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CLANN MHIC RUAIRÍ

Súile

Own Label CD, 11 Tracks, 53 Minutes

www.clannmhicruairi.com

As I listen to the magnificent Clann Mhic Ruairí's Súile CD, I can't help considering Ireland's lack of success with foreign ventures in song competitions in recent years, and I wish I could tell festival organisers that they could select just about any one of the tracks on this group's new CD, and people in other lands would be enthralled at what they hear: the utter beauty of song and singing, exquisite arrangements, and appeal of words and harmonies. The fusion of old and modern in Clann Mhic Ruairí's CD, Súile, is not only something of a triumph, it's a total pleasure.

Donegal is to the fore among those Irish counties that produce singing

family groups like the Rann na Feirste Mac Ruairí family: Clannad are their near neighbours, the Henry Girls are from Inishowen, and the Patterson family from Letterkenny were really big in the late sixties and early seventies. What's truly unusual about all of them is their being totally at ease in performing both traditional and modern material. Tá an ceol acu ón gcliabhán – they have the music from the cradle.

There are 11 tracks on the album and the appeal for this listener is the sheer perfection of delivery and presentation; there is no straining for effect anywhere in either the singing, the harmonies or in the arrangements. The singers are accomplished performers and their guest instrumentalists enhance the presentation to make this my number one Irish language song CD of this year or of any year in recent times. Throughout the recording, the haunting atmosphere they create through their performance is truly enthralling and as near to perfection, musically speaking, as one can get.

Clann Mhic Ruairí consists of four brothers, Tony, Aodh, Dónall and Seán, and Tony's daughter, Megan. It's always a pleasure to hear familiar songs from the tradition and one such is track 1 on the CD, Dúlamán, but in this instance, sung to an air I haven't heard before; a good example of the group's ease in blending the old and the new. The titletrack, Súile, is a composition of Tony's and Megan's and deals most movingly with a family tragedy in 2013. They also wrote Síbhean which they were inspired to write by hearing of the mistreatment experienced by the Native American Oglala Lakota nation in the 1800s. I loved hearing again the much-loved Donegal songs that include Siobhán Ní Dhuibhir, Thíos i Lár an Ghleanna, and Máire Bhruinneal. This is a CD I'll keep near to hand to listen to over and over again. Check it out for yourself at iTunes and cdbaby.

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