



Andy M. Stewart and Manus Lunny bring fresh arrangements to traditional music.

## Creative Celtic Duo

interview by Rod Campbell

The dog days of popular music in the 1970's came to an abrupt end with the apocalyptic emergence of punk rock. At about the same time Johnny Rotten laid claim to being the anti-Christ incarnate, the folk scene finally unshackled itself from the albatross known as the singer-songwriter. Out of the Celtic hinterland strode a multitude of brash young musicians who drew heavily on the roots of traditional music. One such group was Silly Wizzard led by an adroit singer named Andy M. Stewart.

The Wizzard made eight albums. All except two have become collector's pieces. Despite his obvious commitment to the band, Stewart found the time to record a solo album *By the Hush*, which won the Melody Maker's folk album of the year in 1982. At about the same time, the Wizzard were touring Germany with the Irish group Wild Geese, who included in their ranks one Manus Lunny. Lunny and Stewart struck up an acquaintance and passed the traveling time swapping tunes.

Two years later Stewart and fellow Wizzard Phil Cunningham intended to tour

Europe as a duo. However, Cunningham was involved in a serious car accident. Meanwhile, the tour commitments had to be fulfilled. Stewart called up Lunny and the rest, as they say, is a telephone conversation from Norfolk Virginia on Wednesday.

Now on their third major tour, Stewart finds traveling with Lunny a lot easier than with a band. "A duo is an easier thing to control as far as the physical rigours of touring are concerned." Cheaper too, "but you can't put anything together with that in mind." Stewart's approach to music has also changed, simply because there's more time to arrange. "You have a chance to explore," he says, adding that six musicians impede on each other's solos.

Stewart doesn't feel that the lack of a band has infringed upon his musical arrangements. "I find quite the reverse, because when there's just the two of you, you've got to do an awful lot more with your performance to maintain a good evening for people."

Stewart and Lunny had their record debut with an album entitled *Fire in the Glen* which was released last year to critical acclaim. The album also featured Phil Cunningham, now

## 54-40 have numbers right

54-40  
Show Me  
Warner Bros. Records  
review by Christopher J. Cook

Even after their great first album, I must admit there were a few doubts in my mind about how much 54-40's new vinyl slab would impress me. I hoped I was wrong, but I anticipated a carbon copy of their self-titled debut. I needn't have worried. Neil Osborne and the boys teamed up with production engineer Dave Jerden (renowned for his work with the Stones and Talking Heads) for *Show Me*, the follow-up to 54-40, and I like this album.

In fact, in overall terms of song-for-song listenability, I think most people will enjoy this album even more than the last. *Show Me* rocks harder than did 54-40 — the band's style has evolved in the year-long interim between albums into a more straightforward rock, less acoustically based sound. This is great — except that there isn't a song like "I Go Blind" on the album. I feel truly sorry for anyone who skipped last year and never heard this classic tune that remains the band's best to date. Oh well, at least no one will buy this album just for one or two songs, since there aren't any stand-out-above-the-rest great ones on it; they are all really good. Description of individual songs is pointless

since there are no exceptionally strong or weak ones — a description of the album's overall mood is more appropriate. Let us just say that the lyrics are typical Neil Osborne: simple, repetitive, and not especially rhythmic, yet very interesting and intellectually stimulating. One thing is immediately evident upon listening, there have been some guitar lessons taken in the last year or so. There are (especially on side one) some really cool riffs laid down that are better and more complex than anything previously released.

The overall sound is quite a bit heavier than anything from the previous album (except maybe "Baby Ran"), and there's also a more dominant keyboard sound — somewhat similar to the Doors. As well, the band utilizes a new backing vocal scheme that sounds almost Simon and Garfunklesque if the imagination is stretched a bit. Yet the band's sound is uniquely 54-40.

My greatest fear is that some cretinous 630 CHED deejay will play a song like "Get Back Down" and a million junior high 54-40 fans will sprout overnight. The band will become exceedingly rich and probably never put out any more good music. As it is now, these dudes may be the best Canadian rock band, and I feel sorry for any true music fan who hasn't been exposed to them.

fully recovered from his accident. Stewart says *Fire in the Glen* was supposed to be a follow up to *By the Hush* but he decided to share the project with Cunningham. But by then, tours with Lunny were already underway, so he too was included.

The pair have recently released a follow up entitled *Dublin Lady* which they produced themselves. "The arrangements are a lot different. If *Fire in the Glen* sounded like Silly Wizzard, that's not the case any more." "Manus did a lot of the arrangements; they're new and they're fresh. Quite different from anything I've done before."

Stewart has earned himself quite a reputation over the past few years. His songs are

covered by a variety of musicians on the folk scene. Asked whether he considered writing political songs which seem to be back in vogue, he replied: "There's a lot of politics in traditional songs. I've always written songs that if they weren't obviously a love song, they had something to say. If you look behind the most obvious conclusion from a song, you might think you're listening to nostalgia. But if you look closely, you'll find something in there."

Stewart and Lunny will be appearing at the Orange Hall, 104 St and 84 Ave at 8 p.m. For information call the South Side Folk Club at 478-6417.

OCT. 22, 23 & 24 8:00 p.m.



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