



Reviews

I Will If I Can (GLCD6018) 2005

John Carty has quietly but quickly become one of Irish music's leading players. An astonishing fiddler, the London-born musician is equally gifted at banjo, flute and tenor guitar. He has three acclaimed solo fiddle albums, two banjo albums and two band albums already under his belt, and his musical sparring partners include such trad giants as Matt Molloy and Arty McGlynn. In the last three years alone, John has been named Ireland's prestigious TG4 Traditional Musician of the Year (2003), invited to join the Irish supergroup 'Patrick Street' (with such luminaries as Kevin Burke and Andy Irvine) in 2004, and awarded the Irish Echo's 'Top 10 CD of the Year' (2005) for his latest CD, I Will if I Can.

I Will if I Can (GLCD6018) brings John's brilliant banjo playing to the fore, and a trio of fabulous musicians at his side: two greats from De Dannan - Alec Finn on bouzouki and guitar and Johnny McDonagh on bodhran - and Brian McGrath on piano. The vibe is relaxed, the playing crackling good, and the spirit of past masters is in the air, as the four musicians settle in for an hour of old favourites.

"One of the most accomplished Irish multi-instrumentalists alive. The flourishing diaspora of Irish traditional music had no finer exponent than John Carty in London, and the fact that he's "back home" in North Connacht emphasises how close in sensibility his playing...is. I Will If I Can captures him in peak form." - Earle Hitchner, Irish Echo, Jan 25, 2006

"Carty's playing is fascinating -- an uncanny ability for a seemingly endless spinning out of subtle variations. I Will if I Can is a spectacular production..." - Celtic Grooves

"This is banjo in the old style, and it's lovely stuff. It has style aplenty, and the showband swagger captured by De Dannan's Ballroom album. Listen to James Morrison's, the final set of polkas: pure class, with John adding fiddle to his bouncy banjo for a fittingly flamboyant finish to I Will If I Can. He can, and he does." - Alex Monaghan, The Living Tradition

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At It Again (SHAN CD78054)

by The Irish Herald

“At It Again” is the third CD in a series of outstanding traditional Irish music CDs from John Carty, each as good as the last, if not better.

This third traditional CD from Shanachie also features John’s brother James, a wonderful flute player well-known in the London trad music scene. John and James Carty were born in London of Irish parents, and grew up immersed in the London trad music scene, in which their musician father played a prominent part. John moved home to the family farm in Ballinameen, near Boyle, Co Roscommon, in 1991.

John Carty plays in the Sligo style, a driving style with a “lift” that is the same style that his Roscommon-born father picked up when he was in his youth. John Carty is now considered one of the leading musicians in the Sligo style, in a country where once-distinct regional styles have been diluted to some extent.

John Carty’s other main gig is as a member of At the Racket, in which he plays banjo, fiddle, and flute. That band features a happy combination of traditional instruments with “nouveau” instruments like the saxophone.

The CD’s liner notes feature fascinating comments on the history behind these tunes, many of which are from Carty’s native North Connaught.

The recordings here all shine with the light, sweet touch of the fiddle, and the stringed accompaniment from the bouzouki/guitar is not overpowering. This works, since the melody and the melody instrument are the thing in Irish music, not the stringed accompaniment, which has been added to some traditional recordings in the last few years.

The tunes include the “The Sligo Maid”, a rolling, bouncy tune that seems effortless in its jaunty enthusiasm. You can’t but help feel elevated in spirit when you hear this tune played this way.

The “Copperplate” and the magical “Connemara Stockings” are just a couple of the other wonderful tunes to be heard on this CD. It’s all lovely music, easy to love and appreciate, whether you’re a musician or a punter.

Yeh, Thats All It Is (SHANACHIE 78034)

by Danny Saunders

A splendid album of very accomplished fiddle music from the very talented John Carty. John Carty is a one time (1982) Senior All-Ireland banjo champion, is considered a first class flute player and on the evidence of this CD is an excellent exponent of the tenor guitar. Is it fair that one man has so much talent and others (me) so little?

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On this CD John plays fine tunes with skill, flair and feeling with stylish ornamentation and coaxing a great tone from his fiddle. Though well versed in the music of the West of Ireland, and there are traces of this style in his playing he makes the music all his own. The notes state that John plays a "right handed" fiddle while he is left-handed this makes his skill all the more remarkable.

On 'Yeh, that's All It Is' John does not play the banjo or flute but he does give us a few tunes on the tremor guitar. These are played with the same panache that he brings to the fiddle and bring an unusual variety to the programme. Brian McGrath - keyboards and banjo and Arty McGlynn - guitars provide appropriate accompaniments throughout.

It might have been nice to have heard a little of John's banjo and flute playing, next time perhaps, even so this is a very good CD and I highly recommend it to everyone interested in fiddle music.

The Cat That Ate the Cradle (Clo-lar Chonnachta CICD099)

by Alex Monaghan

Traditional music doesn't come much purer than this. Here we have the unadulterated banjo of John Carty bringing the old tunes to life. Apart from two of Carty's own compositions, everything here is familiar but much of it is given a new turn.

John Carty's playing is not in the style or class of Gerry O'Connor, but it is a very good example of the older Irish tenor banjo style. He plays about two dozen classic tunes here in forty minutes, covering everything from "Strike the Gay Harp" to "Trans-Roscommon Airways". He also play fiddle on a couple of tracks, to great effect.

What makes this album outstanding for me is actually the piano-playing of Brian McGrath. It's only if you listen carefully that you hear how much work the piano is doing. Brian clearly knows the tunes and suits his accompaniment to each one, and he also complements the banjo superbly. Being a banjo-player himself no doubt helps.

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