short clip of Planxty during a rehearsal."

Seán Ó Sé, formerly of Seán Ó Riada's *Ceolteoirí Chuallan*, and west Kerry native, Seosaimhin Ní Bheaglaoich, will host the *Singers' Club*, while the famed Kilfenora *Céilí Band*, now in its 101st year, will perform at an outdoor céilí at Meeting House Square, on Sunday. "We also have a group called The Hounds of Ulster, with flutes and Lambeg drums. They are going to be playing on the streets, which will add to the carnival atmosphere throughout **Temple Bar** over the few days," says Hanrahan.

"Plus, there are some very high-profile people involved in this year's Pub Trail — we'll have the likes of Kila, Eleanor Shanley, Mike Hanrahan, Kevin Glackin and Seán Óg Potts. They'll all be taking part in the pubs throughout the festival. All in all, it's a very full programme."

The **Temple Bar TradFest**, in association with Bushmills, takes place in Dublin from Wednesday, January 27, to Sunday, January 31. For tickets and info, see www.TempleBarTrad.com.

Téada, one of Irish music's leading exponents internationally, will perform on Friday night at the Project Arts Centre; inset, TradFest programmer, and broadcaster and musician, Kieran Hanrahan.

